



# **Missing from Home/Care, Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking.**

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**Briefing for Health and Well-being Board  
2 October 2014**

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## **Introduction**

The following paper is a brief summary of arrangements to support children and young people who go missing and those at risk of, or who are currently being sexually exploited or being "trafficked".

National statutory guidance in respect of children and young people who go missing from home was updated in January 2014. It reflects the growing recognition of the vulnerability of these young people and confers a considerable increase in the obligations and expectations of both the police and local authority children social care services at a time of diminishing resources.

Child Sexual Exploitation has been a priority for the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board and its Member agencies for some years and a Multi-Agency CSE Strategy is in place. It covers three areas: prevention, protection and prosecution.

### **1. Missing from Home**

Government regulations require two active responses to children and young people who go missing from home and no longer distinguish between children who are 'looked after' and children who are not. When a missing incident is reported to the police a risk assessment is completed on the basis of the information provided which determines the urgency of response. Incidents relating to children and young people are never given a "low risk" classification and this ensures an effective response with close monitoring and re-evaluation of risk over time.

Once a child is found two checks take place. The first is a "Safe and Well" check which is carried out by the police and the second is an "Independent Return Interview". The reason for the "independent" element is to ensure that the child or young person has access to a professional who is not compromised by association with the environment from which the child has gone missing. For 'looked after children', these are carried out by a Local Authority social worker, while those who have gone missing from their own home are seen by a Children's Society (CS) worker. This has been the case since 01/08/14.

This latter arrangement has a number of advantages. The CS workers are located within the CSE team enabling good communication in respect of historical intelligence, while their relationships with the families are less likely to be inhibited by any perceived stigma of social care involvement. CS refers children and families on to other services as appropriate and routinely thereafter follows up to come to a view as to how things are progressing.

Previously such interviews were only conducted after the third missing episode, whereupon it was not infrequently found that the child had in fact previously been missing six or seven times. That children are not always reported as missing from family homes has long been established as a significant concern.

The benefits of this recent development are becoming evident with children being referred to services that are able to address any issues at an earlier stage.

There are, based on the average of the last 3 years, in excess of 5000 reported incidents of children and young people going missing in Lancashire per year. Going missing from home is a key vulnerability in terms of risk of Child Sexual Exploitation.

## **2. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

Lancashire has come to be seen as having developed some expertise and to have been innovative in this field. There is however no room for complacency. The LSCB coordinates multi-agency activity in response to CSE and takes responsibility for the establishment and delivery of the CSE Strategy.

Three specialist multi-agency teams are in place across the county to respond to CSE and trafficking. The LSCB recently received an updated profile re CSE and analysis of the information has led to a number of recommendations which are being implemented.

Rates of referrals in response to concern about potential CSE have remained constant across the county over the last three years with around 1400 referrals per annum. 62% of young people referred were between 13 and 15 years old and 95% were described as "white" with the majority being female. The number of referrals in respect of males has however risen with 22% of the 2013-14 referrals being in respect of boys.

"Looked after children" are disproportionately represented in CSE referrals.

The offender profile evidences that 92% of suspects are male and 93% described as "white".

In addition to single agency training, significant levels of multi-agency training are delivered by the LSCB. More than 2000 professionals have completed the LSCB level two CSE on-line training and demand for directly taught courses is high. While this may seem to be a high number there are an estimated 60000 professionals working with children and families who need the level of awareness that this training gives.

The recent enquiry by Alexis Jay following concerns about responses to CSE in Rotherham made fifteen recommendations, all of which are being considered by the LSCB CSE Strategy Group to ensure there are no gaps in Lancashire. Initial analysis suggests that many are met in full and all are at least partially met. The LSCB Strategy and action plan will be updated to ensure these are met in full.

***Recommendation 1: Senior managers should ensure that there are up-to-date risk assessments on all children affected by CSE. These should be of consistently high quality and clearly recorded on the child's file.***

Senior managers do not routinely check all assessments but do have a general oversight; team managers for CSC and a police sergeant in the specialist CSE teams routinely approve risk assessments.

