

Child Criminal Exploitation/’County Lines’ – Report for Scrutiny Panel outlining Department of Childrens’ Integrated Services response

- This report follows on from the one presented at the Scrutiny Panel in November by Community Protection colleagues outlining the data, understanding and analysis of the emerging issue of ‘county lines’ for Nottingham City
- The Panel is asked to note the strategic and operational response led by Children’s Services in relation to the identified and emerging risks linked to child criminal exploitation.
- There has been significant development within Children’s Directorate, together with colleagues across the Council and broader partnerships across the city, to reduce the level and impact of harm caused by children and young people being drawn into violence, particularly weapon-enabled offending and with the rising challenge of ‘county lines’. Crucial to service developments to tackle this emerging issue has been the acknowledgement that this is a safeguarding as well as public protection issue and that children’s own victimisation and experience of trauma is a critical factor in them becoming entrenched in violent lifestyles.
- The Child **Criminal Exploitation Panel (CCEP)**, chaired monthly by the Head of Service for Early Help, began in July 2018 and the process is starting to evidence progress from identification of concerns, through the completion of a ‘toolkit’ to assess Child Criminal Exploitation Panel to the outcomes of strategy meetings and other activity to respond to the risks and needs identified. Attendees at the panel include colleagues from Childrens Services, Community Protection and Youth Justice Police leads for knife crime and ‘County Lines’, Substance Misuse, CAMHS, Health, Education and where appropriate the voluntary sector.

Colleagues are asked to complete the toolkit when there are concerns about criminal exploitation and this should be done in conjunction with other colleagues, including Youth Justice, CAMHS etc wherever appropriate.

The names of children referred for discussion are circulated prior to the meeting to enable research and information gathering to be completed and shared. The CCEP process enables information sharing, a focused discussion and a quality assurance role with regard to:

- Ensuring all agencies are working together.
- Identification of links with other young people, concerning locations/venues.
- All possible powers and options are being used to safeguard the victim and disrupt and identify barriers to the prosecution of alleged perpetrators.

The panel chair agrees multi-agency actions to safeguard children and young people and promote their welfare, and reduce their risk of harm to others. The panel has also been able to commit some Office Police Crime Commissioner funds, using a ‘personalised commissioning’ model to ensure the voluntary sector is funded to support the diversion of children from exploitation.

Information relating to actual or suspected perpetrators of criminal exploitation is also shared when it is reasonable to believe that doing so will prevent a crime and/or safeguard children.

Identifying opportunities in education and employment is a critical factor in providing good outcomes for young people vulnerable to exploitation as well as support for their families and carers.

Keeping young people safe in the short and long term is a whole system, all service approach with children and their families at the heart of this work.

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