

**REPORT TO:** Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 9 June 2014

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Young People and Families

**SUBJECT:** Missing From Home/ Care and Child Sexual Exploitation Update

**WARDS:** Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To provide an update on the development of the Missing from Home and Care service and Child Sexual Exploitation activity.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

**1. The positive developments in the Missing from Home and Care service are noted and the proactive response to Child sexual exploitation (CSE)**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 During 2010 and 2011 the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB'S) of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington with Cheshire Constabulary, collaborated to produce a Pan Cheshire Joint Protocol for Children and Young People who run away or go missing from Home or Care. The joint protocol seeks to identify and manage the risks and ensure a consistency in approach across borders and agencies. This protocol was subsequently adopted by the Merseyside LSCB's

3.2 The protocol has been revised in April 2014 to take into account new definitions concerning children who go missing which now has 3 classifications , absent, missing and ' away from placement without authorisation.' The new protocol also defines agencies roles and responsibilities including the collation and analysis of data to assist with trends around missing but to also make links to Child Sexual Exploitation and trafficking.

3.3 The four Cheshire local authorities agreed to go ahead with a joint missing from home / care commissioned service with Halton being the lead authority. Catch 22 were the successful provider and started in 2012.

3.4 The Service works with clear links to Cheshire Constabulary's missing from home co-ordinators to support young people who have been notified as missing and absent from home or care. There is a co-ordinated and organised response which includes a 'return interview' and where required the Catch 22 worker will work directly with children, young people and their families/carers.

3.5 The coalition government has identified child sexual exploitation as a key focus of its policy, publishing the Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan. This followed a campaign by Barnardo's to increase the profile of this underreported area of child abuse. Barnardo's contacted elected members directly to encourage individual and local authority sign up to the "Cut them free" campaign. Halton has signed up to this campaign.

3.6 A Pan-Cheshire MFH and CSE Strategic Group has been established by the Police. This group has produced a Pan-Cheshire CSE Strategy and Protocol which each LSCB has approved. The strategy has recently been amended to include the Merseyside LSCBs. The Strategic Group has also produced an Action Plan that reflects the areas to be addressed under the government's Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan.

- Map the needs of their own area.
- Monitor on-going prevalence and responses.
- Develop an effective local strategy ensuring a coordinated multi-agency response.
- Increase understanding amongst practitioners and the wider public.
- Safeguard children who are potentially more vulnerable – this includes establishing effective communication channels and ensuring multi-agency training.
- Consider setting up a working group or sub group on CSE and appoint a lead officer to provide a coordinated response.
- Develop links with neighbouring authorities and ensure cross border working.

3.7 A MFH /CSE / Trafficking Sub Group has been established by HSCB which reports directly to the HSCB Executive. The Sub Group oversees the Halton's Implementation of the MFH protocol, CSE Action Plan and the collection and analysis of data including missing from education and links to CSE and trafficking.

### **Current Picture of Missing from Home and Care**

3.8 Cheshire Constabulary has seen a 12% reduction in the annual number of recorded incidents from 623(2012/11) to 550 for 2012/13.

3.9 For the period January to March 2014 there have been 141 episodes reported to the police

120 for missing (62 of these concerning children living at home and 58 episodes concerning children in care), 21 episodes recorded as absent. The commissioned service (Catch 22) for the same time period have received 100 Notifications from the Police, 6 Notifications from Social Care and completed 75 return interviews with young people and they are currently supporting 22 young people in direct work.

3.10 With regard to young people that repeatedly go missing for both home and care, these are mostly females, age 13 – 16 years and all are known to Social Care. The young people are predominantly from Widnes. and many of them

are associating with other young people who are going missing There is still a fairly equal split of children missing from home and care which does include the young people in care placed in Halton from other local authorities, but Halton Children in care is the higher number. Most of the young people that have repeat missing incidents, are or have low attendance or poor engagement with education

