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Child Exploitation – Theme Safety

1 Purpose

- 1.1 Child at risk of exploitation (CRE) strategy Derby. Changes to the Derby exploitation strategy.
- 1.2 A brief comparison of the data from the CRE strategy between April 19 and March 20 and the previous year's data is provided. This will also focus on the number of children in care on the strategy and how they are safeguarded. The current trends and types of exploitation being reported.
- 1.3 Commissioned Services and added value from agencies in the city and consideration of the offer to children and parents on the CRE strategy.
- 1.4 Impact of Covid on children and families on the CRE strategy and on professional interventions.
- 1.5 A brief overview of operational and strategic work directed via the vulnerable Childrens' subgroup of the safeguarding board, the regional work and 5 P's plan and future focus including; contextual safeguarding and aspirations

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To ensure that professionals and the authority focusses equally on all forms of exploitation that affect children on and offline and on disrupting and prosecuting the adult offenders.
- 2.2 To ensure that children in care are protected from exploitation and any risks identified are responded to urgently in line with statutory guidelines and procedural expectations, which all are enhanced by the corporate parents protecting and safeguarding them to achieve the best outcomes.

3. Reason(s)

- 3.1 Current responses to exploitation are hampered by the Covid restrictions and virtual landscape we work within. This has delayed and changed the way we work, in some cases for the better, but for children it has created a void, a lack of physical professional

contact and many children struggle to form relationships or to engage virtually with professionals.

- 3.2 Other forms of exploitation are still evident in the strategy data and it is important to ensure they remain a focus of everyday work. It is important to understand that children rarely present with one risk or one issue, more frequently they have a combination of factors that make them vulnerable to exploitation. Often those vulnerabilities require a multi-agency, coordinated response. To achieve that, appropriate resources, planning and development are required. In the current financial climate and virtual world, this is a challenge.

4. Supporting information

- 4.1 In 2017, Derby began to develop the exploitation strategy to move away from a strict focus on sexual exploitation to incorporate the range of emerging issues identified in the national serious violence and violence against women and girl's strategies. To facilitate this the sexual exploitation strategy was renamed as; the child at risk of exploitation (CRE) strategy. This allowed professionals to consider all forms of exploitation but in the main, to equally consider exploitation within criminal contexts. Such as drugs activity, violent crimes, shoplifting, labour exploitation, honour-based violence and extremist grooming and modern slavery.
- 4.2 It is important to note that these issues were already considered within a range of forums, with different agency leads, including statutory children and adult services and within voluntary sectors. But the issues were not reviewed in a formal child protection framework like the exploitation strategy, governed by the local safeguarding children partnership arrangements. This was primarily due to the range of complex issues that crime related exploitation involves. To coordinate the responses and close the gap between criminal justice and welfare responses to criminal exploitation victims, it was important to frame criminal exploitation within exploitative contexts and to apply a welfare/victim-based perspective for all agencies involved where there is any concern about grooming or coercion of a child.
- 4.3 Data - See slides for numbers and comparison. Also, whilst there are reduced numbers of cases reviewed in the year, there are concerning trends related to increased numbers of CCE referrals and for many of those cases there are additional risks related to violent offending and involvement with drugs cultures, that bring a number of risks to the child but also to their peers and families and possibly to professionals.
- 4.4 There is a distinct lack of CSE referrals in comparison to previous years and the number of boys on the CRE strategy has significantly increased.
- 4.5 There are more issues related to modern slavery within CCE cases, but again the experience of cases here, is that the tools (National Referral Mechanism) are ineffective to protect children because they do not bring actual physical support to a child. There is a wider challenge to this from the Anti-Slavery Commissioner
- 4.6 The CRE concerns for Looked after children have been far less however issues concerning risk tend to be in relation to frequent missing episodes, cannabis use and links to anti-social behaviour. However, it is important to note, over the year this only

related to 5 LAC children from Derby. The remaining 2 local LAC cases were at risk of sexual exploitation. 4 cases were closed over the year due to risk reducing and improved understanding of the risks.

- 4.7 The remaining 6 cases were LAC children from out of authority and they were reviewed as a reciprocal arrangement with other authorities in the region. However, they remained the responsibility of the placing authority. A looked after child is reviewed separately from their independent review to focus directly on the exploitation and a structured support plan is developed at the meeting. Consideration is also given to where they are most at risk and attempts are made to engage families, carers, communities etc.
- 4.8 It is apparent that statutory services alone cannot safeguard and protect children at risk of exploitation and so Derby, Derbyshire and the Police and Crime Commissioner commission a provider Catch 22 to deliver CRE services to children and families across the City and County – the service is Derby/shire Child At Risk of Exploitation Service (CARES). The contract is monitored and to date there has been positive results with children in care being seen as a priority and supported to recognise the risks they are exposed to.
- 4.9 The city is also fortunate to have added value from Safe and Sound. They provide support for low level cases and to parents.
- 4.10 Both services work with any child referred to them so LAC children also benefit from these services.
- 4.11 The impact of Covid 19. There are concerns about Covid restrictions being used to support avoidant behaviours and this hampers professional input or intervention with children and offenders. LAC children including fostered children, have had the opportunity to attend their CRE meetings, but there is limited engagement. However, chairs do make attempts to speak with them separately to ensure their voice is heard. For 5 of the 15 meetings the child has been missing at the time of the meeting.
- 4.12 Feedback was obtained from a few young people recently and one, was a looked after child. Two of the responses are included here;

When one child was asked what the impact of Covid had been for her; she replied;

I just feel flat, can't get out of bed sometimes and sometimes I am ok.

