



**AN OVERVIEW OF THE MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE TO CHILD  
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN PETERBOROUGH**

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## **Forward**

This overview report has been compiled, by taking account of the known child sexual exploitation in Peterborough, during the period 2010-2016. The report is focussed on the learning from Operation Erle which was the operational name of a multi-agency partnership investigation into child sexual exploitation in the City which spanned 2013 to 2015.

Although this report is based upon the experiences of those young people who were victims and witnesses under Operation Erle, it is extremely important to note that the experiences of these children and young people, whilst fundamentally important in their own right, are accepted by the partnership within Peterborough as being indicative of the experience of a wider group of young people who were also victims of child sexual exploitation at the time, and those who continue to be at risk today.

The joint investigation, Operation Erle, has received national praise for Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Peterborough Children's Social Care, the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board and its partners for how they tackled child sexual exploitation and continue to tackle the issue within the city. However, this must not for one moment diminish the suffering of all of the victims involved and they must be at the centre of any learning to try to prevent similar situations arising in the future. This must be the overarching aim of the publication of this document: to promote the safeguarding of children and young people from child sexual exploitation, locally and nationally.

I would like to extend my thanks to those agencies who have contributed to the process of collating this document, the openness of their responses and their dedication to make improvements. The learning from this review must though be dedicated to the brave victims of child sexual exploitation and the frontline staff who went above and beyond to support them in their recovery.

Dr Russell Wate QPM

Independent Chair

Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board

## 1. Introduction & Background

- 1.1. The aim of this report is to evaluate the overall learning regarding the multi-agency practice of addressing child sexual exploitation in the city of Peterborough and its surrounding area. The report will focus on both strategic and operational learning drawn from the reflective experiences of a spectrum of agencies. The focus is on reflecting and analysing the key themes to inform future learning, service delivery and developments. However, the multi-agency experiences of addressing child sexual exploitation in Peterborough may also assist other areas in tackling this issue. The key reflection on practice will focus on the period from 2010 to early 2016.
- 1.2. This review has been undertaken in line with the key concepts outlined within *Working Together (2015)*, primarily:
- Reflecting and analysing the multi-agency lessons to be learnt;
  - Reflecting upon the lessons to be learnt in a constructive manner to inform future learning and developments;
  - Evaluating the outcome and impact of this learning on multi-agency strategic and operational developments. Therefore, using the root cause learning in a constructive and reflective manner.
- 1.3. The Peterborough Local Safeguarding Children Board (PSCB) and several key agencies have contributed to this review, primarily via the desktop review of key documentations. These documents have been appraised to inform the context and learning, in particular a summary of the multi-agency debrief of Operation Erle (the child sexual exploitation inquiry in Peterborough: see section 3.3.2) and the report of the independently facilitated action learning child sexual exploitation workshop held in September 2015.
- 1.4. The journey of addressing child sexual exploitation has been proactively facilitated on a multi-agency platform, demonstrating complex issues and 'rich' learning. There is evidence that this learning has been reflected upon from a multi-agency perspective in the aim of making child sexual exploitation visible now and to the future.

1.5. In summary, the purpose of this report is to provide an overview of:-

- The context of child sexual exploitation in Peterborough;
- Assess how child sexual exploitation was addressed on a multi-agency basis;
- Evaluate the overall learning;
- Reflect on the outcomes achieved;
- Consider potential future learning and developments.

1.6. Therefore, the intention is not to unpick the details of specific cases, but rather to evaluate the overall learning in a constructive and reflective manner.

## **2. Independent Author**

2.1. The author is a qualified Solicitor and Social Worker, with a Master's degree in both work areas, a postgraduate diploma in Community and Criminal Justice, and qualifications in Mental Health. She has extensive practice-based experience across social care, criminal justice and mental health services, including work on a multi-agency basis to support children, young people and vulnerable adults at practitioner, middle and senior management level. In addition, she is research active and has undertaken several reviews, including SCRs & DHRs. Ceryl Teleri Davies is not employed by any of the Peterborough Safeguarding Board Agencies.

## **3. The Context of Child Sexual Exploitation in the UK**

### **3.1. UK Perspective**

3.1.1. The Jay report (2014) and the Casey report (2015) acknowledged the presenting challenges posed by child sexual exploitation. Recent national high profile court cases reported in the media have assisted in raising awareness of child sexual exploitation, whilst several serious case reviews (SCRs) have highlighted lessons to be learnt by the three key agencies; specifically, Peterborough Children's Social Care, Cambridgeshire Constabulary and Health services covering the Peterborough area. Despite evolving knowledge and

practice experiences, lessons need to be learnt on how best to respond to the multitude of complexities when addressing child sexual exploitation. However, this is not a phenomenon or a challenge uniquely faced by Peterborough, but rather a national concern requiring continuous review and analysis. On a national basis, the distance travelled in addressing child sexual exploitation has been rapid, from the development of National Guidance (2006), a plethora of research reports and Government Action Plans (2011). During this timeframe, there have been several serious case reviews across England, resulting in increasing media attention of its impact on the victims/survivors. However, at the beginning of the period covered by this review there was a general lack of awareness of the signs and symptoms of child sexual exploitation, which resulted in low level identification and a lack of drive towards proactive intervention.

