

Meeting Title	Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee
Report Title	Tackling Child Exploitation Strategy: So that our children and young people feel: “understood, believed, and treated like a human being. I feel my worker is interested in me and on my side. I know they don’t judge or blame me.”
Meeting Date	May 15 th 2024

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Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Cheryl Barnard
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Summary of issues: Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee recommended in March 2023, the following: 1. That the Child Exploitation Strategy is co-produced with partners and that it seeks to embed trauma informed practice and engagement with all frontline workers who may have contact with children and young people. 2. Review implementation of the Child Exploitation Strategy and, when it does so, invite representatives of Nottinghamshire Police to attend.
Recommendation(s): 1. That the planned approach of the Safeguarding Childrens Partnerships be noted 2. The strategy and performance against this strategy is brought back to Scrutiny Committee in the next 12 months.

1. Background

- 1.1 Child exploitation is a serious and growing crime. While the exploitation of children has been happening for a long time, the ways in which this now happens has evolved and increases the risks to our children.
- 1.2 Our vision is to reduce child exploitation in Nottingham, to keep children safe, so they can lead healthy lives. We commit to taking new, innovative, and evidenced based approaches, focusing on harm reduction in our communities, preventing victimisation and repeat victimisation, ensuring the lived experiences of the child sits at the centre of our approach.
- 1.3 Exploitation is a form of abuse.

- 1.4 Child exploitation occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person into an activity that results in financial or other advantage for the perpetrator or facilitator.
- 1.5 Specific types of exploitation include:
- Modern slavery (including human trafficking)
 - Sexual Exploitation
 - Criminal Exploitation
 - Radicalisation
- 1.6 Multiple types of exploitation can occur alongside one another or as part of other forms of abuse.
- 1.7 The two most prevalent forms of child exploitation are Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation.
- 1.8 Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity
- (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or
 - (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.
- 1.9 The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual.
- 1.10 Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur using technology
- 1.11 Child criminal exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity:
- in exchange for something the victim needs or wants.
 - for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator.
 - through violence or the threat of violence.
- 1.12 The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual.
- 1.13 Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. The criminal exploitation of children is not confined to county lines but can also include other forms of criminal activity such as theft, acquisitive crime, knife crimes and other forms of criminality.
- 1.14 Children and young people who are criminally exploited are more likely to be arrested and criminalised for criminal behaviour, than those individuals or groups who are exploiting them. This is because they are more likely to be easily detected and often do not recognise that they are being exploited or are experiencing threats to their safety or that of their families. In such circumstances, children and young people should be considered as children who have/are experiencing abuse and exploitation first and consideration given to protecting them as victims

2. Information and Action taken

- 2.1 Our Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-26 (attached) states our commitment is to: “Create a single whole system response, working in partnership to reduce child exploitation and extra-familial harm and protect our communities. All partners understand that anyone under 18 facing these harms, or causing harm to others, must be seen and treated as children and young people first and foremost and our success in tackling child exploitation and extra-familial harm is evaluated against this fundamental principle.”
- 2.2 The Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnerships are working collaboratively to implement our Child Exploitation strategy. We are driving this through the “Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Steering Group (this group is cross Local Authority and Safeguarding Childrens Partnerships), which meets on a quarterly basis.
- 2.3 This steering group includes representatives from the Police, Children’s Social Care, Youth Justice Service, Early Help, Education the ICB, Health providers and the National Probation Service
- 2.4 We aim to raise the profile of child exploitation to protect and safeguard children from harm. We shall achieve this by developing and maintaining effective local responses and through the delivery of an effective multi-agency strategy and delivery plan delivered by key partners through the Tackling Child Exploitation Steering Group. This includes the implementation of timely and effective risk management and the implementation of a comprehensive range of child centred interventions for children who are at risk or are victims of sexual and/or criminal exploitation.
- 2.5 The steering group has committed to introduce the multi-agency principles for Tackling Child Exploitation (Research in Practice with The Children’s Society and Safer Lives at the University of Bedfordshire 2023) and we set the context for child exploitation for both the City and the County. We agreed that we would adopt the TCE multi-agency principles to underpin our strategic planning and practice moving forward. The 8 principles underpinning our response to the exploitation of children and young people are:
- Recognise and respond to trauma
 - Be curious, evidence-informed and knowledgeable
 - Approach parents and carers as partners wherever possible
 - Create safe spaces and places for children and young people
- 2.6 We hold regular workshops to address the TCE Strategic Partnership Assessment, where we break into discussion groups to groups focusing on the narrative journey of child exploitation both nationally and locally. This involves all partners assessing themselves against the 8 principles using the [Research in Practice Partnership](#)

Reflective Tool This then informs and populates our action plan which includes short and long term planning to support partnerships in improvement activities across all organisations individually and collectively.

- 2.7 There is strong commitment from both Senior Leadership Groups for the Safeguarding Children's Partnerships to deliver this piece of work jointly and to multi-agency practice that has a shared purpose and direction with a focus on relationships and a strengths-based vision.
- 2.8 The 8 practice principles are central to our approach. Delivering these so that they are understood and embedded is our challenge and opportunity to impact positively on the lives of our children and young people. You will note for example that principle 5 is to "recognise and respond to trauma."
- 2.9 Principle 6 is that we all must "Be curious, evidence-informed and knowledgeable" Each of the principles and the 4P's model (Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare) demonstrate our commitment to working together to "create a single whole system response, working in partnership to reduce child exploitation and extra-familial harm"
- 2.10 There is a new Children at Risk of Exploitation Team (CaRE) in the police and the ambition for this being a multi-disciplinary team covering both city and county is an example of our commitment and ambition. Representatives from both LA childrens services team spend time each week co-located at Oxclose Lane Police Station.
- 2.11 Rob Griffin Assistant Chief Constable for Nottinghamshire Police and Strategic Leadership Group Chair for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Council's Safeguarding Children's Partnership has stated the following:

"Working Together 2018/2023 highlights the threat that children may face from outside their families that may make them vulnerable to abuse or exploitation. Until recently the neighbouring local authorities of Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Council have provided their own response to tackling child exploitation alongside their statutory partners. However, as the chair for the Strategic Leadership (SLG) for both Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire I am pleased to introduce Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire's Safeguarding Children's Partnerships joint commitment to tackling child exploitation.

