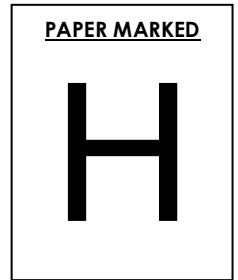


**POLICE AND CRIME  
COMMISSIONER FOR  
LEICESTERSHIRE**

**ETHICS, INTEGRITY AND  
COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE**



Report of	<b>OFFICE OF CHIEF CONSTABLE</b>
Subject	<b>CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION</b>
Date	<b>FRIDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2020 – 2.00PM</b>
Author	<b>DCI GAVIN DRUMMOND</b>

**Purpose of Report**

1. To provide the Ethics, Integrity and Complaints committee with an overview of Child Criminal Exploitation and an insight into the Force's approach. The report will provide an outline of what processes are currently in place, how these have developed over the past few months and the force's plans for the future.

**Recommendations**

2. The Committee is recommended to discuss the contents of the report.

**Ethical Dilemmas**

3. Many children who are subject to criminal exploitation will come to the attention of youth justice services as offenders. Due to the criminal nature of those individuals engaging in the exploitation of children, the level of offending is likely to be significantly serious often resulting in serious violent crime. In circumstances where the child does not identify themselves as victims of exploitation and their behaviour appears seemingly consensual it is often very problematic for the Police and Partners to identify whether they are being criminally exploited or not?

**When should a child or young person be treated as a victim of criminal exploitation vs the need for a criminal justice outcome?**

**Body of report**

4. Tackling Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is a key priority for Leicestershire Police in conjunction with partners across Leicester, Leicestershire and

Rutland. It is the responsibility of all agencies across the partnership to identify, safeguard and robustly tackle Child Criminal Exploitation.

5. 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. 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.
6. Examples of Child Criminal Exploitation can include being involved in a County Lines drug dealing operation, acquisitive theft, slave labour and sexual abuse.
7. All Children are vulnerable to criminal and sexual exploitation, not just specific groups. Examples include:
  - a. Grooming affluent children attending public school, who are less likely to be identified as “drug running” by the Police.
  - b. Targeting vulnerable older children, such as those who are neglected and less likely to be reported missing by parents.
  - c. Targeting other groups of children who may be particularly vulnerable, such as those who have special educational needs, looked after children, children with poor mental health and children not in full time education.
8. A recent audit (June 2020) of Leicestershire Police crime and intelligence systems identified 85 children as linked to CCE. Amongst those 85 children there were a number of vulnerability risk indicators, the most prominent being:
  - a. Weapons
  - b. Missing from home
  - c. Drugs
  - d. Crime
  - e. Sexual abuse
  - f. Mental Health
  - g. School
  - h. Finance
9. The subject of children or young people being detained in Police custody is a contentious area with Police officers having to try and strike a balance between the rights of the victim, the requirement to complete a prompt and effective investigation and the needs of the child or young person.

## **Force Approach**

### **Processes**

10. The Force has the following CCE leads in place:

Chief Officer Lead	ACC David Sandall
Strategic Lead	DCI Gavin Drummond
Dedicated Investigative Lead	DI Jen Heggs