3.1.2. Child sexual exploitation is a form of child abuse/harm often hidden and indeed misunderstood (Thomas, 2015). Child sexual exploitation is defined as:

*Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability. (DCSFa, 2009, p.9).*

3.1.3. Child sexual exploitation can take several forms, for example, inappropriate relationships involving one perpetrator holding disproportionate power and control over a young person, peer exploitation involving sexual coercion and organised/networked exploitation and trafficking (Barnados, 2011).

### 3.2. The Context and Experiences in Peterborough

3.2.1. Peterborough is a diverse city experiencing a rapid growth in population and a higher than average younger population. It is a cathedral city with a mixture of both affluent and deprived areas. Therefore, the dynamics of a younger population, growing ethnic diversity and pockets of deprivation bring increased pressures on public services.

3.2.2. During the course of this review there have been several high profile child sexual exploitation criminal cases/trials in Peterborough, which have resulted in significant periods of imprisonment for the perpetrators. This was during a national climate of a void in systematic multi-agency working to identify and address child sexual exploitation. The initial picture in Peterborough does not diverge from the national picture. However, proactive reflections have been gathered on a multi-agency basis through the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board and via a facilitated action learning session.

3.2.3. The following factors were identified as influencing the historical context of child sexual exploitation in Peterborough (pre 2012):-

#### **Box 1: Historical Context**

- The general lack of awareness of CSE;
- The lack of confidence, knowledge and understanding of practitioners and managers to grasp that several factors may be the root cause, signs and symptoms of CSE;
- The lack of robust response to disclosures of sexual activity at a young age;
- Lack of robust multi-agency response to safety planning and disclosures of harm.
- The high level of deprivation and access to illegal substances within particular areas of Peterborough.

- The culture of conceptualising young people as ‘young adults’ capable and with the freedom to make ‘unwise decisions’ and the notion that they were choosing to have abusive relationships. Therefore, the lack of visibility of conceptualising young people as victims of CSE with complex needs.
- The lack of robust response to the assessment and safety planning of missing episodes.
- The lack of robust information sharing of concerns to assist agencies to establish a comprehensive picture of all the emerging concern around CSE.
- Difficulties in the transition process between Children’s and Adult’s Services.

### 3.3. Multi-agency Operation

3.3.1. The brief descriptive summary provides details of the multi-agency operation which established a clear but different remit for addressing child sexual exploitation:-

#### **Operation Erle:**

3.3.2. This operation commenced in January 2013 as a joint operation between Cambridgeshire Constabulary and Peterborough Children’s Social Care in response to an aspiration to proactively identify child sexual exploitation in Peterborough. At this time, the benefit of very close working relationships including many opportunities for joint working could not be underestimated. This operation was victim focused and involved the engagement of over 110 young people as potential victims or witnesses. It also involved the arrest of nearly 40 individuals. In total, this operation consisted of 5 separate criminal trials, resulting in 10 male defendants being found guilty of 59 offences against 15 young women. The punishment for these male defendants amounted to custodial sentences totalling 114 years and nine months. The final trial was held in May 2015.

3.3.3. Operation Erle has received national recognition as a model of good practice for identifying and investigating child sexual exploitation.



### 3.4. The Nature & Extent of Child Sexual Exploitation in the Area:

3.4.1. Estimating the extent of child sexual exploitation nationally is difficult given the low awareness of the indicators of this form of abuse (DCSFa, 2009). However, knowledge and practice is evolving with continuous developments in the process of evaluating prevalence data to gain a sense of the nature and extent of child sexual exploitation in Peterborough and its surrounding area. The learning from Operational Erle identified that several of the victims of child sexual exploitation had experienced difficult home circumstances. These difficulties included neglectful parents, witnessing domestic violence and abuse and substance misuse. Box 2 outlines the emerging themes identified to assist in preventing this form of abuse. The data was gathered as part of the work conducted by Operation Makesafe, which was utilised to inform the victimology assessment.

#### Box 2:

- 86% of victims are female and 14% are male.
- Two thirds of victims are aged 12-14 with 14 years being the most frequently occurring age.
- 68% of Peterborough victims were White British (this is line with census 2011 ethnicity), 22% 'Any Other White' (twice the 2011 ethnicity rate) and 4.5% Asian Pakistani (6.6% for all Asian ethnicities)
- Half of all victims came from Peterborough. The high levels in Peterborough are likely to be due to the publicity around the Operation Erle trials, and the increased awareness of professionals in the city as a result of these
- The vulnerability of victims was further perpetuated due to the barriers to accessing support, the continual contact with the perpetrator in the form of manipulation, coercion and grooming and the impact of these abusive relationships based on unequal power and control.
- The impact of the child sexual exploitation on the victim's health and wellbeing need to be assessed, reviewed and managed to ensure that the appropriate

support is offered at the right level to manage, support and reduce the risk, whilst promoting protective factors.

(Source: Cambridgeshire Constabulary, child sexual exploitation Victimology analysis, 2015: data for Peterborough).