When asked if the work re exploitation and support from health professionals had helped, she said,

A bit, but it is hard talking on the phone and it gets a bit boring and tough to keep listening. You don't do much, do you. I prefer going out and seeing people properly.

- 4.13 Generally, feedback from young people in meetings or for meetings has been varied re the impact of Covid. Several children have discussed feeling isolated and some have talked about boredom, isolation and feeling frustrated with the lock down. Three CRE cases have been referred for counselling support as part of a CRE plan because of these feelings.

- 4.14 Conversely, one child reported that the restrictions were good because it has helped her improve her relationship with her Mother.
- 4.15 There is a concerning pattern of boys at risk CCE, not observing restrictions and two of these children are in care. They are responsible for many of the reported missing episodes in those homes. This is concerning because they are then at risk of contracting Covid, infecting other children, carers and professionals who have contact with them.
- 4.16 A CRE Covid plan was completed in April 20, after the lockdown measures were enforced. To support this plan there were also monthly update newsletters provided to professionals, with relevant national research, trends and information on how to best support children at risk of CRE through the restrictions etc. The newsletter also informed of free access to workbooks and online courses for professionals and parents and for children to access directly. It has also included research on children's mental health and wellbeing in lockdown, and an overview of local and national policy updates.
- 4.17 Children continue to be supported through the CRE strategy and via CP plans during the lockdown. CRE meetings are being held virtually via Teams and the child and parent/carers have the opportunity to take part in those meetings, or if they prefer, they can speak to the chair separately via skype, teams or telephone.
- 4.18 Multi agency tasking meetings are still held monthly to focus on high risk cases and persons or places of concern. This is a well-attended and proactive meeting that considers protection, disruption and prosecution equally.
- 4.19 Regional work has focussed recently on aligning the risk assessment tool to ensure there are consistent responses to children who cross borders and who live within our region. There has also been development of the 5 Ps, to align the regional CRE strategy with the Governments Serious Violence Strategy. This will ensure that criminal exploitation is embedded within local strategies and responses to CRE victims are consistent across the region. The 5 P's are: Pursue, Partnership, Prevent, Protect and Provide. See document attached that gives an example of a populated 5 ps overview of work on CRE in Derby.
- 4.20 Local authority licensing services are involved in safeguarding children through monitoring of licensed premises. The Police licensing team also provide a list of all licensing incidents daily to the CPM CRE, and they are reviewed for any matters that might constitute a child safeguarding issues and reported for assessment/support accordingly.
- 4.21 Training – Virtual training on CCE for professionals has been developed and will be delivered throughout the next 4 months. One session related to CCE and stereotypes has taken place with the Children's homes Managers, with a view to them then delivering the same session to keyworkers and then keyworkers to children. This received positive feedback. However, the number of courses offered post lockdown has reduced. The DDSCP are now considering how the training can be developed and delivered as a partnership and this will lead to consistent training of staff across Derby and Derbyshire.

- 4.22 Two sessions on exploitation were delivered to the voices in action group. These were face to face, the day before lockdown. One session comprised issues related to CCE and local services. The second session was related to contextual safeguarding and both were very well received, and the feedback was positive. The children picked the subject matters, which shows there is also a local need for children, in respect of understanding current trends and issues of exploitation.
- 4.23 The theme of the report is safety; there is no doubt that agencies across Derby are aware of CRE as a child protection concern and are committed to safeguarding children from these risks. However, there are limitations to what coordinated work can be achieved with virtual meetings and virtual strategies that require broader development to be more effective.
- 4.24 Further, taking into consideration the children's feedback the sooner face to face working can increase, the better the opportunities for engagement and quality interventions.
- 4.25 The local and regional strategies aspire to have a consistent regional approach to all children at risk of exploitation, regardless of the type of exploitation; and an equal focus on victims and offenders to improve prosecution and disruption.
- 4.26 Locally there are also plans afoot to embed the contextual safeguarding framework into all child protection process to better identify, support and protect adolescents from exploitation and other forms of harm.
- 4.27 Nevertheless, with the continued development of the virtual work and working with the continued restrictions and local arrangements to deliver work (governed and monitored through the vulnerable young person's group), does offer protection and support to children at risk of CRE. Within these limitations, children identified as victims or at risk, have a clear pathway to support through generic services and LAC, child protection or child in need plans.

5. Public/stakeholder engagement

5.1

5.2

6. Other options

6.1 None to consider.

6.2

7. Financial and value for money issues

7.1

8. Legal implications

8.1 None arising directly from this report at this time.

9. Climate implications

9.1 None at this time

10. Other significant implications

10.1

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Olu Idowu, Head of Service, Legal	9.10.20
Finance	Alison Parkin, Head of Finance, Children and Young People	12.10.20
Service Director(s)		
Report sponsor	Jasmine Nembhard-Francis, Head of Service - Quality Assurance	12.10.20
Other(s)	Dr Mandy MacDonald CPM/CRE Lead	9.10. 20

Background papers:	
List of appendices:	Appendix 1- CRE COVID 19 Pandemic Strategy Appendix 2- Derby CRE Service January 2020