

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy and Development Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	10th March 2020	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Update on Exploitation	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
None		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Panel have requested a report outlining information in relation to children and adults at risk of exploitation and information on multi-agency working which reduce and where possible remove risk.
- 1.2 The paper seeks to assure the Panel that relevant policies, procedures and strategies recognise and address exploitation and furthermore sets out examples of the services and programmes commissioned to support children, young people and adults with care and support needs.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to;

- 2.1 The Panel are asked to note the content of the report which provides assurance that the B&NES Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership have a clear focus and overview of exploitation activity in its broadest sense across B&NES and have policies and procedures in place.

3 THE REPORT

3.1 Introduction

Exploitation is a generic term which encompasses different types of abuse towards both children and adults at risk the report has separated these out for ease and to demonstrate the differences.

3.2 Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation involves situations, contexts or relationships in which a person under 18 is given something, such as food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts or money in return for performing sexual activities or having sexual activities performed on them. It can also involve violence, coercion and intimidation, with threats of physical harm or humiliation

Warning signs

Signs of a child or young person being in an exploitative relationship can vary. Some examples are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Going missing from home or care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeat sexually transmitted infections, pregnancies or terminations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absenteeism from school
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Misuse of drugs or alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deterioration in physical appearance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involvement in offending	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence of online sexual bullying
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence of vulnerability on social networking sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emotional distance from family members
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receiving gifts from unknown sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruiting others into exploitative situations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-harming
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thinking about or attempting suicide	

3.2.1 Organisational Responses to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

- **Avon and Somerset Constabulary Operation Topaz**

Avon and Somerset Constabulary response to Child sexual exploitation is Operation Topaz. Topaz is a perpetrator disruption team enabling the Force to proactively protect the highest risk child sexual exploitation victims by developing opportunities to disrupt suspects.

Topaz recognises that disrupting suspects is often the most effective way of safeguarding victims of child sexual exploitation.

Topaz enables timely disruption, by any means available, including directing partner agencies to intervene.

The Topaz Prevention Officer proactively seeks out “hidden” victims through outreach work, acting upon intelligence, and targeting the kinds of groups, institutions and locations where victimisation is most likely to be occurring. The Prevention Officer is able to build relationships to develop victim confidence, build community relationships that result in improved intelligence, enable locational disruption by working with taxi drivers and hotels for example, and develop partnership working.

Tier 1 victims and suspects are high risk cases with whom Topaz is actively involved with a plan around them.

The Topaz Victim Contact / Engagement Officer works alongside these victims to build relationships and gather information to enable well-informed safeguarding and disruption. The focus is on supporting victims to enable the capture of an evidential account, intelligence gathering and safeguarding; working alongside the Topaz Disruption Officer to disrupt perpetrators and locations.

Topaz works with the wider Police family and partner agencies to ensure the best possible outcome for the child. Where possible, Topaz works to prosecute for offences against the child, or otherwise remove the focus away from the child’s account to prosecute for other offences.

Tier 2 victims and suspects may also be high risk cases but Topaz is not currently actively working with them. This is either because, in the case of suspects, there are no current disruption opportunities or, in the case of victims, an engagement officer has not been allocated. Tier 2 victims and suspects are regularly reviewed to ensure victims are appropriately safeguarded and any disruption opportunities developed.

Over half of all subjects flagged to Topaz are aged 15 to 25 and are often not much older than the children they pose a risk to. This is due to most CSE being peer to peer and single offenders as opposed to organised CSE.

Therefore, parents and guardians need to be aware it’s not about ages but about power and balance in a relationship.

In a recent survey of children, they do not have Facebook in their top 10 platforms – Facebook is what they show their parents not what they use.

Across Bristol, B&NES and South Gloucestershire about 150 perpetrators are flagged to Topaz and potentially posing a risk of CSE and about 200 children are flagged as being at risk.

Currently for B&NES the numbers are less than 10% of the totals however Topaz are still working with partner agencies to identify those posing a risk or at risk so the numbers in B&NES may well increase in the future.