#### **4. What Worked Well: Partnership Working in Peterborough**

4.1. As knowledge, experience and practice has developed on a strategic and operational level, the understanding and reflection on 'what has worked well' has been gathered on a multi-agency basis. The initial position of proactively addressing child sexual exploitation in Peterborough is evidenced from the strategic authority and degree of ownership of Operational Erle. This degree of ownership subsequently translated into practice through the development of a bespoke investigation team and the practice of identifying witness, victims and perpetrators. The overarching principle of achieving good evidence further shaped the nature and person centred approach adopted when supporting victims. The very close co-ordination and joint working between Cambridgeshire Constabulary and Children's Social Care assisted in facilitating this process by helping to remove barriers regarding different professional roles and responsibilities. During this time, working within a framework of joint working facilitated positive and consistent support for victims to build and sustain relationships in a patient rather than time limited manner. Also, effective joint working ensured equal access to all key information in a timely manner, for example, as facilitated via joint briefings. As part of Operational Erle, safeguarding was seen as a 'golden thread' through the silver and gold strategies. Gold, silver or bronze command structures are used in response to emergency or major incidents to establish a hierarchical framework for their command and control. Gold focuses on strategic, silver on tactical and bronze on operational. The executive steering group instigated a Consequence Management Group of senior partnership and community representatives. This was extremely useful in managing community reaction and implementing preventative and educational responses to lessons learnt during the inquiry.

- 4.2. Undoubtedly, there has been significant progress in understanding and analysing active and potential cases of child sexual exploitation by Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Children's Social Care, Health, Education and several agencies across the voluntary sector. This progress has primarily been achieved through the relentless commitment of a spectrum of dedicated professional staff. As a result, the importance of good practice has further embedded as part of subsequent models of working, for example, within Cambridgeshire Constabulary, the Missing Person Investigation Unit is now co-located with the Child Sexual Exploitation Investigation Team. This model of working assists in ensuring a comprehensive flow of information in a proactive rather than reactive manner.
- 4.3. Outlined below are the reflections of several agencies on their progress to address child sexual exploitation from their own perspective.

**a) Education**

Schools are now far more aware of the signs and possible indicators for child sexual exploitation. There is a named child sexual exploitation lead in every secondary school, with direct links to the Peterborough Safeguarding Children's Board's Sexual Exploitation Coordinator. All basic safeguarding awareness sessions, both for staff and governors, are inclusive of information relating to child sexual exploitation, and there are clear mechanisms in place for sharing information with statutory agencies.

Schools are encouraged to build work around healthy and safer relationships into their curriculum. However, along with the constant strive to improve education around personal safety and child sexual exploitation there are still stumbling blocks, mainly in terms of the lack of statutory status for some subjects. However, further audits will assist us to assess the current landscape in detail and in planning work to the future.

**b) CAFCASS**

Child sexual exploitation forms one element of CAFCASS' Exploitation Strategy, along with radicalisation and trafficking. The overarching aim of the strategy is to provide staff with the knowledge and skills required to assess and support children and families affected by these matters in line with CAFCASS'

functions and duties. At the core of the strategy is a network of ambassadors (at service area level) and champions (at team level) who receive up-to-date knowledge and cascade this down to colleagues. Management time is dedicated to creating and implementing the strategy, further elements of which include: presentations by experts in these fields; updated training; internal research; the collation of learning generated by colleagues in partner agencies and by Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board and so forth. The CAFCASS team that provides services in the Peterborough area has shared its national and local exploitation plans with the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board and has both a local exploitation ambassador and champion.

**c) Cambridgeshire Constabulary**

The partnership in Peterborough is committed to supporting identified (and potential) victims of child sexual exploitation, whilst disrupting precursor contact and behaviour that may lead to child sexual exploitation, and bringing those offenders of child sexual exploitation to justice. The Partnership has a number of operational and strategic meetings to ensure all agencies are joined up in the response to tackling child sexual exploitation. Development of processes over the last few years has seen improved information sharing, awareness training and partnership response to tackling child sexual exploitation. These processes remain under continuous review for improvements to be made and continued evolution of our approach to this complex and ever changing crime type.

Child sexual exploitation forms one of the key priorities for Cambridgeshire Constabulary, with a dedicated team having been established over the past few years to deal with this type of crime. Highly trained and skilled officers respond to all identified potential victims of child sexual exploitation to support them from the outset and reduce the likelihood of them being exploited. Operation Makesafe has been developed within Cambridgeshire Constabulary to ensure joined up information sharing, identifying those most at risk of child sexual exploitation and hotspot areas for child sexual exploitation perpetrators to move in. This informs proactive activity from all partner agencies to try and prevent child sexual exploitation taking place, whilst having the ability to target those suspected of child sexual exploitation to ultimately bring them to justice.

Identifying missing from home episodes are linked to child sexual exploitation, Cambridgeshire Constabulary has taken steps to increase its scrutiny of all reports of people reported missing. The Constabulary now classify all unaccounted for children as missing, ceasing to use the category of absent (previously used in instances of truancy etc.) thereby ensuring a consistent and thorough level of investigation. A Missing Person Investigation Unit has been created to work alongside the Child Sexual Exploitation Investigation Team. This Unit investigates all reports of people having gone missing and are skilled in identifying where children have gone missing and the potential links this may have to child sexual exploitation. In addition to these teams, all officers and staff across Cambridgeshire Constabulary have been provided with in depth training to enhance their awareness of child sexual exploitation and ensure a positive response in every identified case.

Recognising the changing dynamics to Child Sexual Exploitation and the significant impact social media and the World Wide Web has in relation to this, a dedicated “on-line” investigation strand has been developed. This is based within the Child Sexual Exploitation Investigation Team and means faster time information sharing, response and opportunities to tackle child sexual exploitation. The whole Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Person Investigation Unit are based in the same location as partner agencies within the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub, placing all the needs of child sexual exploitation victims within a well-established partnership arena to provide the best response and support possible to victims of child sexual exploitation.