The commitment and our practice are underpinned by the multi-agency practice principles for responding to child exploitation and extra familial harm (Research in Practice with The Children's Society and Safer Lives at the University of Bedfordshire 2023) which are evidence-based drawing on academic research, practice wisdom and lived experience. They also support our partnerships commitments to multi-agency practice that has a shared purpose and direction with a focus on relationships and a strengths-

based vision of how we provide the right help, at the right time, to the right children and their families across Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire.

Alongside this piece of work within Nottinghamshire Police force we have brought together our child exploitation expertise in to one Children at Risk of Exploitation Team (CaRE) and there is a commitment to this being a multi-disciplinary team covering both city and county.

This feels like an exciting time for both Safeguarding Partnerships and hopefully one of the first of many opportunities for us to bring together capacity not only in terms of resource but our passion, commitment, and dedication to safeguard children in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County against abuse and exploitation.”

- 2.12 This is priority area of work and we can already start to see changes in culture and practice across our city and county. We have a commitment and determination to drive this transformation for our children, young people and their families
- 2.13 The impact of applying these principles to the work we do will be critical in impacting and improving the lived experience of our children and families. This does entail a significant shift in some cultures that exist, and the strategy will be crucial in developing, delivering, assessing, and revising our work with exploitation.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 Our collective aim is to create a whole system response that understands risk, and identifies when exploitation occurs, protects and supports children who are at risk of or subject to, child exploitation and disrupts and pursues those who target children for the purpose of abusing them
- 3.2 We recognise that identifying, understanding, tackling, and preventing the exploitation of children is a complex task that requires a coordinated collaborative approach from partners and work with the victim/survivor, their family, and the community.
- 3.3 All partners have committed to undertake and complete the strategic assessment over the next 12 months. This work is already well underway. Each of the 8 commitments will involve separate workshops to deliver our strategy.
- 3.4 The Strategic Group will be responsible for ensuring training is provided across the partnership to enable practitioners to be skilled in identifying exploitation, and knowledgeable about how to respond appropriately to safeguard children and young people. This will include in person awareness raising events, e-learning utilising existing platforms and access to virtual reality training that is already in place for Childrens Services.
- 3.5 A programme of training is to be designed and delivered to all staff across services working with children and young people. The partnership will ensure that this is delivered in an effective way through identifying training that can be cascaded, as

well as appropriate online training modules. The Strategic Group will be responsible for approaching relevant Safeguarding and Community Safety Boards to identify funding to support the rollout of appropriate training for the workforce.

Training for the workforce should include:

- Recognising the signs of child exploitation in children and young people
- Awareness of vulnerable locations across the area
- Understanding the association between Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation
- How to share intelligence relating to child exploitation concerns
- Procedures relating to safeguarding and protecting children and young people from child exploitation. Nottingham City Childrens Services has thorough operating procedures in place for its colleagues.
- Knowledge of thresholds and processes for accessing available support and interventions for those at risk of child exploitation.
- Understanding the link between Missing children and exploitation.
- Preventative child exploitation interventions for those within Early Help Services
- Intensive safeguarding child exploitation interventions for those within Youth Offending and Social Care Services

- 3.6 The partnership will also be responsible for raising awareness regarding child exploitation amongst children and young people themselves, so we can prevent young people from becoming exploited at the earliest point. Preventative programmes should be delivered in schools, and where possible to parents and professionals.
- 3.7 Presentations have already taken place with Designated Safeguarding Leads from the education sector.
- 3.8 The Strategic Group will be responsible for approaching relevant Safeguarding and Community Safety Boards to identify funding to support the delivery of awareness raising programmes for children and young people. For example, this will include the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- 3.9 We shall build on the opportunity of co-locating services within the CaRE team based in Oxclose Lane, Nottingham.
- 3.10 There are 3 statements written below that we have challenged ourselves with in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire.

“Our local strategy, policies and practices for child exploitation and extra-familial harm make it explicitly clear that anyone under 18 facing these harms, or causing harm to others, must be seen and treated as children and young people first and foremost. All partners understand this and our success in tackling child exploitation and extra-familial harm is evaluated against this foundational Principle.”

“Any language that could contribute to labelling or victim-blaming is robustly challenged in our local partnership, and we continuously reflect on how our use of language is interlinked with our perception of children and young people, and how this impacts on the services and support children and young people receive.”

“We are confident that the child and young person-centred approach is implemented and practised in a consistent way across our partnership. Leaders and staff in all agencies ensure children and young people are not blamed or held responsible for the harm they face. Children and young people are seen holistically.”

- 3.11 These are exacting standards that our children and young people expect from us, and we demand from ourselves. We have made progress over the last year but more needs to be done at pace to ensure that all organisations and agencies policies and practices, behaviours and cultures support the above statements.
- 3.12 Each partner has committed to holding itself individually and collectively accountable to the 8 principles that the above statements support. There is much work still to do but there is a collective will and desire to deliver on our strategy, to change practice, behaviour and culture to impact on and improve outcomes for all of our children and young people.