The current figures for children and young people that are at risk of or are being criminally exploited in B&NES is 69 and children and young people at risk of or are being sexually exploited is 57; there is some overlap with these figures as some children will appear in both groups. All of these children are allocated and receive

case support from one of the Council Children Social Care teams or from the Willow Project (described below).

- **Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**

As a result of some of the findings from Operation Button it was agreed that Requests for Service pertaining to CSE would be referred to our MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub)¹ this enables a more integrated approach and a greater understanding of the risks. 13 young people have been progressed through our MASH processes to ensure that their needs are being adequately met.

- **The Willow Project**

B&NES has developed a frontline response for young people who are at risk and victims of CSE. Through the development of the Willow Project CSE victims are offered support dependent on their level of need. The Willow Project is a multi-agency/multi-disciplinary virtual made up of professionals who have been trained to work with young people at risk of or involved in lower level CSE.

The professionals within the team remain employed within their substantive post and then commit half a day per week to working within the Willow Project. The aim of the project is to support, advocate and provide time to potential victims of CSE.

There are currently 12 workers part of the Willow team. There are plans that the Willow team will expand to offer a service to young people that are at risk or are being criminally exploited.

In our last Ofsted report on 07/07/2017 Ofsted stated that *'when children go missing, there are plenty of people who look for them and do something about the reasons why. Other professionals like the Police do a good job of protecting children from harm. The Willow Project is a local service that is excellent at helping children to learn how to keep themselves safe.'*

3.3 Modern Slavery

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 define the criminal offence of slavery servitude and forced or compulsory labour (section 1) and the separate criminal offence of human trafficking. This might include labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, organ trafficking and forced marriage. Modern Slavery is not the same as illegal immigration or people smuggling. It is characterised by elements of violence, intimidation, deception, coercion, abduction and threat. Just because someone has consented to travel doesn't mean they're not victims as they may have done so under false pretenses.

Warning signs

- Anxiety – is the person you're speaking to visibly anxious? Are they hesitant to speak or slow to respond to questions? Showing signs of trauma or confusion?
- Manner – Do they have poor eye contact or seem withdraw? Are they revealing feelings worthlessness or hopelessness? Do they distrust authority figures?

¹ MASH meetings are held with multiagency partners who gather and share intelligence on children to help identify and reduce / remove risk

- Condition – Do they look malnourished, exhausted or unkept? Have they any untreated or neglected wounds? Are they poorly dressed or equipped for the job they are carrying out?
- Environment – Are they living in dirty or cramped accommodation? Rarely allowed to travel alone?

3.3.1 What types of modern slavery are there?

Almost all forms of modern slavery include some element of forced labour, which is 'any work or services people are forced to do against their will'. Some forms of modern slavery can be found below:

- Sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation involves non-consensual or abusive sexual acts performed without a victim's permission. This includes prostitution, escort work and pornography. Women, men and children of both sexes can be victims. Many will have been deceived with promises of a better life and then controlled through violence and abuse. It is also possible to exploit a person who consensually engages in providing sexual services.

- Forced labour

Forced / compulsory labour involves victims being compelled to work very long hours, often in hard conditions without relevant training and equipment. They often hand over the majority (if not all) of their wages to their traffickers. The types of work and working environment can often be described as 'dirty, demeaning or dangerous'. Forced labour crucially implies the use of coercion and lack of freedom of choice for the victim. In many cases victims are subjected to verbal threats or violence to achieve compliance.

Manufacturing, entertainment, travel, farming and construction industries have been found to use forced labour by victims of human trafficking in various extents. There has been a marked increase in reported numbers in recent years. Often large numbers of people are housed in single dwellings and there is evidence of 'hot bunking', where a returning shift takes up the sleeping accommodation of those starting the next shift.

- Domestic servitude

Domestic servitude involves the victim being forced to work in private households. Their movement will often be restricted, and they will be forced to perform household tasks such as child care and house-keeping over long hours and for little if any pay. Victims will lead very isolated lives and have little or no unsupervised freedom. Their own privacy and comfort will be minimal, often sleeping on a mattress on the floor in an open part of the house.