All of the current processes within Cambridgeshire Constabulary regarding the provision for child sexual exploitation have been subject to an independent peer review by the College of Policing. The findings of this review were positive and identified some of the practices undertaken by Cambridgeshire Constabulary and the wider partnership working as leading the way nationally for best practice.

**d) Children's Social Care**

At the time that the young people who became victims or witnesses under Operation Erle were first being targeted by men seeking to sexually exploit them, the response of agencies in Peterborough, including Children's Social Care, was in many ways similar to the response in other parts of the country.

There were examples of positive individual work with young people, and a variety of approaches were used to try to reduce the risk of harm they were facing. These interventions, however, tended to lack focus and did not name the central issue of the organised exploitation of vulnerable young people by groups of men. This meant that the specific risks to young people were not fully identified, making it more difficult to develop plans that would offer them sufficient protection at the earliest opportunity.

The unfolding of the harm that these young people had suffered, as well as the greater understanding of child sexual exploitation prompted by the national picture, led Children's Social Care on a rapid journey of developing practice and implementing new systems and processes to tackle child sexual exploitation in Peterborough, in partnership with other agencies.

This rapid change of approach across Children's Social Care and Cambridgeshire Constabulary resulted in the success of Operation Erle and other legal action to safeguard the young people in the short-term. A shared commitment to continuing to develop best practice approaches to protecting vulnerable young people from this type of organised exploitation has now resulted in the development of a much broader Council and partnership wide child sexual exploitation prevention and management strategy, which recognises the importance of whole families and the wider community in successfully tackling child sexual exploitation. Within the Council, this cross cutting approach is made much easier by the creation of a People and Communities Directorate in March 2015 that has responsibility for all Adult, Children and Community Services, and is able to ensure that synergies and the impact of individual policies are always considered through the lens of improving safeguarding for families and children.

Protocols on child sexual exploitation and children who go missing from home or care have been rewritten to reflect learning and to ensure that safety plans for children and young people are reviewed regularly to ensure their effectiveness. Changes also include the ongoing monitoring of potential child sexual exploitation activity and the needs of individual young people through a specific Peterborough multi-agency group; and the continuing understanding of the link between children missing from education, home or care and possible child sexual exploitation; issues that are now all considered alongside intelligence from Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

Any young person who goes missing is now provided with an independent Return Interview, either through Barnados for children who have gone missing from home or by National Youth Advocacy Service for children in care. This means that in both cases, young people can talk to independent and trained staff about any issues that may be worrying them. The information from those interviews is considered both on an individual child basis and also to assist in intelligence gathering at the multi-agency meetings.

A risk assessment is undertaken with all young people open to Children's Social Care – including those who are in care. These assessments are regularly reviewed and enable protective plans to be put in place where any risks are identified. Child sexual exploitation is explicitly considered as a possible factor in any concerning activity or behaviour; and protective plans explicitly address any risk from child sexual exploitation.

Most importantly, the Service has renewed its commitment to the importance of listening properly to what children and young people are telling us, and then taking timely and appropriate action to safeguard and support them.

**e) Health**

The Integrated Contraception and Sexual Health Service (iCaSH) has developed a focus on professional curiosity around the potential indicators of risk, harm and abuse of pregnancy at a young age. This service now has a detailed under 18 assessment template which has alerts to areas such as child sexual exploitation, which has been developed in response to the indicators of risk of harm of child sexual exploitation. Also, multi-agency audits focused on

child sexual exploitation have been undertaken to identify future learning and developments required.

Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (PSHFT) has undergone a significant transformation in the last 4 years, in terms of the capacity of staff to recognise the signs of abuse and exploitation and to work with other agencies to protect children and young people. Child sexual exploitation has been a dominant theme in our training packages for staff, and additional focused training has been delivered to high risk areas such as sexual health, paediatrics, maternity and the emergency department. Staff can now identify the presentations of exploitation without an allegation being made. For example, staff on Amazon children's ward will work with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) staff to identify behaviours and risk factors for child sexual exploitation in all presentations of overdose and self-harm. A culture of professional curiosity has been strengthened.

The Trust has identified a child sexual exploitation champion, with regional participation in the Local Safeguarding Children Board child sexual exploitation multi-agency working group and joint action plan. The Trust has actively participated in education programs and dissemination of literature to children and young people using the Trust's services.

Staff in PSHFT are now highly aware of the presence of criminal child sexual exploitation in Peterborough, and know how to identify the problem and then work with other agencies.

The Designated Professionals from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group have sought to support and lead the health economy in regards the issue of child sexual exploitation across both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This has enabled the embedding of knowledge and practice around sexual exploitation in all the services we commission. Substantial reporting is received from Health Care Providers around their safeguarding activity and this includes reporting around cases of child sexual exploitation. It also forms part of the teaching packages that Providers deliver to all staff. The strengthening of transition planning for children who receive health care services and are continuing on into adult service is also



underway in accordance with the new NICE guidance. The Designated Doctor was part of the local safeguarding children board multi-agency working group that developed a resource pack around child sexual exploitation for all professionals and for parents. This has been well utilised and embedded across the health economy and beyond.