11. The safeguarding management of Children linked to CCE is completed with the Force Safeguarding hub based at Wigston Police Station. Within the hub there are a number of co-located agencies including the Police, Social Care representatives from both City and County local authorities and also health.
12. The aims of the Multi Agency Safeguarding hub are as follows and are in line with the regional standards for exploited children.
  - **Prevent** by raising awareness of CSE and CCE amongst young people, parents, carers and communities, and to work together to provide children and young people with strategies to recognise, avoid, report and exit CSE and criminal exploitation at any stage and to remove opportunities for potential perpetrators across the County. Direct work with children and young people and families using Signs of Safety methodology. Champions in each service area ensuring an expertise within services.
  - **Prepare** by providing strong leadership, effective systems, gathering of intelligence and partnership working to tackle CSE and CCE, by recognising the problem of CSE and CCE and criminal exploitation of children and young people.
  - **Protect** by safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, supporting professionals, parents, carers, families and communities who may be at risk of CSE and CCE, identifying potential victims, risks, patterns and perpetrators at the earliest opportunity. Daily risk management meetings highlight risks and actions needed. Weekly meetings consider those most at risk to ensure appropriate action is undertaken. A co-ordinated response from the team relating to those children and young people that are missing.
  - **Pursue** by investigating, disrupting, arresting and prosecuting those who seek to coerce, criminally exploit and abuse children and young people, whilst supporting victims and their families effectively through the criminal justice system. Disruption tactics continue to be used to consider creative ways of minimising access to children and young people. Mapping exercises undertaken to ensure perpetrators are identified early.
- 13 The force's approach to recording concerns regarding children and young people linked to CCE is through the completion of a Public Protection Notice. This is a universally used approach recognised across the partnership for how we share safeguarding information.
- 14 When the completed PPN is received within the Safeguarding Hub they share the content with children services and a decision is made on whether a strategy discussion is to be had (if there is grounds to believe the child may be at risk of significant harm). At the same time a further assessment specifically relating to CCE is carried out and a multi-agency case discussion is held to agree the appropriate risk through the Daily Risk Management Meeting (DRMM).

- 15 The risk levels are as such:
- a. Low Risk - A child or young person who is at low risk of being involved in a gang / gang activity. (There are few risk factors present).
  - b. Medium Risk – A Child or young person who is likely to be linked to others known to be involved in gang activity and is at risk if being drawn into the behaviours.
  - c. High Risk – A child or young person who is likely to be involved with a gang and the behaviour could already be entrenched. A level of control / coercion will be present and change of lifestyle will be difficult.
- 16 A weekly meeting to review the multi-agency response and safeguarding plan to medium and high risk exploited children across LLR. The meeting will also review exploitation perpetrators, high risk geographical areas and high risk and medium risk children that have been missing within the previous 7 days.
- 17 A monthly Child Exploitation multi agency meeting is held to drive the operational delivery of the LLR safeguarding arrangements. The group will monitor the arrangements through analysing multi-agency data and outcomes to influence practice and coordinate approaches. The group will lead on identification of themes, patterns and trends relating to CCE.
18. There are existing Policies with Leicestershire Police in relation to dealing with children and young people in Police custody. The Youth offender case disposal policy is the current guidance which offers a decision making matrix regarding charge, based on a gravity factor system and was originally drawn up by the Association of Chief Police Officers in consultation with the Crown Prosecution Service, the Home Office, the Youth Justice Board and officials of the Joint Youth Justice Unit (reporting to the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Children, Schools and Families).
- 19 With the developments around the Modern Day Slavery Act 2015 and County Lines/Criminal Exploitation there is further need to consider the vulnerability and exploitation of any youth offender in custody. Section 45 of the Modern Day Slavery Act introduced a defence for victims who are compelled to commit criminal offences as a direct consequence of being a victim of slavery or exploitation.
- 20 The key factors which are relevant in deciding whether to charge, caution or conditionally caution a young person for an offence are:
- Any admission of the offence
  - The seriousness of the offence
  - The previous offending history of the youth
  - Whether the disposal supports and reduces the risk of re-offending
  - Whether it is in the public's interest to prosecute the young person
  - Welfare/interest of the child and young person
  - Age of the child/young person

21 The triangle of risk assessment is a tool to offer guidance into some of the questions that an investigating officer should be considering during the course of an investigation. The principle focus within this tool is:

- Risk of harm to the public
- Risk/vulnerability of young person
- Risk of harm of offending/re offending.

### **Implications**

Financial: None

Legal: None

Equality Impact Assessment: Multi Agency Child Exploitation TOR references the Equality requirements through the partnership approach.;

Risks and Impact: Unnecessary criminalisation of Children and young people can have a profound impact on their welfare. Failure to identify where a child is being criminally exploited can lead to both physical and psychological risks to that child.

Link to Police and Crime Plan: Exploitation of Children features within the Police and Crime Plan.

### **List of Appendices**

- Working together 2018

### **Person to Contact:**

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