

Assurance Meeting to Discuss Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) – Meeting Notes

Date: Thursday 22 September 2016
Chair: John Campion
Note taker: Jackie Irvin, Policy Officer, OPCC
Venue: Conference Room, Shrewsbury Police Station

	Name:	Capacity:
Attendance:	John Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
	Anthony Bangham	Chief Constable (CC)
	Amanda Blakeman	Assistant Chief Constable Local Policing (ACC)
	Jason Wells	Detective Superintendent Protective Services (DSupt)

Purpose

The PCC welcomed the CC and his team. The PCC explained that child sexual exploitation (CSE) was a concern for West Mercia's communities, in particular around Telford. As a consequence he had convened the meeting to hold the Chief Constable to account for West Mercia Police's approach addressing CSE. Notes would be produced and published summarising the key areas discussed.

PCC: What is the current intelligence assessment of CSE?

Response:

Child sexual abuse forms part of the national Strategic Policing Requirement and CSE is an alliance priority within the control strategy. National, regional and local CSE profiles have been produced. The current alliance threat assessment, which was developed in 2015 is being refreshed and will be republished in October.

CSE is an increasing area of business and there are CSE resources across the force area, working with partners. Set up varies across the force area to co-align with partner approach. In Telford and Wrekin there are long term and well established working arrangements in place and a Child Abuse Through Exploitation (CATE) support group exists, working with Independent Sexual Advisors (ISVAs) to provide third party support to victims.

The threat assessment identifies, locations, use of drugs, education and deprivation as key drivers. It assists in identifying any gaps and exposing the harm.

- Types of exploitation – there is a lot of awareness around the ‘boyfriend model’, but the assessment identifies that ‘peer to peer’ is an area requiring greater understanding.
- Locations – work has been carried out with hotels and taxi firms to raise awareness and both CMPG and SNTs are engaged in targeting locations.
- Drugs/ alcohol – both in terms of the wide range of substances, but also understanding the networks making them available.
- Education – this needs to be from an early age and forms part of the PSHE curriculum. PCSOs visiting schools have CSE as one of their areas to cover.
- Deprivation - this is often a contributory factor in a person being susceptible to CSE. Being able to hold conversations in a structured environment such as a school is important and an approach supported by Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB).

Third party support - Support from agencies such as Barnardo’s is seen as important by the force as it gives victims someone other than the police to talk to.

Partnership working – there are multi agency safeguarding hubs (MASH) across the force area, which speeds up assessment processes and ensure the right agencies are brought together. The force has been working with all the LCSBs to provide a consistent service and co location is ongoing in some areas. The biggest challenge to effective partnership working is data sharing across different IT systems and organisations. The alliance investment in SAAB and Athena will improve this.

PCC: How would the Chief Constable rate the current intelligence assessment?

Response:

The CC is confident that the intelligence assessment is adequate and that it will continue to improve over the next 2 years. The CC also recognises that there remain gaps in intelligence. The CC identified the following potential gaps:

- Systems – the force don’t know all of what’s available because systems aren’t integrated for example the missing persons database, COMPACT, in West Mercia doesn’t ‘talk’ to the West Midlands equivalent database.
- Sharing of information – landlords of homes in multi occupation is an example of a potential intelligence source, but not one the force has ready access to. This is seen as a gap.
- Deprivation – deprivation in areas moves and new areas emerge. The assessment doesn’t map out deprivation areas and it doesn’t predict potential locations for victims ‘upstream’ of CSE occurring.
- Digital analysis – digital triaging is being developed to prioritise devices and to generally speed up the interrogation of devices. The CC recognises however that until a device is looked at its not possible to know what it may contain.

PCC: Looking ahead where would the CC like the quality of intelligence assessment to be?

Response:

In a position where it is possible to be confident that the force is getting it right.

PCC: There are lots of reports with multiple recommendations around CSE, how can the CC reassure the PCC that all the recommendations are considered and acted on?

Response:

The ACC for Protective Services chairs a Critical Incident Management Meeting (CIMM) which is reviewing all the recommendations arising from the different reports, identifying any gaps, assessing which recommendations have been implemented, assessing the impact, whether any require reviewing or a fresh approach to be taken.

Across the alliance the picture varies. Telford and Wrekin in particular have a very proactive LSCB and head of children's services, with a high level of partnership working and awareness of CSE. In other areas there are concerns that CSE is not a local problem by partners and thus they are not prioritising it. The CC is confident the force is engaging with partners to ensure they understand the threats and risks within their communities.

PCC: What is the force doing to protect victims?

Response:

The CC is confident that when a victim is identified as such they receive a high level of service, however if a victim does not perceive themselves to be a victim then their protection is reliant on officers being able to recognise and understand that there maybe a CSE issue involved. Vulnerability training is being rolled out to improve this understanding.

PCC: Why does there appear to be a low number of flagged incidents and crimes showing on the force data?

Response:

CSE falls into a wider category of child abuse so it is not always easy to separate CSE out for reporting. It is recognised nationally that a growing number of our young people are likely to be a victim of CSE and under reporting remains an issue.

PCC: How do you satisfy yourself that staff recognise and understand CSE?

