



Work Outline / Terms of Reference

Child Criminal Exploitation

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Our key question:	How are the Council and Partners working together to reduce the risks of criminal exploitation for young people?
1. How is O&S adding value through this work?	<p>The criminal exploitation of our young people remains a significant concern for the Council and its partners. As the youngest city in the UK, this is a major and also growing safeguarding challenge for us all to face. Birmingham City Council Overview and Scrutiny has previously undertaken an Inquiry - ‘We Need to Get it Right Health Check in Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation’. It is critical that Birmingham is ready to meet the changing nature of exploitation. This Inquiry will seek to explore whether there is effective joint working in place to prevent Child Criminal Exploitation now and in the future and identify improvements to make young people safer in the future.</p> <p><u>What is Child Criminal Exploitation?</u> - ‘occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child ... The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology’ (County Lines Exploitation: Practice Guidance for Youth Offending Teams and Frontline Practitioners, Ministry of Justice 2019). This definition acknowledges CCE’s binary nature and herein one of its many complexities, i.e., a young person may be both a victim and an offender at the same time.</p> <p>CCE often occurs within ‘county lines’ drug-dealing operations. ‘County lines’ is a term used to describe gangs involved in exporting illegal drugs within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines. They are likely to exploit children to move and store the drugs, and will often use coercion, intimidation, and violence (Criminal Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults: County Lines, Home Office, 2017).</p>



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The trauma of young people's experiences is highly likely to have a long-term impact on their future and of future generations. Therefore, an effective and robust partnership approach towards tackling CCE now is critical.

The '[Punishing Abuse](#)' report (Dr Alex Chard, March 2021) was commissioned by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (WMPCC) and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). This report researched 80 cases of young people known to Youth Offending Teams across the West Midlands (including Birmingham). It identified that:

- Majority are 'educationally disenfranchised leaving (them) vulnerable (to) social exclusion, exploitation, and crime'
- Girls are the most at-risk victims experiencing 'highest levels of abuse and exploitation'.
- Evidence of Criminal Exploitation including through county lines. Nevertheless, there may be higher levels of exploitation as there is a significant chance of under-recording, in particular related to the sexual exploitation of boys.
- 31% of these cases (including all cases relating to girls) had resulted in multi-agency referrals for sexual exploitation.

This research also concluded that known risk factors 'appear to have created a virtual escalator' whereby young people are 'propelled towards crime and the criminal justice system', and which leads to their exploitation and abuse. These risk factors include:

- Poverty
- Physical disabilities or poor mental health
- Family or individual substance misuse
- Known to Criminal Justice system
- Known to Social Care services
- Experienced parental loss
- Family violence
- Family criminality
- Victim or abuse and violence in the community
- Disrupted education
- Special Educational Needs

It highlights 'preventing children from being pushed onto this escalator' as the challenging strategic issue facing organisations.



	<p>In any area, the partnership landscape to address CCE is complex and multi-layered. There are challenges in identifying young people at risk and the appropriate type of responses to deliver. Intervention plans combine responses across statutory and third sector organisations, as well as directly with families. The nature of Child Criminal Exploitation also changes, which puts pressure to plan and adapt. The size of Birmingham increases this complexity and challenge.</p> <p>Birmingham City Council’s Council Plan links:</p> <p><u>Grand Challenges</u></p> <p>Opportunities for Children and Young People</p> <p><u>Be Bold Outcomes</u></p> <p>A Bold Inclusive Birmingham</p> <p>A Bold Safe Birmingham</p> <p><u>Corporate Priorities</u></p> <p>8. Support and enable all children and young people to thrive</p> <p>9. Make the city safer</p> <p>10. Protect and safeguard vulnerable citizens</p> <p>A new round of Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) was announced by the Government in March 2022. These new inspections will consider the multi-agency response to the criminal exploitation of children in Birmingham.</p>
<p>2. What needs to be done?</p>	<p><u>Key Lines of enquiry:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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? 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? 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?



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	<p>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?</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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?</p> <p><u>Equalities Impact</u> This will be monitored throughout the course of the inquiry.</p>
<p>3. What timescale do we propose to do this in?</p>	<p>A report to City Council is proposed for June 2023.</p>
<p>4. What outcomes are we looking to achieve?</p>	<p>Our overall outcome is to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce the number of children and young people becoming at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation 2. Improve the effectiveness of partnership working to reduce the risk of Child Criminal Exploitation
<p>5. What is the best way to achieve these outcomes and what routes will we use?</p>	<p>This is an Inquiry proposed by the Education and Children’s Social Care OSC and will be undertaken by this Committee. As the Housing and Neighbourhoods OSC has the statutory function as the Crime and Disorder Committee for Birmingham under their</p>



remit, they will be kept informed about the progress of this Inquiry.

Call for Evidence:

- Public – citizens and communities will have the opportunity to provide information as part of a 'Call for Evidence'. We will be particularly focusing on hearing about the experiences and capturing the views of families, who have had children at risk of, or involved with, Child Criminal Exploitation.
- Members – all Members will be invited to provide their views.
- Stakeholders – relevant stakeholders will be identified to provide evidence to the Inquiry. They may be local, regional, or national stakeholders.

Stakeholders invited to provide evidence include:

- Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (BSMHFT)
- Birmingham City Council
- Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (BSCP)
- Birmingham Children's Trust
- Birmingham Community Safety Partnership
- Schools (primary and secondary)
- Forward Thinking Birmingham
- Lived Experiences
- Other Local Authority areas
- Probation Service
- Third sector organisations (Aquarius; Barnardo's; Catch 22; Children's Society; Choices Resettlement; Inside Out Resettlement Services; KIKIT; Lighthouse Consortium; NSPCC; NWG Network; St Giles; Victim Support)
- West Midlands Police
- West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner
- Violence Reduction Partnership

Task and Finish Group – this will be set up comprising Members from the Education and Children's Social Care Overview. The Task and Finish Group will be chaired by Councillor Des Hughes. This group will monitor the progress of the Inquiry.



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Member / Officer Leads

Lead Member:	Councillor Des Hughes (Chair, Inquiry Task and Finish Group)
Membership of Inquiry Task and Finish Group:	Councillors: Shabina Bano; Morriam Jan, Shehla Moledina, and Simon Morrall
Lead Officer:	Amelia Murray, Overview and Scrutiny Manager