

Child Criminal Exploitation

What needs to be done?

- a) What is the definition of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) being used in the city? If different definitions are being applied by partners, how does this impact upon the effectiveness of joint working?

CCE is accepted as child abuse that involves a young person being coerced or manipulated into committing crimes that benefit an individual or organised crime gang. Whether the young person benefits financially or not, or consents to be involved or not. It would still be regarded by Police or professionals in Health and Social Care, as abuse and exploitation. Definitions of CCE are open to interpretation and it is often an individual worker's understanding of what is CCE which would determine the response and support provided. This can lead to partners not working cohesively as risks and vulnerabilities are deemed differently. However, attending daily morning briefings as with the EMPOWERU hub allows for discussion and a more co-ordinated approach to disruption.

- b) What is the current scale and nature of CCE in Birmingham? How has this picture changed over the past four years? What are the projected risks and threats for the future?

CCE has existed for decades. If we have adults committing crime, there will be those who will use the young and vulnerable in order to evade detection by the Police and avoid incarceration. It has long been accepted within the criminal fraternity, that young people are dealt with more leniently in court and are given less custodial sentencing to avoid criminalising the young. This is the mantra used as a convincer to groom the young and deceive them into thinking, nothing serious will happen if they're caught. Unfortunately, this is believed and leads to these young people co-opting their friends to also become involved. There are young people who are in positions where they're the main provider within their family and their family come to rely on the money, they bring in. Hence parents ignoring what goes on. CCE remains a constant within society, to deal with the effects of poverty and providing a sense of belonging to young people who feel alone and unprotected. In terms of risks and threats for the future, there will be continued cases of abuse; in all its forms, young people developing mental illnesses as a result of trauma and their experiences, and more young people criminalised, which will affect their career prospects and ability to travel to other countries. CCE is still a big concern in Birmingham for young males and females, however it continues that young males are still more likely to be supported within the criminal justice system and young females supported through social care. Our data for CYP reporting CCE has stayed consistently the same for the past 4 years.

C) How are organisations informed by evidence-based practice? How do organisations capture 'what works' and 'what doesn't work', and how has this information changed their services? How is Birmingham learning from other areas, and how is this learning being implemented to make a difference? Child Criminal Exploitation 04

Via our data and analysis, we will capture the work we do with a young person in order to reflect and assess what is working, where the gaps are and areas for improvement. This process allows us as an organisation to develop knowledge base and establish a foundation to cultivate expertise. Outcome monitoring tools are used by our practitioners, with CYP that measure improvements / lack of improvement holistically in a young person's life i.e., Use of time. Where areas of good practice have had a significant positive impact of the young person this good practice has been shared within the team. For example, assertive outreach, styles of engagement. Up skilling the staff team to be able to deliver impactful interventions with appropriate training and working in partnership with other specialist agencies e.g., Barnardo's, red thread & St Giles. We will share best practice internally & externally, attend briefings, events, meetings etc to share knowledge bases, and highlight lessons learned. This is where any research, reports, or approaches would be discussed and disseminated that have any evidence-based learning to share.

d) What is the current partnership strategy in place to address CCE in the city? How is this strategy being supported and delivered through partners? What are the partnership mechanisms for collaboration, and how effective are they? How effective is its governance structure?

The NRM is the strategy used nationally which encourages all partners within Health and Social Care and the Police to adopt this mechanism. However, this strategy is not perfect as the deadlines for feedback or escalating to the next stage is not always adhered to, and the actions taken are not always adequate to safeguard the young person and their family. There have been occasions where the strategy taken using the NRM mechanism has been counterproductive and can put the young person/family in a more vulnerable position.

Aquarius has a specialist exploitation partnership worker from Barnardo's. This service level: agreement has allowed for appropriate and effective information sharing and expertise from both organisations to help disrupt CSE /CCE exploitation. Aquarius attends daily morning briefings with EMPOWERU hub with other statutory and third sector organisations to share information and allow for better collaboration.

e) Who are the key statutory organisations and what are their respective roles in addressing CCE? What investment is provided to these organisations, and has this changed over the past four years? What are the current plans for investment to meet future demands?

West Midlands Police, NRM, Local Authority Birmingham Children's Trust – Including Youth Offending Services.