In rare circumstances where victims receive a wage it will be heavily reduced, as they are charged for food and accommodation.

- Child exploitation

Persons under the age of 18 are classified as children in the UK, they are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by individual opportunists, traffickers and organised crime groups. They can be deliberately targeted by criminals, or ruthlessly exploited by the people who should protect them.

Children can be subjected to any of the exploitative conditions as mentioned above and common countries of origin for victims include Vietnam, Nigeria, Romania, Slovakia and the UK.

- Organ harvesting

Organ harvesting involves trafficking people in order to use their internal organs for transplant. The illegal trade is dominated by demand for kidneys. These are the only major organs that can be wholly transplanted with relatively few risks to the life of the donor.

3.3.2 It could be happening in your neighbourhood

All concerns regarding modern slavery are referred to the National Referral Mechanism Scheme. The National Crime Agency reported that 5145 potential victims were submitted through the National Referral Mechanism Scheme in 2017, an increase of 35% when compared with 2016. Reporting showed potential victims of trafficking originating from 116 different nationalities. The most common exploitation type recorded for potential victims was labour exploitation, which also includes criminal exploitation.

3.3.3 What's being done to tackle the issue of Modern Slavery?

Avon and Somerset Constabulary work hard to safeguard vulnerable individuals and or children suspected of being victims of slavery. BBC TWO's 'The Prosecutors', follows an investigation by Avon and Somerset Constabulary and Staffordshire Police in 2017, unravelling a human trafficking operation in the city of Bath. Young Vietnamese teenagers were shipped across the country and forced to work without wages, in poor conditions in nail bars. Three people – including a woman from Bath – were jailed in January 2018 following the first successful prosecution in the UK for exploitation and enforced child labour, under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

The investigation only came about after Officers carried out a multi- agency welfare visit to Nail Deluxe in Westgate Street, Bath in February 2016. Welfare checks are vital practice in our work to identify and tackle modern slavery and we work together with charities and local councils to share information and to disrupt known modern slavery industries in our force area. These welfare checks depend on information and the public play a very crucial role in helping to stamp modern slavery out.

3.4 County Lines

County Lines National Definition - a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas (within the UK), using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line".

They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move (and store) the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. (HMG Serious Violence Strategy, April 2018)

3.4.1 Avon & Somerset County Lines: Force Overview

- County Lines issues are prevalent throughout the UK, Avon and Somerset Constabulary work with national, local partners and law enforcement agencies to tackle the supply of Class A drugs and associated risks to vulnerable people and the wider community.
- The Lines remain focussed in the Force's outlying towns and cities.
- Intelligence continues to link most of the Lines to the targeting of vulnerable drug users, consistent with the "cuckooing". There is also a risk of violence as many of the gangs have intelligence linking them to knives/firearms albeit there is limited recent evidence of the latter weapon in Avon & Somerset. Child Criminal Exploitation also remains a key characteristic of County Lines criminality and this aspect is regularly monitored.

3.4.2 County Lines in Bath

Not all Lines are active at any given time; the business model they use enables them to be very adaptable and fluid in nature. At present the number of County Lines operating in Bath is lower than Avon and Somerset Constabulary have previously seen and Avon and Somerset Constabulary believe is a reflection of the targeted work that the local Neighbourhood Policing Team and Intelligence teams have conducted.

Bath City Centre Neighbourhood Team are aware of a number of addresses which have been cuckooed, (taken over by drug dealers) in the past and/ or are likely to be targeted by County Lines gangs. They make regular welfare checks at these addresses to ensure that vulnerable people are safe and not being taken advantage of. Bath City Centre Neighbourhood Team have put in safeguarding measures with partners to protect these individuals. This has led to arrests, seizure of drugs and money and also the location of vulnerable children.

Ongoing operations to tackle County Line issues are continually taking place and disruption and enforcement with partners are continually being advanced. Positive action has had a considerable impact on the communities of Bath and has safeguarded countless persons being exploited.