- 3.11 From 1 April 2014 The local authority is required to record all episodes of 'away from placement without authorisation' regarding children in care, absent and missing for children from care and from home.
- 3.12 Cheshire Constabulary works in partnership with the Local Authorities to collect data on children reported missing and absent from care and home and other relevant data. This data is regularly analysed in order to map problems and patterns. This includes identifying patterns of local "hotspots" sexual and other exploitation, as well as concerns about who children run with and who they runaway to be with.
- 3.13 Each month the Police Strategic Public Protection Unit sends the local authority a 'tracker' that shows all missing and absent young people. The tracker will show the type of placement and the number of episodes over the last 6 months, the responsible local authority, CSE or other significant risks.
- 3.14 The commissioned service Catch 22 provides regular reports to the LSCB sub group about the return interviews undertaken as well as further data on reasons for young people are running, the associates that they run with as well as highlighting positive outcomes for young people that they support with direct work.
- 3.15 Compliance visits are undertaken with residential providers and part of this will include a review of data/ records of 'away from placement without authorisation,' absence and missing young people.
- 3.16 The three data sources from the police, the Local Authority and Catch 22 will be received and reviewed on a monthly basic analysis to ensure consistency and flag any Data Quality /Performance issues. The review of the data also acts as an added safeguard to ensure those children and young people identified as most vulnerable /at risk are having their needs addressed via the most appropriate plan. This data will also form a part of the Performance Report process to ensure that monthly figures are consistent and reviewed in terms of Performance and any areas of focus can be identified.
- 3.17 Catch 22 have co facilitated with LSCB training events to highlight the Missing from Home Service and the link of Missing to potential Child Sexual Exploitation. A telephone helpline is available and delivered in partnership with a national organisation 'Missing People'. It is operational 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year.

- 3.18 There has been a task and finish group to look at issues around young people that are 'missing' from education. These are young people that are on the school roll but not attending school. There are some common links between the group of young people identified; they had been open to services including social care, issues with family functioning, missing episodes, mental health, and behaviour issues.
- 3.19 Detailed audits concerning this cohort of young people are being undertaken to understand possible missed opportunities for intervention, possible ways forward for these young people to access education provision. This group has also made links to current work with the 14- 19 team around the commissioning of alternative provision.

### **3.20 Financial Implications**

The local authority commissions services for missing children and child sexual exploitation, this is from one organisation Catch 22 . For some young people who are assessed at high risk of sexual exploitation it is necessary for them to come into care.

### **Current Picture of Child Sexual Exploitation**

- 3.21 Halton's CSE operational multi-agency group meets on a monthly basis to share local information from cases of young people identified as being at risk of harm due to sexual exploitation. This partnership arrangement will help to identify links between children and young people as potential victims, links with potential perpetrators and potential hotspots. This meeting does not care plan for the individual young people but identifies and collates the links and soft intelligence.
- 3.22 Over the months the referrals being made into the operational group have fluctuated and the quality of the referrals has improved. Those referrals received are predominately from police and children's social care with school being the third most frequent referrer. During January to March 2014 there have been 14 referrals, 13 of which there have been no confirmed cases of a child being sexually exploited but concerns for each of the referrals of the risk of CSE.
- 3.23 Social media plays a role in respect of the risk of and actual sexual exploitation within the Halton area. Media such as Snap Shot, face book, MSN, BBM are all identified as means of communication by young people. In most of the cases identified within Halton to date there are issues regarding parental guidance, attachment, neglect issues and a few cases where sex offenders have either previously associated with the family or are involved currently with the family.
- 3.24 The information and intelligence that is being gathered will provide a matrix plan that will enable us to identify and target specific families / perpetrators, locations, business etc. where CSE has been identified as an issue. There has been no information shared at the operational group that would suggest organised CSE activity. Whilst there has been some crossing of boundaries

into St Helen's and Knowsley this appears to be linked to placements of the young people.

- 3.25 The Police have recently led on a multi-agency operation to disperse and identify potential offenders. This has now ended and any learning from this operation will be reported to Halton Safeguarding Children Board. Police have also been issuing warnings to those adults found to be harbouring young people who are missing and those vulnerable to CSE.
- 3.26 Cheshire Constabulary have introduced a sergeant that will work across Cheshire to support and co-ordinate activity of the police MFH co-ordinators and recently an additional officer has been appointed to support CSE in Halton. The new post will provide the vital link to exchange of intelligence across police forces.
- 3.27 January 2014 saw the launch of a Cheshire campaign titled 'The more you know, the more you see'. The campaign aims to create debate amongst young people, professionals, parents and others people responsible for caring for young people, about how to spot the signs of child sexual exploitation. The media campaign was supported by activities delivered by partners across Halton including drop-in sessions at youth groups, Internet safety awareness sessions and awareness sessions for parents in high school. During this week a theatre production "Someone's sister, someone's daughter" was delivered at key schools.
- 3.28 Catch 22 as the missing from home and care service does have links to CSE, they have seen a trend for young people at risk of CSE by internet / mobile phone use when completing Return Assessments following missing episodes. This may not be the primary reason for them running but due to lack of positive adult influence or parenting and attachment issues and low self-esteem these young people are very vulnerable.
- 3.29 Catch 22 from April 2014 provide a full time commissioned resource in Halton to support CSE. Based on national learning and some local needs analysis the following four areas of work have been agreed:
1. To review and deliver the basic awareness CSE Multi-agency Training on behalf of the LSCB. It is expected every Social worker in Halton will have undertaken this training by July 2014.
  2. A focus on raising awareness regarding CSE with parents. It is anticipated that this will be delivered in the community and will have a focus on e-safety.
  3. Any specific work in schools, either via group work with young people or with school-based staff, it is expected that this work will be identified via the respective CSE/Missing from Home operational groups i.e. this will be a responsive element of the work.