Within Primary Care the issue of child sexual exploitation has also been addressed. Training has been given to Primary Care through both the briefing that is sent to all practices, the Level 3 Safeguarding training for Primary Care and the Safeguarding Leads conference. Child Sexual Exploitation is part of the Safeguarding Resource Pack provided for Primary Care staff to access, and includes direction to the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board Resource Pack. Recently an NHS England leaflet on child sexual exploitation was sent to all General Practitioners (GP) practices to assist them in knowing the signs and symptoms of child sexual exploitation. In partnership with Cambridgeshire Constabulary, when live operations are under way in specific areas of the county, a visit is made by the Senior Investigating Officer to the GP practices in the area to raise awareness with them of the concerns for children in their area.

**f) NSPCC**

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) has a dedicated Service Centre in Peterborough delivering to children, young people and families through two teams of social workers. At the outset of Operation Erle resources within the centre were redirected to deliver within the child sexual exploitation agenda, drawing on a national body of evidence and model of intervention focusing on prevention where child sexual exploitation is a risk, protection where child sexual exploitation is ongoing, and recovery through delivery of therapeutic service. In addition, centre managers have supported strategic planning, and a range of training and awareness raising sessions for professionals have been delivered.

A dedicated child sexual exploitation focused intervention continues to be delivered from the Service Centre, with group work provided in secondary schools, including where children have special educational needs, aimed at diverting young people at risk of sexual exploitation away from those risks. The

majority of ongoing service delivery is directed at young people where sexual exploitation is still happening or where post abuse therapeutic work is required – with some post abuse interventions provided for many months. The Peterborough NSPCC team has a strong focus on participation work with young people, and through this work have provided the voice of young people about their experiences to aid professional learning in the city.

Looking to the future, the Peterborough NSPCC team are planning to support the roll out of our preventative group work into school and community settings, for others to co-deliver if a need arises. One of the benefits of this service provision by the NSPCC is that work is not restricted by city or county boundaries, and this has allowed specific support and interventions to be provided where young people have featured in the Operation Erle investigation, but are not children from Peterborough.

- 4.4. As an outcome, as a partnership the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board produced several key documents to provide context, direction and purpose to the development of their work as outlined in Box 3.

**Box 3: Work completed and developments within agencies in response to the Historical context (See: Box 1).**

**Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and Action Plan:**

The progress and completion of this comprehensive work plan is regularly monitored and reviewed by the multi-agency strategic child sexual exploitation group. Not only does this provide a forum to discuss child sexual exploitation and the work plan, but ensure that the impact and outcome of the work plan is evaluated on a continuous process.

There have been key developments implemented on a multi-agency basis, which clearly highlights the resources, multi-agency approach and progressive nature of the comprehensive action plan implemented to address child sexual exploitation in Peterborough and indeed across Cambridgeshire. The flow of practice changes illustrated below demonstrates the development and impact of change at each level of practice, from referral, assessment, intervention to measuring the impact of

interventions. This is framed within the developments of quality assurance systems and a comprehensive training programme, which are all supported by a new Co-ordinator role. The following points illustrate the flow of these comprehensive developments.

#### **Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator Role:**

The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board created the post of a part-time Sexual Exploitation Co–ordinator to map multi-agency connections, ensure risk assessment is robust and interventions are available and suitable, develop multi-agency policies and procedures and ensure these are embedded across partners, raise awareness and drive continuous improvement.

#### **A Multi-agency Child Sexual Exploitation Referral Tool:**

In January 2013 in the early stages of Operation Erle, a numerical scoring tool was introduced for across agencies. During September 2014 the National Working Group ([www.nwgnetwork.org](http://www.nwgnetwork.org)) produced a vulnerability checklist, which was adopted in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. The referral route remained the same: directly into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the new ‘tool’ relied much more upon professional judgement. In April 2015 the pathway was amended to align with all other child protection concerns and as a result, the checklist was added to the existing child protection referral form. This shift recognised child sexual exploitation as a mainstream child protection issue as a result of fundamental shifts in policy, practice and service delivery in line with good practice guidance (Barnados, 2011).

A decision was made to implement a bespoke risk assessment tool alongside the referral tool. As a result, a Risk Management Tool was devised by a multi-agency group and launched in August 2015. Therefore, evidence from national forums, the criminal trials have proactively informed the development of a tool focused on promoting professional curiosity, vulnerabilities and risk indicators. In addition, there is a free narrative section for professionals to details their concerns. To measure the quality, proportionality of threshold and impact of the use of this tool, quality assurance measures were implemented and monitored by the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board. The continuous and reflective manner of addressing child sexual exploitation is further evidenced by the decision of assessing child

sexual exploitation as part of identifying sexual abuse concern rather than seeing it a standalone concern. Not only does this assist with key processes, for example, data gathering, it also embeds the culture of evaluating child sexual exploitation as a 'golden thread' running through all sexual abuse work with children and young people. It is also clear that the multi-agency commitment and drive has continuously placed child sexual exploitation as a key priority for development, review and embedding as part of 'everyday' professional practice.

