**Warwickshire and West Mercia PCC Trust, Integrity and Ethics (TIE) Committee**

**Protocol Report – Child Sexual Exploitation**

**27 April 2017**

**Jane Spilsbury – Independent TIE Member**

This protocol was taken up in May 2016 as a particular interest to me as an independent member because it links closely with the safeguarding element of my role as an education professional.

I originally met with Detective Superintendent Stephen Eccleston on 18th May 2016, who signposted me to other colleagues, including Detective Inspector Nigel Jones, who leads on CSE for Warwickshire and West Mercia as part of Protecting Vulnerable Young People. I also met with Kate Shipley, CSE lead for Warwickshire LA. The TIE Protocols were shared with Stephen Eccleston. I would like to thank all those who supported this process. It is important to acknowledge that this report represents a superficial view of this area of the work of the Alliance and is offered from an independent lay person’s perspective.

There is already a great deal of scrutiny over this area including JTAI, SSI, HMIC, Ofsted inspections of safeguarding and scrutiny by local authority safeguarding boards, scrutiny committees and panels. CSE is a national policing priority.

Originally the Alliance had one dedicated, specialist investigative team for CSE consisting of officers and support workers – 1 x DI, 3 x DS, 9 x DCs and 3 support staff coordinators. In addition, Warwickshire OPCC provided additional funding for 5 additional Police Staff Investigator posts, funded originally for one year. The Alliance was ahead of many other forces in this regard.

Following favourable findings of an independent internal review of the CSE team/s across the Alliance, dedicated teams are to be retained and additional resource commissioned. There is now another dedicated CSE Team in Telford of 1 x DS, 4 x DC's and 1 support staff Coordinator. The original team therefore now just covers Shropshire. There is also shortly to be an uplift of resources to the South team covering Worcestershire and Herefordshire. An additional 1 x DS, 4 x DC's and 1 x support staff coordinator will be added to the current resource and spread across both counties in line with the demand; distribution yet to be decided.

This is an encouraging development as originally the teams were only put in place for one year temporarily until March 2017. They are now a permanent part of the structure.

Although there has been an increase in the number of CSE incidents within the Alliance area, this is not atypical and is due to an increase in the reporting due primarily to heightened awareness. The Alliance has a good understanding of the issues surrounding CSE in all its forms. Additional resource has been committed to tackling on-line CSE, which is becoming increasingly understood and identifiable too. The introduction of the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Warwickshire has also seen an increase in referrals for CSE.

Officers felt that the approach to multi-agency working could be strengthened in terms of coordination and this has been recently confirmed by the findings of the HMIC PEEL Inspection in response to the question ‘How effective is the force at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm, and supporting victims?’, it was found that –

*‘Both forces have a good understanding of the scales and nature of vulnerability in their communities. They have analysed extensively areas of strategic risk and have produced profiles that are informative and influence operational policing.’*

*PEEL Effectiveness Report 2016.*

However, a clear recommendation was made that –

*‘Warwickshire should improve the way it works to share information and safeguard vulnerable people; specifically, by ensuring that the capability and capacity of the MASH enables it to process referrals promptly and effectively*.’

The MASH (Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub) was established in Warwickshire in May 2016 and it is fair to say that systems and procedures are being reviewed on an on-going basis to ensure that referrals are processed quickly and effectively to safeguard children and vulnerable young people. The sheer volume of referrals has made this difficult to achieve, but agencies are working together to understand the thresholds for intervention. A revised approach to Early Help will also help to achieve this.

Through the Pathfinder review mentioned previously, it was confirmed that it was justified to keep a specialist team for CSE. Officers clearly felt that it was important for this specialist team to be retained because the team needs to maintain on-going relationships with victims throughout the investigation and prosecution. This can be a lengthy period of time during which victims can be vulnerable to ‘being persuaded ‘not to pursue their cases.

On-line CSE as a priority is a direction from the NCA and a priority for the Alliance. It is a resource-intensive area of work so an on-line CSE team has recently been created to cope with the volume of work in this area, but also to ensure the Alliance can meet the expectations as set out by the NCA.

The health and wellbeing of staff working in this area is a major consideration. Counselling has to be provided to support officers. There is a need for additional resource in terms of searching computer equipment in investigations, and this is currently being addressed with as a separate issue within the Alliance.

Succession planning in this area of work can be an issue. It is not a popular area of work and all officers are required to be trained for one year in the SCAIDP system, which means that there is a long lead-in time for officers to be up and running.

The Alliance commissions support for victims in Worcestershire from Barnados with funding from West Mercia PCC. This is for two reasons – 1) to be more victim-focused and 2) because Barnardo workers provide the independence from Police and Social Services which can be reassuring to victims and build their confidence to disclose, as they are not seen as being from one of the ‘authorities’. It is important to recognise the valuable contribution made to partnership working by Barnados as a third sector organization.

It is hoped that this service could be expanded to the other counties but funding will only be available if there is a recognised need. The service currently relies on annual grants and could therefore be vulnerable to cuts and staffing issues if long term funding cannot be assured.

There is already nationally recognised good practice within the Alliance in Telford’s Child Abuse through Exploitation (CATE) team. The Ofsted inspection report into the effectiveness of the Children’s Safeguarding Board of Telford and Wrekin, published in August 216 states –

*‘There is a strong commitment from the local authority and its partners to tackle child sexual exploitation. A dedicated children abused through exploitation (CATE) team provides good quality risk assessments, planning, and interventions. Although relatively small, the team also reviews progress and updates plans effectively. Consequently, young people receive comprehensive and well-coordinated services that make a positive difference. The team is made up of staff from the local authority, who work closely with a police child sexual exploitation team as a 'virtual' team using a joint service pathway. A tool has been developed to assess risk and protective factors in relation to child sexual exploitation. Inspectors found that the tool was consistently used to both assess risk and inform planning. Recently, sexual health services have been recommissioned to support young people to access support. This is a positive improvement that young people are benefiting from.’*

Telford and Wrekin has established Operation Charwell Strategic Panel, chaired by Chief Superintendent Charles Hill, in response to the high profile CSE case in 2013. Having attended one of the meetings, I can confirm that this appears to be a dedicated and impressive process, which is rigorous in its approach to tackling CSE and supporting victims as effectively as possible.

The Alliance carries out preventative work as well, such as the ‘Something’s not Right‘ Campaign in Warwickshire. Schools in Warwickshire have been made aware of this through the monthly enewsletter to head teachers, ‘Heads Up’, and through the work of the Safe Education Partnership Board, which I chair. West Mercia now also has a bespoke CSE communications campaign under the strapline 'Tell Someone'. (www.tell-someone.org)

In addition, Young Solutions have been commissioned to deliver training across West Mercia for hoteliers, taxi drivers, schools and colleges. The aim is to roll out across the whole Alliance a process that is currently in place in Warwickshire, whereby taxi drivers only get their license granted or renewed when they have completed the training.

In conclusion, it is clear that:

* the Alliance forces carry out extensive strategic analysis of the areas of risk and profile the risk effectively;
* resources are constantly reviewed on an on-going basis to ensure that sufficient and appropriate resources are allocated;
* creative solutions are being sought to achieve this – CATE in Telford and Barnados in Warwickshire;
* good practice exists in many areas of the Alliance but there is no complacency about further development needs.

**Recommendations**

* Where expertise has been developed, every effort should be made to preserve this by providing permanent funding and to build in succession planning;
* The on-going development of processes and systems in the MASH will increasingly contribute to the effective support of vulnerable young people. As part of this, the views of victims should be sought to ensure that they receive the best possible support;
* Continue to ensure that the whole Alliance learns from existing best practice.