**Recommendation 2: *The numeric scoring tool should be kept under review. Professional judgements about risk should be clearly recorded where these are not adequately captured by the numeric tool.***

The new 'numeric scoring tool' is being used and reviewed. Practitioners are encouraged to use professional judgment and do not routinely and slavishly follow its results but instead use it as a kind of guide, open to interpretation;

**Recommendation 3: *Managers should develop a more strategic approach to protecting looked after children who are sexually exploited. This must include the use of out-of-area placements. The Borough should work with other authorities to minimise the risks of sexual exploitation to all children, including those living in placements where they may become exposed to CSE. The strategy should include improved arrangements for supporting children in out-of-area placements when they require leaving care services.***

This recommendation is complied with. If risk of CSE is identified a referral is made to the specialist team while in all CLA reviews the IRO will specifically enquire as to CSE and if there appears to be any evidence of its existence they must consider any assessment available and the level of risk. There exists a strategy whereby regular multi-agency CSE meetings are held to review the overall state of affairs and to plan whatever actions are required. There are only a few children placed outside Lancashire;

**Recommendation 4: *The Council should make every effort to make help reach out to victims of CSE who are not yet in touch with services. In particular, it should make every effort to restore open access and outreach work with children affected by CSE to the level previously provided by Risky Business.***

There is a pan-Lancashire approach to raising awareness of CSE. In 2012 and 2013 week-long events about this subject were held, publicised through national and local TV and radio, schools, football clubs, community and faith centres and such. This will continue annually so long as the problem persists: this year it is arranged for mid-November. In addition it is accepted that on-going awareness-raising is fundamental to the CSE teams and that early response to identified risks essential.

The services provided by the 'Risky Business' project in Rotherham are replicated in some of Lancashire's CSE teams. This needs to be the case throughout the County, North Lancashire and Chorley South Ribble are the least developed in this respect. Recruitment of workers to the dedicated teams is currently ongoing.

**Recommendation 5: *The remit and responsibilities of the joint CSE team should be urgently decided and communicated to all concerned in a way that leaves no room for doubt.***

There are three dedicated CSE teams in Lancashire (which also cover the two unitary authorities of Blackburn and Blackpool); pan Lancashire agreed responsibilities and core offer established and publicised.

**Recommendation 6: *Agencies should commit to introducing a single manager for the multi-agency CSE team. This should be implemented as quickly as possible.***

There are no managers specific to these teams: instead they come under their existing local management structure;

**Recommendation 7: *The Council, together with the Police, should review the social care resources available to the CSE team, and make sure these are consistent with the need and demand for services.***

There is a series of meetings planned to evaluate resources available to CSE in the context of, and taking into account, the contemporary reorganisation of both the constabulary and CSC;

**Recommendation 8: *Wider children's social care, the CSE team and integrated youth and support services should work better together to ensure that children affected by CSE are well supported and offered an appropriate range of preventive services.***

This work is on-going. YPS have accessed some CSE-awareness training but as yet do not have a presence in the CSE teams. There are established links, as is the case with the Youth Offending Teams;

**Recommendation 9: *All services should recognise that once a child is affected by CSE, he or she is likely to require support and therapeutic intervention for an extended period of time. Children should not be offered short-term intervention only, and cases should not be closed prematurely.***

This recommendation is accepted and there are examples of our funding of therapeutic support and of continuing long-term support being provided for victims and their families; there is recognition that siblings are often affected when there is a victim in the family and appropriate services for these have also been provided.

A number of films have been made featuring interviews with victims and their families which appear to have been particularly effective in illustrating the profound impact of CSE. They have proved to be an effective aid in therapy and in engaging those in training in this subject;

**Recommendation 10: *The Safeguarding Board, through the CSE Sub-group, should work with local agencies, including health, to secure the delivery of post-abuse support services.***

Intensive outreach workers, in the Children's Society's Street Safe Lancashire (SSL), provide valuable support to children and young people, at risk of or involved in

sexual exploitation, from report through to the court process. They provide support to victims as part of an integrated package of multi-agency intervention.

A recent Serious Case Review highlighted the need for counselling services to offer pre-trial counselling when needed and this has been reinforced through agency action and a newsletter that has been widely distributed across the network of partner agencies. The LSCB is seeking assurance from all large providers of counselling services that the guidelines about pre-trial counselling are understood and acted upon in the best interests of children and young people.

At the same time, the LSCB has concerns about the provision of emotional support for children and young people; either for mental health issues or emotional issues, including post incident support. The commissioning strategy for emotional health and wellbeing in Lancashire is complex. Schools and the voluntary sector, through external funding, contribute to the overall resource but Health continues to be the main commissioners of provision.

