

## **Children in Care – Children at Risk of Exploitation**

### **Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide an update and information to the Corporate Parenting Committee on Children at Risk of Exploitation (CRE); evidence the number of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) cases referred; the impact that this has on children in care and the work that has been undertaken over the last 12 months in Derby to raise awareness and safeguard children in care from exploitation.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 To note the ongoing work being undertaken in relation to CRE.

### **Reason(s)**

- 3.1 To ensure children in care are supported to reduce the likelihood of them being exploited.

### **Supporting information**

#### **Children in Care Council Summary**

- 4.1 This report highlights children who are at risk of exploitation and demonstrates how children services and partner agencies (including schools, health, commissioned specialist services, police etc.) are working together to safeguard them. The highlights are:
  - Every child referred to the exploitation strategy receives specialist support from contracted services, a social worker and from a range of agencies. The support

is identified in the protection and disruption plan produced at the end of child in need or child protection meetings.

- Research and good practice updates are regularly sent to all managers with tools to educate them about any emerging trends and existing issues of exploitation and resources to share with children.
- There has been a multi agency review of the risk toolkit and procedures based on new and emerging themes and partnership experiences of children at risk of exploitation. The update has incorporated the recommendations from the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse and a range of government and centre of excellence reports and guidance updates. These documents support understanding of the national picture of risks to children and the disruption tactics, including legal updates required to improve responses to victims. The independent enquiry team have also produced a work booklet specifically looking at exploitation issues for LAC children, which has been incorporated with others, into the appendices of the risk assessment tool.
- Early in the year (2021), a workshop session on criminal exploitation was offered to all children's home managers and was well attended. Post meeting information and resources were shared with the teams to support their work with LAC children.
- A cross border, multi-agency audit of criminal exploitation has been completed and highlighted good responses to children at risk of modern slavery, criminality and exploitation.

- 4.2 During the last 6 months of 2021 there have been developments in children's services and the wider multi-agency partnership to better understand effectively safeguard children from exploitation. Looked after children remain increasingly vulnerable to exploitation and work has been developed with Partner agencies to ensure that these children are well supported, by educating them, their carers and the professionals working with them. There is also provision of resources to ensure knowledge is regularly updated and relevant.

- 4.3 Looked after children do go missing from care which can often increase vulnerability to exploitation and harm. There is a robust missing procedure in place which ensures that all missing episodes are responded to consistently and children are spoken to on their return. This supports them to disclose and professionals to act on any disclosure. The risk toolkit is completed and any concerns identified are addressed immediately by relevant services. There has been a very recent revision of the multiagency risk assessment, which is utilised by both Derbyshire and Derby City. This revision has enabled early identification of risk and recommendations re appropriate interventions to develop and strengthen relationships with the child, which will in turn aim to reduce risk.
- 4.4 Children in care benefit from wide ranging support, from their allocated social workers, specialist support workers from local authority contracted specialist CRE support services and independent reviewing officers. Each home has a safer neighbourhood officer attached to it too. Information about risk to children is shared via operation liberty forms and the homes share these intelligence forms regularly. This supports officers to build an intelligence picture and to direct resources to mitigate risks. Operationally, the risk of exploitation is managed via regular reviews which are independently chaired by child protection managers.

Children continue to be encouraged to attend their meetings in order to share their wishes and feelings and to shape the plans which are put in place to protect them. The more a child is involved from the offset, the better the outcome and they then feel they have some control, understanding and say over actions to safeguard them. They do not always agree or relate to the safeguarding plan but feel included and listened to.

During and following lockdown there has been participation work with children via our specialist services to understand the impact of lockdown for those at risk of exploitation. Children gave differing views about their experience, for example some felt more secure and reported better relationships at home but other's felt contained and isolated. In the main, children at risk of criminal exploitation continued to go out, go missing and were vulnerable to exploitation. The risk was considered higher because the children had limited professional or parental oversight. Anecdotally, the information from child in need and child protection meetings showed a rise in cannabis misuse and use of or carrying of weapons. The tasking meetings held with police and partners has been reviewed to ensure any identified risk is addressed and there are weekly knife crime tasking meetings held by the police monitor the use of or carrying of weapons.

Our teams in Derby try very hard to ensure that all children at risk of CRE remain within the local authority as there is evidence that the further a child is from their home authority, the more isolated and at risk they may be. This is due to being removed from their family and friendship networks and usual routines. Also, due to being new in an area they may stand out, particularly if vulnerable. However, this may be the only way they can be safeguarded in the short term. If children at risk of exploitation are placed in other local authorities the 'host' authority is notified and a risk analysis given. Safeguarding arrangements are put in place in other areas if possible and the work continues to be led by the allocated worker, who identifies support in the area the child is living in.

