



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

**Briefing for Overview and Scrutiny Committee
5 December 2014**

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.

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 was 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 took place in November 2014 and included events targeted at schools, other professionals, parents/carers and the general public. The programme for the week took a particular theme each day, such as street grooming. An evaluation of the impact of this awareness week will hopefully be available soon.

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 recently held an event for providers of children's homes that included information about CSE and providers' responsibilities.

Finally, the LSCB is due to undertake a multi-agency 'CSE diagnostic' during the next two months in order that strengths are built upon and that any areas of concern are identified and promptly acted upon. The LSCB will hold agencies to account in delivering these actions.

Jane Booth, Lancashire LSCB Independent Chair, 11 November 2014