

Briefing for Police and Crime Commissioner

Topic: Child Sexual Abuse/Exploitation (CSA/E)

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Purpose of briefing

To brief the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on the current position and any associated issues relating to CSA/E

Background

Child Sexual Abuse/Exploitation (CSA/E) is considered a national threat and a public health issue that requires a whole society approach to address the increasing scale and impact of the problem. CSA/E can take many forms. As well as rape and other physical forms of sexual abuse, CSA/E can also be evident in:

- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking
- County Lines and Organised Crime Gangs
- Cyberbullying
- Sexting/distributing indecent images of children
- Online streaming via platforms and apps
- Online grooming
- Pornography
- The use of online gaming platforms as a grooming tool

Victims of CSA/E suffer both in the short-term; from the actions of the perpetrator and in the long-term from the impact of the trauma they experience. The impact of CSA and CSE is also experienced by the families of victims.

CSA/E has been subject to significant national attention in recent years and designated as a strategic priority by the Government with the same level of significance as terrorism and serious organised crime.

Locally, CSA/E is a priority for many multi-agency mechanisms such as the Children Safeguarding Partnership Boards, MARAC, and Multi-agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH).

The Constabulary and partner organisations support several initiatives such as the Vulnerability Tracker, The Philomena Protocol, the Police Strategy Team, Through the Eyes of a Child, Intervene to Protect a Child and Safeguarding Champions.

Current issues

- Young people over 18 years old, or those transitioning to adult services, often face difficulties when trying to access support. The national CSA/E Toolkit recommends

reinforcing that sexual exploitation does not end when a child becomes an adult, and that perpetrators will target vulnerable adults as well as children and young people.

- There is perceived to be a need for more robust and accessible therapeutic and/or mental health services for children and young people and that all interventions are underpinned by trauma informed techniques.
- Children and young people who are not engaged in mainstream education can become hidden from services and/or miss out on key education in relation to consent, sex, relationships, and abuse and exploitation.
- There is often a lack of understanding about child sexual abuse and exploitation, and child criminal exploitation, among professionals working with children in 'out of school' settings, such as sports, theatre, music, and dance clubs, faith groups, scouts, brownies, youth clubs and summer schools, for example.
- Business and industries such as hotels, Bed & Breakfast facilities, transport companies, security companies, retail providers and hospitality staff are not always equipped with the relevant knowledge and information to ensure that they can spot the signs of child sexual abuse and exploitation, and harmful sexual behaviour, and respond appropriately.
- Social media companies are not always proactive in the protection of children and young people, or in the reporting of perpetrators.
- An understanding and identification of children and young people being trafficked for the purpose of criminal exploitation in relation to county lines and other forms of modern slavery is critical and to better understand the links between child criminal exploitation, and child sexual abuse and exploitation and how this impacts on a child or young person when the two intersect.
- Online offending is becoming more prevalent but is often harder to identify as perpetrators use the internet engage children and young people in sexual communication. Promoting awareness of how public internet spaces are being used to minimise the possibility of detection is needed.

Decisions needed

None pending

Partnership involvement

Work is undertaken in a range of multi-agency forums including the two local authority multi-agency Safeguarding Partnerships, MASH, MARAC and MAPPA.

Police involvement

This area of work is led by the police who are active participants in the above forums.

People to meet

Safeguarding Superintendent, Safeguarding Chairs of the Durham County Council Children's Safeguarding Partnership and Chair of Darlington Borough Safeguarding Partnership.