#### **Interventions/Chelsea's Choice:**

In June 2013 the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board commissioned the drama *Chelsea's Choice* (delivered by Alter Ego Creative Solutions [www.alteregocreativesolutions.co.uk/chelseas-choice](http://www.alteregocreativesolutions.co.uk/chelseas-choice)) which was delivered to nearly all of the secondary schools in Peterborough. In excess of 3,000 Years 8 and 9 students saw the drama, which has been followed up by Cambridgeshire Constabulary Safer Schools Officers via the roll out the "Exploited" CEOP programme. The "Exploited" film and resource pack aims to support and educate young people on how to stay safe from abuse and exploitation. The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board sought evidence of the impact of *Chelsea's Choice* and as a result a questionnaire was sent to all secondary schools in April 2014. As a result, 515 responses were received across all schools, which is an excellent return rate. This consultation evidenced that the majority of young people (72%) replied that their 'sympathetic adult' for sharing safeguarding concerns with would be a teacher. As a result, since January 2015 all Secondary Schools in Peterborough have appointed a Child Sexual Exploitation Lead, which are supported by the Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator via a termly focus group. From a critical and reflective viewpoint, this development evidences:-

- a) The aim towards prevention and early intervention.
- b) The comprehensive reflection of further measuring the impact of intervention to gather evidence to inform 'what works'. Not only does this ensure that interventions are designed at the right level, but considers amendments/revision in a fluid manner.
- c) The drive to gather evidence to further inform practice developments.

d) Illustrates the emerging culture of incorporating young voices in practice developments about sensitive issues that impact on their 'everyday' lives. Participants were asked to comment on their understanding of child sexual exploitation, which provided the opportunity for them to define this concept and for any misconceptions to be identified and addressed as part of any further prevention/intervention work.

e) That key findings from the questionnaire are implemented and barriers removed to further encourage young people to access their 'sympathetic adult' of choice.

f) The support and guidance provided by the Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator in this specialised role via the facilitation of focus groups to develop knowledge, skills and share good practice.

**Information Packs:**

The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board Strategic Learning & Development Group identified the requirement for agencies to be fully aware of the signs and symptoms of child sexual exploitation. As a result a multi-agency task and finish group developed a child sexual exploitation resource and training pack. The pack is free of charge to all agencies and includes leaflets, posters, details on signs and symptoms and a 2 hour child sexual exploitation briefing which can be shared as part of agencies training or team meetings. The leaflets for young people and parents/carers were co-produced with a group of secondary school students to ensure that their critical eye and voice was constructively used to develop 'user friendly' materials. The leaflets are currently available in English, Polish, Russian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Slovak and Urdu.

**Multi-agency Training:**

The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board has developed and delivered a multi-agency child sexual exploitation training package. To date the course has been oversubscribed each time it has run and additional sessions have been arranged to meet the demand. Therefore, there is a good degree of professional time allocated to prioritise attendance at this training. Level 1 training is developed and delivered by the Sexual Exploitation Co-coordinator with training materials developed in

conjunction with the Joint Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Strategic Sub-group. A review of the training delivered over the past 12 months illustrates the comprehensive nature of the training (e.g. from sexually harmful behaviour to child sexual exploitation and learning disabilities) and the range of agencies accessed (e.g. from the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) to CAFCASS). The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board has also been a key contributor to the "Say Something If You See Something" campaign which has been delivered to hotels, multi-agency partners, Elected Members and other Local Authorities.

The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board has also delivered awareness training to over 480 approved drivers (including taxi drivers) and voluntary drivers, which is part of the annual updated training. Targeted awareness raising activity across the night-time economy workforce (taxi drivers, bouncers, takeaway food outlets, hotel receptionists and off-license staff) has also been delivered to ensure the visibility of child sexual exploitation. Not only does this ensure that training and awareness raising is offered to the wider community, but is also aligned to key messages from research (ESRC, 2015). Also, the National Working Group suggests that this is a sector that should receive training due to their role and contact with the public during the evening to assist them in identifying the signs and symptoms of abuse and exploitation.

#### **'Ambassadors' and 'Champions':**

The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board is currently running a pilot with two local primary schools to train a group of pupils as "Safeguarding Internet Safety Ambassadors". The pupils will be trained on internet safety and then be champions within the school setting by assisting and skilling up other pupils on how to stay safe online, including running assemblies and contributing to lessons on internet safety. Again, this is key evidence of collaborative work across the local community and the inclusion of younger voices in sensitive matters that impact on their lives. Offering young people the space to share their views encourages their engagement and participation.

There is evidence of continual processes of raising awareness of child sexual exploitation throughout the local communities., for example the Muslim community

have been proactively involved as several briefing events have been facilitated in Mosques and Madrasah's in Peterborough.

#### **Measuring Performance and Quality Assurance:**

Key developments have focused on developing new data sets to primarily monitor the demographic information of young people who are the subject of a child sexual exploitation referral. Multi-agency audits have also been undertaken to monitor the themes and messages from practice to inform future developments. The opportunity has also been taken to use audits to identify good practice and acknowledge how practitioners established relationships and addressed challenges. The good practice identified is focused on the final stage of this quality assurance process; focused on offering a debrief for young people on the findings of the audit of their case file. Not only does this 'close' the cycle of this quality assurance work, it also again includes the young person's voice in a collaborative, co-production and partnership manner. This form of quality assurance practice assists in ensuring that learning is robust, meaningful and in keeping with effective participation guidance when engaging with young people.

During April and May 2015, Peterborough was inspected by Ofsted, who judged that joint working between Cambridgeshire Constabulary and Children's Social Care was effective, in particular in ensuring a victim led approach, raising the awareness of child sexual exploitation whilst ensuring the safety of young people in Peterborough. It appears that significant efforts have been undertaken to drive forward organisational cultures focused on identifying and addressing child sexual exploitation.