#### 4.5 CRE LAC Data

The numbers of LAC exposed to exploitation has been stable over the last 6 months averaging 43 children over the two quarters, but in quarter 3 there is a slight rise in referrals for LAC children referred (44). A substantial number are referrals for children outside of the authority (27).

There were 172 cases reviewed in 20/21 and up to quarter 3 (21/22), there are 174 referrals. The biggest increase in referrals was 2020/21 with 112 new referrals for the year. However up to quarter 3, in the current year, there are 23 new referrals recorded. With only 2 months to end of year it is clear that the surge in referrals is levelling off, but the data show that a number of cases were reviewed for a longer period, anecdotally I believe this relates to the increased risk presented in criminal exploitation cases, related to drugs cultures, use of weapons and drugs cultures. This includes new referrals and cases where the risks have decreased or ended up to quarter 3 2022. There are significantly more males than females referred for support with a slight reduction in the number of females referred in the data thus far, but there is time for this to increase. The majority of the males are at risk of child criminal exploitation (CCE) and the local data picture has parallels with the figures noted nationally.

Derbyshire police are considering new arrangements to manage exploitation risks and the exploitation tasking meeting has been revised to now include a range of police teams, responsible for criminal and community safety matters. This ensures that the risks are managed in a child centred way and improves information sharing re operational work and tasking. Every child on the exploitation strategy with a high-risk status will be allocated an officer from the exploitation team and every medium risk child is allocated a safer neighbourhood team officer. Where possible consistency is maintained for LAC children and the officer attached to the home or beat area from neighbourhood safeguarding will be allocated to that child.

- 4.6 The governing group for children at risk of exploitation is the Exploitation and Vulnerable Young People (EVYP) Subgroup. Safeguarding children from exploitation is a key priority for this partnership and therefore, a plan is devised that sets out the work of Derby and Derbyshire local authorities and their partners. Quarterly reports are provided to that group from CRE leads and a range of partners, which supports an understanding of the extent of the problem and the multi-agency work to address it.

CRE training has been updated with multi agency partners and has been delivered on two occasions to a range of professionals. This has been welcomed and evaluated positively by all participants for content, delivery and usefulness. Further training and workshops are planned between April and June 22.

## **Public/stakeholder engagement**

- 5.1 As noted above, there is good stakeholder engagement from statutory, education, health and voluntary sector agencies and evaluation of children and parents is encouraged at every child protection and child in need meeting. There have also been several engagement events with professionals, children and parents throughout 2021, these include:

- Children in care council – x 3 sessions.
- Parent's evening – x 2 sessions with 10 parents in total.

- The Police inspector has also met with parents independently to obtain views about policing and CRE unit activity.
- Stakeholder engagement - 5 meetings to update the CRE risk tool and procedures.
- Contracted services have continued to hold events with children and parents to understand the impact of lockdown and any emerging needs/trends.
- Children and parents have the opportunity of pre meeting contact with the chair of the meeting to give feedback and this therefore does not rely on them attending the meeting. However, attendance is strongly encouraged to hear and understand professional concerns and have the opportunity to respond to them with an independent chair.

The events were successful and were supported by the Vulnerable Children and Young People Development Officer from the safeguarding partnership (Derby) and by the specialist services manager from Catch 22. The parent's groups were put together by Safe and Sound.

The National Pandemic and subsequent 'lockdown' prevented further group-based events. However, specialist services, partners and social workers have maintained contact with children regularly.

The stakeholder engagement to develop the CRE procedures and assessment tools updates has been excellent this took place both in person and virtually. The work supported a range of agencies to provide their perspectives and learning on exploitation and to contribute to the improvement and update of the risk assessment tool and procedures.

Overall, the work of the local authority and its partners supports a better understanding of risk to children, it tackles emerging trends at the soonest opportunity and encourages participation of children, parents and partners to combat exploitation.

## **Other options**

6.1 None.

## **Financial and value for money issues**

7.1 None directly arising from this report

## **Legal implications**

8.1 None directly arising from this report.

## **Climate implications**

9.1 None directly arising from this report.

## **Other significant implications**

10. None directly arising from this report.  
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**This report has been approved by the following people:**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of sign-off</b>
<b>Legal</b>	Olu Idowu	17 January 2022
<b>Finance</b>	Janice Hadfield	18 January 2022
<b>Service Director(s)</b>	Suanne Lim	14 January 2022
<b>Report sponsor</b>		
<b>Other(s)</b>		