

Meeting: Children, Education and Skills Sub Committee

Date: 14 January 2021

Title: Child Exploitation and developments within North Tyneside

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Service: HECS

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

To provide an update to the sub committee in relation to work undertaken in 2020 around exploitation including: Missing, Slavery, Exploitation (both criminal and sexual) and Trafficked (MSET).

The report will detail key priorities, work to-date to strengthen North Tyneside and Partners responses to exploitation and more specifically in relation to MSET and work planned in the coming months of 2021.

2. Introduction

Child Sexual Exploitation does not happen within a vacuum so it is important to understand the correlation between those children and young people who are vulnerable to the spectrum of what we would call MSET.

Since this subcommittee was last updated around our approach to exploitation within North Tyneside and more specifically Child Sexual Exploitation, there has been a significant amount of work undertaken to further strengthen how we safeguard and report on those children who are at risk of or are being exploited within North Tyneside.

Throughout 2020 there has been a working group meeting to review and develop our policies, process, responses and data sets in relation to MSET.

We knew moving into the review that we had well established multi-agency MSET arrangements which operate across the Northumbria Police area, with each local authority having their own MSET panel, chaired by a DI for Child Abuse and Protection. The processes within this were working well but we felt that there was an opportunity to

strengthen them further, whilst raising awareness across a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

3. **Details**

We knew by strengthening several key areas we would be able to provide a robust safeguarding response both internally, with partner agencies and in the wider community by raising awareness. In doing this we identified 6 areas of focus:

- Processes and documents, to be updated in-line with evidence-informed changes to the challenges faced by children and young people;
- Risk assessment tool, to incorporate all levels of risk associated with exploitation and align this with Signs of Safety to allow consistency across the workforce;
- Referral pathways, to be improved and clear;
- Case management system to track and capture recording of exploitation;
- Need to strengthen our strategic oversight of the arrangements;
- Need to raise awareness of exploitation across the partnership and in the community.

What we know about Our Young People:

- We know in North Tyneside there is a small cohort of young people where we have worries around risk taking and safeguarding which is not always as a response to the parenting that they receive.
- We know that this cohort of young people receive support from a range of practitioners, through a range of different plans, each with a slightly different focus;
- That there was an opportunity to integrate our support to better engage these young people to reduce risks and build safety;
- Statutory child protection processes do not necessarily meet the needs of these young people.

What we Have Done:

- Agreed Contextual Safeguarding is one of our Multi – Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) key priority areas.
- Reviewed and re-launched the MSET Strategic Group;
- Scoped and designed a new multi-agency Adolescent Service which will seek to reduce a range of risky behaviors and safeguarding worries outside of the family home with MSET being the main referral route into the service; (Further Information can be provided in relation to this development should it be required)
- Reviewed our MSET process and the supporting documentation, including our Policy, reporting governance, scrutiny and oversight and Risk Assessment form;
- Developed awareness materials around exploitation for dissemination across the community and partnership;
- Introduced a specialist module into the social care data recording system (LCS/EHM) case management system,
- Worked with our data team around developing an easy to understand MSET vulnerability dataset;

- Held workshops across Children's Services' teams to raise awareness of the ongoing improvement work and the use of the specialist module.
- Our new MSET processes have been agreed with Police and partners and have been through the approval processes including the Executive Partnership Board which has oversight of North Tyneside Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

Our next Steps include launching our new MSET processes in February 2021. We will also plan and undertake awareness raising sessions for the community, partnership and council so everyone understands and can respond to MSET within North Tyneside. Our adolescence team will be launched which will be pivotal in providing intensive support to those identified as being at risk of exploitation, including Missing, trafficked and slavery.

What do we know about Children and Young People who are currently at risk of or are experiencing exploitation in North Tyneside:

We know that often children and young people who are at risk of or are being exploited are those that are reported missing by their carers on a regular basis. From the start of October until the 31st December 2020 there were 84 reported instances of a young person being missing. This related to 21 young people. Of those 21 young people 17 were all returned within less than 24 hours with a high proportion only being missing for a few hours.

There were 4 young people who had missing episodes that lasted longer than 24 hours with 1 being missing for 4 days. In each of the missing instances the young person is offered a return home interview within 72 hours. This allows us to understand any harm that the young person may have suffered or be likely to suffer from people they may have been with, provide information on how to stay safe, identify any patterns that cause worry and understand the reasons why they may have been missing.

The young person who was missing for 4 days is a 17-year-old male who is in our care. This young person had been previously Sexually Exploited and due to escalating worries and being unable to keep him safe in his identified placement he spent some time in a secure environment in Glasgow and then a secure step-down provision. There was a planned move back to North Tyneside in 2020 with agreement from the young person and an intensive support plan devised. In the return home interview, the young person advised that he wanted to go and see friends in Glasgow as they had arranged a party. There was a strategy meeting held which allowed plans to be put in place around disruption and work with the British Transport Police.

When a child or young person has been reported missing and if it has been 72 hours, (or sooner pending worries) a strategy meeting would be convened on an open case to the social work team or escalated into a statutory framework. This allows for information to be shared with all professionals, an action plan to be developed and an agreement as to when further meetings will take place. The Assistant Director is sighted on all children and young people who are reported missing.

Since the commencement of the global pandemic in March 2020 there has been a decrease in the number of our young people who go missing.

Over the last quarter of 2020 we have had one young male who was 16 years old placed into Secure Accommodation due to worries that he was being criminally exploited and involved in County Lines. He was involved with a well known gang from the Newcastle area, had spent time in London and was found in the Wiltshire area with a slash to his

stomach and a small cut to his ear. Police at the time kept him in police protection for his own safety due to the people he was associating with and the action they could take, they also moved to safeguard his mother and younger sibling who lived in the Newcastle area. The Secure Placement was ended on 31st December 2020 and a transition plan put in place with high levels of support to keep this young person safe.

Although we have fully reviewed our MSET processes and devised a new policy this is yet to launch and so we have continued to operate our MSET pre and full panel throughout 2020. Both pre MSET and full panel continue to meet once a month to review those cases that are referred in. During the last quarter of 2020 there were 13 cases referred into Pre MSET with 2 progressing to full panel. It was the same young female who is in our care that was heard at both October and November's full MSET panel.

Of the 13 referred in to pre MSET during this time 6 were male and 7 female. Two of which were identified as being at risk of CSE (1 male and 1 female). The age range of these young people was 14-17 year-old.

Work has taken place to develop a specific pathway within our recording system for those who are at risk of exploitation and our data performance team are currently working on a dashboard that will provide specific information in relation to those children and young people that are missing, that have been to pre and full MSET and those that are at risk of exploitation. This pathway will be expanded further during 2021 to include the new MSET paperwork. This will greatly enhance our data set, giving themes and understanding for targeted work to take place and / or practice development. It will also support the development of the Adolescent team and the work that they will undertake with our young people.

Background Information

The following documents have been used in the compilation of this report and may be inspected at the offices of the author.

Appendices

Please see document re plan on a page and awareness raising information