Ongoing targeting of County Lines has resulted in a number of people being arrested for possession with Intent to Supply and a number of people being arrested for possession offences with successful safeguarding intervention for several high risk vulnerable and missing persons.

In addition to this Avon and Somerset Constabulary also actively seek to identify and monitor young juveniles and vulnerable individuals, who are resident in the area and who are at risk of becoming involved with County Lines criminality. This piece of work has close links to Child Criminal Exploitation and is part based on some predicative data modelling that we are trialling. At present there are only four nominals on this list for B&NES, which is again lower than Avon and Somerset Constabulary have previously seen in B&NES.

3.5 Governance of Exploitation

The new B&NES Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership (BCSSP) arrangements are committed to integrating safeguarding children and adults with community safety and the work of the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG)

The purpose of the Exploitation subgroup is to develop, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategic and operational multi-agency responses to exploitation.

A 3-year Youth @ Risk Strategy has been developed by the Exploitation Sub Group to support the children and young people in B&NES that are experiencing or at risk of experiencing exploitation and abuse outside their home environment. Whilst the focus is on teenagers, it is recognised that risk factors relating to exploitation can emerge before the age of 10 years and so the needs of younger children must also be addressed. This is an important and challenging strategy. It is important because of how profoundly these issues affect the lives of children and young people. It complements the Children and Young People's Plan and the Early Help Strategy and embodies the determination of all partner agencies to work together to make effective strategic and operational responses to the complex, diverse and significant needs of the children and young people affected.

The Youth @Risk strategy is supported through 6 thematic protocols:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Criminal exploitation
- Harmful sexual Behaviour
- Radicalisation
- Serious Youth violence
- Missing from home and education

Strategic and operational practice will be informed by good shared intelligence, effective data analysis and agreed outcomes for children and young people.

In considering the importance of working with exploitation of young people, Bath and North East Somerset have adopted a contextual safeguarding approach to develop an Operational Exploitation Meeting (OEM) to address the extra familial risks that are posed to our young people. This group reports into the Exploitation subgroup.

The OEM was initiated originally in December 2018 due to the increasing concerns highlighted to Children's Social Care regarding a group of young people in the Bath area by several agencies. This meeting is a multi-agency meeting that:

- To identify those young people being exploited criminally or sexually, and seek to support, disrupt to reduce harm and ensure support is in place.
- To identify vulnerable adults who are at risk of exploitation/Cuckooing and seek to disrupt activity, reduce harm and ensure support is in place.

- To identify spaces where young people associate, can experience abuse and cause concern such as parks, housing estates, stair wells within the community in order to disrupt activity.
- To identify workers of such establishments that may have contact with YP and vulnerable adults that may be exploited and offer training and pathways to report such abuse.
- To identify adult perpetrators who are exploiting others with a view to action being taken to disrupt/support or prosecute (dependent on circumstances)

The information shared at OEM helps to enable early identification of those young people who may be at risk of exploitation, vulnerable adults, and of those who may pose an exploitation threat to our young people. Additionally, we will be able to better identify specific hotspots and locations where there may be an increased chance of exploitation occurring, which subsequently strengthens our responses and enables the raising of awareness across partner agencies.

3.5 Prevent

Prevent is about safeguarding and supporting those vulnerable to radicalisation. Prevent is one of the four elements of CONTEST, the Government's Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

Within the B&NES Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership there is a Prevent Partnership, a separate report can be requested that focuses on prevent.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

Multi-agency partners are required to comply with statutory frameworks (law and practice guidance) in relation to exploitation. This compliance is monitored by the agencies themselves but also through the BCSSP.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

This report is not requesting additional resources but highlighting the scale of the issue and the work taking place.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk assessment is routine part of the work when determining how to respond to concerns raised. Undertaking risk assessments is essential and all agencies have risk management processes in place.

7 CLIMATE CHANGE

Agencies are live to climate change issues.

8 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Practice is developed and in line with national expectations; innovative practice are considered eg, Willow Project.

9 CONSULTATION

Partners of the BCSSP.

Contact person	Robert Fortune Avon and Somerset Constabulary and Leigh Zywek B&NES Council
Background papers	None
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	