Response:

The CC is committed to vulnerability training for all public facing staff across the alliance that encourages natural curiosity.

[Information provided post meeting: *The College of Policing are researching a bespoke vulnerability training product, but have worked with us to develop our vulnerability*

workshops, which have been inspired by local and national Domestic Homicide Reviews and Serious Case Reviews.

Telford was the original pilot site and saw 38 CID, Uniform and OCC Staff and some first and second line supervisors attend the workshops. This pilot was evaluated by Worcester University, then rolled out in Warwickshire, and all forward facing staff up to and including chief inspector will attend the workshops by December 2016.

Worcester University will evaluate the effectiveness of this training, that will inform the development of the training across West Mercia. This is a nationally evolving educational program, supported by Chief Constable Simon Bailey, NPCC lead for Violence and Public Protection.

These workshops are supported by discrete inputs tailored to different teams such as OCC and CID to support the 'professional curiosity' and vulnerability messages, a wider internal communications campaign, updated intranet site links to PACE (Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation), and it is informing national debate about the silo approach to the 13 strands of prosecuting public protection, which has resulted in a change at NPCC level to considering a single Vulnerability Action plan rather than 13 disparate plans]

PCC: Is the Chief Constable happy that Telford wasn't prioritised for the vulnerability training?

Response:

The CC is not happy that Telford wasn't prioritised for vulnerability training.
[Information provided following the meeting: please see note above].

PCC: Do all new front facing staff get the vulnerability training early on and when will all existing front facing staff get the training?

Response:

All new staff are trained. Existing staff will be trained as the programme is rolled out.

PCC: How have resources been prioritised across the force area and in Telford? When is the intelligence model going to the North?

Response:

The force is moving away from small specialist teams as it has recognised that these teams did not have the capacity to cope with the increasing demands of CSE. Specialist staff will still be needed, but an increased number of officers and staff are being trained with a wider set of skills so that there will be greater capacity and resilience.

The new investigative model was introduced in Worcestershire first. In the north of the force there is still a small team operating which is not fully integrated. Resource levels in Telford will continue to be reviewed.

Learning from the roll out of the investigative model in Worcestershire and Warwickshire needs to be reviewed and changes made before it is implemented in the north of the force.

The Chief Executives from the unitary councils in the north of the force area have been involved in discussions and the force recognises that keeping stakeholders informed and onboard is important. The model will be designed over the next few months but there is no fixed date for implementation until all the identified issues from the review are resolved. Staff in the north have been made aware of this

Whilst the review of the investigative model roll out takes place Telford has an extra Chief Inspector for resilience and resources will be kept under review.

PCC: How reassured is the CC that the force is safeguarding those that we know are being exploited?

Response

The CC is confident that those that we know are exploited are being safeguarded. The CC recognises the following challenges:

- Partnerships - It is not just about the police, partnership working is important including support provided by groups such as CATE support in Telford.
- There is a tasking and coordination group in force which looks at investigations into CSE.
- Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) – the force has been working with the CPS to seek quicker processes and better criminal outcomes for CSE cases. Recent cases show that the force appears to be doing the right things for victims and securing the right criminal justice outcomes.
- Specially trained officer roles.
- Area for improvement – officers need to better identify CSE.

PCC: What is the force doing to address perpetrators?

Response:

- Cases and convictions are occurring and harbouring notices have been used.
- Offenders are placed on the sex offenders register. This is a growing list as more and more cases arise as convictions are made. There is a possible threat around how this will be managed going forward as the list continues to grow.
- It is recognised that there are very few support services for offenders.
- Overt and covert police activity both in communities and online takes place.
- Increased intelligence means that the force is now more aware of CSE networks and more confident that their understanding and knowledge of perpetrators and victims is better than it was a year ago.

PCC: How confident are you that all those who carry out CSE in our communities are known?

Response:

It is difficult to have an accurate number as the number of people involved grows year on year. As police understanding continues to develop so should confidence in whether they know who is involved however offenders are also getting more sophisticated as technology

develops. The problem is on a local, national and international scale. The CC does not have a high confidence level that the force fully knows potential perpetrator numbers.

PCC: What use is made of coercive control powers and are staff being up-skilled in their use?

Response:

Coercive control laws are applicable to a wide number of crime issues, not just CSE. A number of cases have gone to the CPS, but there have been no convictions to date. In a number of cases it is because there are more substantial offences attached to the case.

The up skilling of staff forms part of the wider vulnerability training.

PCC: Are partners adequately connected? Are there any not engaging? What is the overall assessment of partnerships?

Response:

Overall there are good strong partnerships across West Mercia, but there is less confidence in partner integration. Different partners engage in different ways depending on their own needs, and as with all partnerships there can be tensions, but generally partnership working is seen to have improved.

Ensuring the force is represented at a leadership level at all meetings can stretch police resources and there have also been consistency issues in police representation. The force is trying to commit to leaving leaders in place.

PCC: Is there anything the PCC can do?

Response:

The CC feels that the PCC should continue to engage with the political leadership in partner organisations. The CC made no specific request in relation additional resources / activity.

At the close of the meeting the PCC thanked the CC and his team for their attendance and contribution. The PCC reiterated that a note from today's meeting would be published in due course.