#### **Operation Makesafe:**

This operation has two key objectives as outlined below:-

- 1. Target suspected offenders /locations and also identify the most vulnerable victims to ensure targeted support is provided.***
- 2. Facilitate the increased awareness raising of child sexual exploitation to highlight the signs and symptoms of child sexual exploitation to stimulate early identification of these risk factors.***

Operation Makesafe is led by a Detective Inspector who is based within the Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Investigation Unit. The Cambridgeshire Constabulary Central Intelligence Bureau are currently building dynamic intelligence pictures of child sexual exploitation across the Constabulary. This will be used to drive operational activity. The intelligence pictures will concentrate on suspected perpetrators, potential victims and locations or 'hotspots'. The Detective Inspector will make a policy decision in respect of whether to adopt a potential victim or potential perpetrator on a case by case basis.

## **5. What was learnt & evaluated?**

5.1. Undoubtedly, Operation Erle was managed via a robust ethos of multi-agency working, reflection and good practice. It is evident that a reflective approach was adopted to evaluate the key learning to establish robust service development. Summarised below are the key learning points identified:-

- The requirement for robust information sharing, but also a focus on multi agency analysis of presenting information to evaluate and map victims, perpetrators, 'hotspots' and common themes across cases.
- It became apparent over time that schools were essential in supporting victims and a source of intelligence and evidence. Schools and other educational settings hold a wealth of information which is incredibly valuable in establishing a picture of a young person's everyday life, including their concerns and vulnerabilities. However it should be considered that during the time of this review, Sex and Relationship Education with a focus on child sexual exploitation was inconsistent across all UK schools. Therefore, the lack of understanding of the signs and symptoms of child sexual exploitation may have reduced the urgency to fully investigate and escalate concerns. In response, several focus groups have been held with young people, which have also been included as part of the child sexual exploitation consultation events. This increased emphasis locally has improved information sharing between education and other agencies.
- All young people who were part of the Operation Erle enquiry, irrespective of disclosures were automatically subject to a s47 joint enquiry procedure unless



exceptional circumstances were evidenced. This ensured that the complexities of the impact of child sexual exploitation on young people were properly considered in a multi-agency information sharing context. However, this adversely affected Local Authority performance indicators regarding quantity and timeliness of joint enquiries. Despite this adverse effect, this shift in focus was necessary and beneficial to ensure that the complexities of each case were thoroughly considered and the appropriate relationships fostered.

- The need to produce and share victim contact strategies with all members of a joint enquiry. These strategies should include, contingency planning following a cold call of a potential victim; social media strategy; and suicide strategy.
- The importance of considering the needs of the family as a whole during the investigation that is, adopting a ‘think family’ approach (DCSFb, 2009). Also, the importance of considering the range of intersectional needs across the family unit is crucial. In particular, consideration needs to be given to messages from research and practice of the increased risk within specific ethnic minority groups of honour based violence and bringing perceived shame on the family. This relates both to a victim’s family and that of any perpetrators.
- A common feature across several of the cases was the prevalence of missing from home episodes. It has been acknowledged that young people need to talk to an independent person when returning home following a missing episode. A dedicated Missing Case Worker is now commissioned from Barnados to undertake this task for young people missing from home and National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) for young people in care, providing consistency and data oversight from these episodes. As a response a joint protocol was established between Cambridgeshire Constabulary and Children’s Social Care, which is updated on an ongoing basis.
- A key requirement identified was the need to establish robust safeguarding contingency planning across each element of the investigation, for example, suicide prevention strategies.
- The need was identified to have robust recording to assist with achieving best evidence and placing safeguarding as a golden thread to all aspects of the

enquiry for example, the need to ensure that significant unsolicited comments made by family members during searches are recorded evidentially.

## **6. Future developments**

6.1. The pace of change and development in Peterborough has gathered momentum as the criminal trials have progressed and the general national understanding of child sexual exploitation advanced. The focus of future work needs to be based on messages from research, practice and lessons learnt both locally and nationally. Overall, the key focus should be on maintaining the positive commitment, interest, momentum and continuous development achieved during this challenging period. Consideration needs to be given to the following developments as identified following the multi-agency action learning workshop:-

- The requirement to continue to work together and develop practice in a multi-agency manner.
- The continual development of comprehensive training and learning across key agencies working with children and young people via a robust training plan.
- The child sexual exploitation strategy to cover each stage of child sexual exploitation, from prevention, pre-court to post court interventions. Also, the strategy needs to highlight the media engagement and monitoring process.
- The identified issues with the previous management of missing from home episodes requires further attention, in particular the timeliness of reporting these incidents, lack of consistency in recording information and the completion of risk assessments.
- The reinforcement of appropriate assessment routes to ensure that young people at risk of or suffering child sexual exploitation are able to access support and services in a timely manner.
- There is a need to formalise all forms of inter and multi-agency information sharing by developing robust governance arrangements. This governance arrangement to outline the roles and responsibilities of intermediaries and translators during the prevention, pre and post court stages.