The LSCB understands that the draft joint commissioning plan is due to be agreed imminently and has asked that the Health and Wellbeing Board assure themselves of the adequacy and effectiveness of the strategy and provision;

***Recommendation 11: All agencies should continue to resource, and strengthen, the quality assurance work currently underway under the auspices of the Safeguarding Board.***

The LSCB has a Quality Assurance Framework that all partner agencies have signed up to and engage with. Each year, two or three topics are chosen as key focus areas for QA activity. In 2012/13 one of those themes was CSE. A full programme of quality assurance around the work of agencies with children and young people at risk of or victims of CSE was completed.

This work provided assurance about quantitative, qualitative and outcome indicators examined over a period of twelve months. The findings from the work have been used to build on and improve the work of the CSE teams. This work is continuing through bi-monthly reporting of progress on the CSE action plan to the LSCB.

The intended outcomes which the plan will guide partners to achieve are set against the actions and in summary are as follows:

- greater awareness of CSE leading to greater management of risk and reassurance in communities;
- protection of vulnerable victims with a clear, proactive approach in protecting those at greatest risk;
- more perpetrators brought swiftly to justice with greater support for victims throughout their involvement with criminal justice services;
- greater collaboration amongst multi-agency teams to achieve the best outcomes for victims and those at risk of exploitation;
- good intelligence shared more widely to inform decisions on the targeting of perpetrators and protection of those at risk;

- strong, effective and well informed leadership within all partner organisations;
- a commitment to ongoing learning and development in a multi-agency environment where best practice is widely shared and consistently applied;

**Recommendation 12: *There should be more direct and more frequent engagement by the Council and also the Safeguarding Board with women and men from minority ethnic communities on the issue of CSE and other forms of abuse.***

This recommendation is currently only partially met and work will continue to develop effective community engagement in relation to CSE. The CSE sub group of the LSCB has been asked to consider all the recommendations in this report and develop a plan to address any issues that are not completed;

**Recommendation 13: *The Safeguarding Board should address the under-reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse in minority ethnic communities.***

This sensitive issue is being addressed as in recommendation 12.

**Recommendation 14: *The issue of race should be tackled as an absolute priority if it is a significant factor in the criminal activity of organised child sexual abuse in the Borough.***

This is being pursued and there is no discrimination being applied in respect of combatting this criminality. There are many examples of our intervention among minority communities;

**Recommendation 15: *We recommend to the Department of Education that the guiding principle on redactions in Serious Case Reviews must be that the welfare of any children involved is paramount.***

Not within our responsibilities.

### **3. Human Trafficking (HT)**

The UK is believed to be in the top ten destinations globally in terms of human trafficking. It is not now true that this phenomenon is only present in countries with poor human rights. Evidence of trafficking within the UK for the purposes of labour and sexual exploitation is increasing as general awareness is raised.

All front line staff need to be aware of the nature of trafficking and to actively seek help for children and vulnerable adults. From April 2014 Lancashire has been part of a Home Office sponsored pilot study for the provision of independent guardians for trafficked children in the UK. There is to be support in respect of child advocacy from Barnardo's with the same for adults from The Salvation Army.

HT into and around the UK is known to have increased but precise figures as to the true extent are not easily obtainable. It is known that there has been a shift from the use of the larger UK airports and ports, to the smaller lesser known ones including

some in the North West, of which Blackpool airport is an example. There have been a number of children not born in the UK becoming looked after in Lancashire in the last five years. Invariably, these children have problematic backgrounds and only in retrospect has the likelihood of their having been trafficked been considered. In these cases there are indicators that the females have all displayed behaviours that could be evidence of the possibility of their having been victims of trafficking.

The designated workers within the CSE teams in Lancashire work with internally-trafficked children i.e. those being transported within the UK for the purposes of CSE. MASH, CART and CSE teams will become the designated front-line services providing the essential first response.

The regular LSCB and other multi-agency training sessions around CSE include input regarding Trafficking.

The third annual multi-agency week of action around CSE is in the final planning stage. Operation "Toledo", the name given to the CSE Awareness week activities which are scheduled for week commencing Monday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014, will include events targeted at schools, other professionals, parents/carers and the general public. The programme for the week takes a particular theme each day, such as street grooming.

## **Conclusion**

The CSE sub group of the LSCB reports on a bi-monthly basis about progress with their action plan and specific risks or concerns. They problem-profile on a continual basis and take reports from each area of Lancashire to ensure issues are identified and addressed promptly. In addition, the LSCB is planning an event for providers of children's homes that will include information about CSE and providers responsibilities. Operation Toledo will build on all this work to disseminate knowledge and learning on a wide scale.

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