The VRU teams have made a considerable presence & impacted across the city and are laying down foundations for practice within the education, courts procedures and faith alliance networks, enabling better connections with hard-to-reach CYP who are at risk of CCE.

f) What is the role of third sector and community-based organisations involved in tackling CCE? What are the key challenges they face, and what are the solutions they have identified to tackle these challenges? How effective is the cross sector working?

Historically, the third sector has always been instrumental in working within this environment, sometimes having the ability to identify CCE before statutory agencies have recognised the issue, due to their ability to be more flexible in the delivery of their service and therefore often able to reach more young people who are being abused through exploitation. Sometimes the key challenges are getting statutory agencies to see the worth of the third sector and recognise their expertise in this area. Statutory agencies have statutory guidelines to follow, which sometimes makes them unapologetically, risk averse. This sometimes can make discussions difficult because statutory officers can come with their own agenda and preconceived ideas of what they want; in contrast to what works or is needed. In order to overcome some of these obstacle's services have embedded themselves into partnerships and focus groups etc. To get their voices heard and attempt to influence the agenda to be more effective. This has assisted moving the agenda forward, which isn't perfect, (Third Sector Organisations need to be able to keep their own identity, whilst embedding practice within statutory organisations) but has allowed for more partnership working with statutory agencies. Which will only add to benefitting multidisciplinary working. Ensuring staff are invited to briefings, DPM's, Strats and other multi agency meetings would allow for more effective information sharing

Aquarius currently works in partnership with BCT, YOS and the VRU.

g) How does the Council and Partners identify and assess risk for children and young people together for CCE? How are they responding to the challenge in identifying girls and young women as victims? How are the Council and Partners working together to deliver effective interventions when children and young people are likely to be both victims and involved with committing offences at the same time?

Through NRM referral, Strategy meetings, Child In Need meetings, Child Protection meetings, Disruption Panel Meetings, Empower U hub daily briefings. Through these processes young people are discussed to highlight risks and vulnerabilities to decide on a collective way forward and a joint working mechanism to safeguard the CYP and their family.

The conversations that happen within these forums, recognise the vulnerability of girls and young women, and attempt to mitigate the risks attributed to female victims of CCE/CSE. There is a concerted effort to assist with understanding of what is happening on a street level, and the Local Authority, Police and partners are attempting to work together to achieve this in parts. However, there is room for improvement, particularly with having a consistent approach, as some young people are not given the same consideration when looking at the crime committed and victim status. In essence, sometimes victim blaming can slip into practice, which results in inconsistent decisions being made by professionals.

As an organisation our staff are trained to identify and screen for CCE & CSE in CYP and will feed this information into statutory bodies (i.e., we will refer to MASH with the screening tool completed, if the CYP is not open to statutory services or escalate concerns to the YOS officer or social worker if the CYP is already open to services.

h) How are the Council and Partners working with families to support children and young people at risk, or involved with CCE? How are schools and partners working together to reduce the risk of school exclusion?

The work done to support young people and their families is usually pulled together via a statutory process, i.e a child protection plan or child in need plan. When CCE is identified, organisations are included who have strategies to support the young person and their family who find themselves in this position, and they can manage the peripheral issues, through raising awareness with family members, devising safety plans and risk management plans with family members etc. There is an expectation for the NRM process to be undertaken by statutory services once a concern of CCE has been identified by a professional working with a young person or family.

In regard of schools and a reduction in exclusions, it depends on the school and the strength of their pastoral team. Schools focus is teaching and learning, and they are not always sympathetic to the needs of young people outside of education. They have their sharing panel process, which postpones exclusion, however, this doesn't always work. There is no further contingency once a manage move fails and a student can spend an unnecessary amount of time at home once exclusion happens. Exclusion has been a recognised issue of young people falling outside of the net into anti-social and criminalised behaviours, amongst other areas of vulnerability. This has always presented a gap in safeguarding young people, schools and partners need to get better at working together effectively to resolve this gap.

The pathfinders project and the Violence Reduction Unit (AP Taskforce) are both projects we provide substance misuse specialist workers to. These project work within schools and Alternative Provisions and support the whole family unit with socio-economic issues that may impact on a CYP attendance at school, looking to reduce the risk to the CYP from crime and anti-social behaviour and the risks associated with long term school exclusion.