4. Consultations and direct work with individual young people identified as at risk of CSE. These young people will have allocated social workers and will be on the continuum of need at level 2 or 3 (and will include children in care/care leavers). Such consultations may lead to an agreement between the social worker and their line manager for the Catch 22 CSE worker undertaking some operational time limited one to one work with a young person with clear outcomes to be identified.

A pan Cheshire CSE risk assessment tool has been developed and circulated to staff to assist with identifying concerns around CSE.

### **Next steps**

- 3.30 Further work needs to be undertaken to Improve links with GP's and Health providers particularly around sharing information around young people that get regularly tested for Sexually Transmitted Infections s and young girls / women that have repeat pregnancy tests.
- 3.31 There is the development of an 'advanced practitioner' course which will be agreed shortly with implementation in the autumn. It is expected the Catch 22 service will also contribute to the development of the advanced practitioner course. The development of this will be a pan-Cheshire model led by Cheshire Police.
- 3.32 There will be a second CSE campaign week in the autumn to build on those key messages; this will be co-ordinated by the Pan Cheshire Communication group.
- 3.33 The Children's Commissioner Inquiry into Sexual exploitation in gangs and groups and the work around the 'See me, hear me' framework that has been developed. This framework has been established to help focus areas of work around interventions and service delivery for agencies. Halton will need to reflect on any relevant elements from the framework as work around CSE develops. The framework includes components of
  - Prevention
  - Pre-emptive policing to forestall exploitation
  - Targeted early intervention
  - Support for victims and families
  - Identification/apprehension of perpetrators
  - Rehabilitation of offenders
- 3.34 Based on feedback from young people who say hearing and seeing a drama production is an effective way to deliver key messages , a request is to be made to the LSCB to fund the delivery of a specific theatre production 'risking it all'

which Halton young people contributed to. It is expected this production will be made available for all year 9 pupils in Halton.

3.35 It is expected the licensing board will take a lead role in ensuring all licensed traders are made aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and can offer some evidence and reassurance as to how they do this. Also that awareness is raised about Child sexual Exploitation. The Pan Cheshire Strategic CSE group is undertaking some work to agree the publicity materials and a strategy for raising awareness with the licencing and hospitality industry.

## **4.0 POLICY ISSUES**

4.1 The authority continues to have a statutory duty to provide services to looked after children within the authority around Missing.

## **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The work around MFH and CSE service delivery will assist with the new OFSTED inspection framework (2012) for local authorities. The Framework indicates a focus on the journey, experiences and voice of the child, stating: At every stage of the child's journey, the inspection will evaluate the effectiveness of:

- The focus on the interests of the child
- How well all partners take account of children's wishes and feelings and the extent to which this informs their care.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

This service directly relates to improving the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by reducing the incidents of missing and risky behaviour. The services support key elements within Halton's Safeguarding and Children and Young People's Plans.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills In Halton**

The service will ensure that children and young people that go missing from home or care; subject to or at risk of CSE are supported in their learning and future employment and skills development.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The service support people to minimise reduce the risks of harm, and access relevant services to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

The service provides support to vulnerable children, young people and

families to assist them to access appropriate service provision within their local communities. This links to satisfaction with services and overall perception of the area in which people live.

## **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

The local authority commissions services for missing children and child sexual exploitation, this is from one organisation Catch 22 . For some young people who are assessed at high risk of sexual exploitation it is necessary for them to come into care.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

The services specified within this report relate to the needs of individuals and families with protected characteristics as defined within the Equality Act 2010.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Equality Impact	Commissioning Team	Clare Myring
Assessment	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, Rutland House Halton Lea, Runcorn	Commissioning Manager