- The aim to strengthen links between Education providers, Children's Social Care and Cambridgeshire Constabulary around evaluating missing episodes from home and evaluate behaviour around patterns of returning home late and truancy from school. Monitoring patterns of behaviour across schools and colleges on a multi-agency basis to identify any trends and learning in a timely manner. This is now being taken forward in the Operational Group Meeting, led by the Strategic Lead for child sexual exploitation and missing within Children's Social Care. This group involves all multi-agency partners.
- As a result of identified trends, include specific consideration of issues in relation to child sexual exploitation within general transition planning for young people reaching adulthood to ensure robust planning and communication.
- Continual development and training around professional curiosity, challenge and listening to the voices of young people, in particular when addressing sensitive issues, needs consideration. However, the continual nature of this work needs to acknowledge the challenging aspect of working with families collaboratively, whilst also evaluating particular risk and vulnerability factors around child sexual exploitation. This continual professional curiosity needs to be formed on a foundation of an open and trusting relationship between key professionals and the family as a whole.
- As highlighted in Recommendation 8.1 there needs to be a focus on preventative education in schools and beyond. As a future development, this focus should include parents and carers. Also, the use of new media technologies, including social media should be considered as a platform for children and young people and their parents or carers to raise and discuss issues. Not only will this ensure that wider communication strategies are fostered to share concerns, it will also work to foster an environment for discussion without the need for direct human contact.
- As discussed, the normative structure through children and families services cannot necessarily prescriptively be adopted in these types of cases. There needs to be a continuous flexible approach to the service provision pathways, to include planning across children and adult services but also taking into

account legislative restrictions and access to appropriate expertise and resources.

- 6.2. To summarise, as the pattern and knowledge of child sexual exploitation evolves the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board partnership should remain open to new patterns of concerning and harmful behaviour.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1. Despite the challenges faced, key milestones have been achieved to ensure that the voices of children and young people are incorporated to inform multi-agency practice developments. Recent developments reflect that when concerns of child sexual exploitation have been identified, the multi-agency response has been proactive, comprehensive and reflective. This is not a simple task to achieve and the multi-agency drive of partnership working across Peterborough should not be underestimated. This has been driven and achieved under the watchful eye of the media and during a period of several investigations and criminal trials. Furthermore, continuing to listen to the voices of children and young people will assist the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board in moving forward with their child sexual exploitation action plan, to build community confidence that appropriate safeguards are implemented.
- 7.2. To summarise, the evidence suggests that the partnership working together under the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board in Peterborough have resisted the potential for agency inertia and the dismissal of child sexual exploitation as a problem within the city. As highlighted, there have been continuous developments to address this issue in a proactive rather than reactive manner. It appears that the focus of the strategy and action plan adopts a robust dual approach to prevent child sexual exploitation by protecting children and young people and prosecuting perpetrators (Pearce, 2014). Therefore, the responsibility for child sexual exploitation has clearly developed as a core business for the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board.
- 7.3. In accordance with key national guidance (DCSFa, 2009) there is a sense that the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board has effectively monitored how key agencies have continually assessed how young people are being groomed

for sexual exploitation and reflectively considered the routes into child sexual exploitation in their area. In response to the messages from practice and the criminal trials, the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board have worked to amend their prevention and interventional approaches to take account of evolving knowledge of the patterns of child sexual exploitation.

## **8. Recommendations:**

**8.1. *The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board should undertake an audit of the current provision within educational establishments to establish the current programme of interventions and its effectiveness. The audit should include the following:***

- ***Risk taking behaviour***
- ***Myths***
- ***Role of Social Media***
- ***Spectrum of abuse and violence***
- ***Use of coercion***
- ***Signs of abuse and exploitation***
- ***Appropriate behaviour in respectful and consensual relationships***
- ***Legal context (Consent, Sexting etc.)***

**8.2. *Relevant agencies to provide assurance to the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board that they review their 'missing from home' procedures to ensure:-***

- a) multi-agency information sharing,***
- b) appropriate recording,***
- c) timely discussion with young people and their families,***
- d) consideration of previous episodes of missing from home,***
- e) clear expectation for strategy meetings,***

- f) completion of return to home interviews,*
  - g) clear evidence of management oversight,*
  - h) robust data capture to identify any trends.*
- 8.3. *All agencies to ensure that the voice of children and young people is incorporated as a central aspect in all child sexual exploitation work.*
- 8.4. *The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board should assure itself that a 'whole family' approach (DCSFb, 2009) is adopted by all agencies when working to identify and address child sexual exploitation to ensure holistic engagement, support and protection. This approach to be driven forward by changes in policies and practitioner training. In addition, case file audits to be completed to evaluate and measure this change in practice.*
- 8.5. *The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board should ensure that if a large scale investigation arises, the needs of the specific young people or adults involved are considered at the earliest possible point, and identify the most helpful response from all agencies involved, including addressing their long term emotional health and wellbeing needs.*
- 8.6. *The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board should assure itself that transition planning takes place across all agencies with young people reaching transition age who have experienced child sexual exploitation. Flexibility is key in responding to individual needs, for example, it should be recognised that not all such young people may be open to Children's Social Care or willing to accept services from them. Some young people will require a very specialist transition plan, and this will need to take into account legislative restrictions and access to appropriate expertise and resources. The voice of the young person should be central to all planning*

**across agencies. This will require joined up working with Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs).**

- 8.7. ***The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board to use multi-agency data to map and evaluate high-risk areas for child sexual exploitation to inform the early identification of perpetrators and victims.***

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