

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



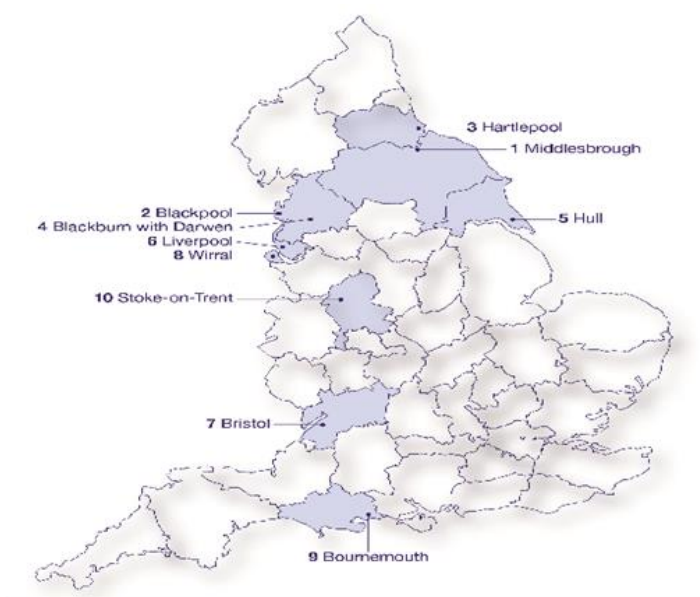
Report subject	Child exploitation to include information on County Lines and Knife Crime
Meeting date	7 June 2022
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This report provides an update on the actions and progress in identifying and supporting children and young people who are victims of child exploitation and the increased focus that have placed on those who may be vulnerable to exploitation, based on well-known indicators.</p> <p>The report also highlights the collaborative and close partnership work with the police and other agencies to intervene and disrupt the activities of those who target the most vulnerable children and young people.]</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>Information and update</p>
Reason for recommendations	Information only
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Mike White
Corporate Director	Cathi Hadley
Report Authors	<p>Zafer Yilkan – Interim Director of Safeguarding and Early Help</p> <p>Alva Bailey – Community Safety Consultant</p> <p>David Webb – Service Manager, Youth Justice Service</p> <p>Paul Sibanda – Service Manager, Complex Safeguarding Service</p>
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Information and Update

Background

- Members will be aware that child sexual or criminal exploitation occur when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual or criminal activity. The power imbalance may relate to age, gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, access to economic or other resources. The victim may have been exploited even if the activity seems consensual, and the exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur online.

2. Both girls and boys can be victims, and the perpetrators can themselves be children and young people. The coercers and perpetrators can belong to an organised group, criminal peer group, or act alone.
3. The government's 'From Harm to Hope' paper published in 2021, BCP ranks within the top 10 nationally, in terms of youth drug use and complex needs. The drug lines in operation within BCP are foremost from Liverpool, London and through Hampshire. The highest number of children suffering exploitation by type within BCP is the county lines. This is more than 50% that of sexual exploitation.
4. In the UK, an estimated 1,716 organised crime groups are involved in supplying drugs in the UK, including within the prison estates. County lines are driving increased violence in the drugs market, as well as exploitation of young people and vulnerable drug users. In 2020 alone referrals of children suspected to be victims of county lines increased by 31%.
5. The exploitation profile for BCP has not significantly changed within a period of two years. However, there has been a sharp increase in contextual safeguarding concerns and anti-social behaviour amongst the younger age group of young people between the ages of 10-13 years. There is a steady stream of referrals with increased screening across BCP. What is clear is the need to improve capacity and timeliness to offer multi-disciplinary service by all partners to address growing contextual safeguarding concerns for children at risk of exploitation and those children on the periphery, improve partnership working and better utilising 'artificial intelligence, mapping associations, locations and adults posing risks to children. This is an area of work that requires further developments.

Map of England showing local authorities ranked by opiate and crack cocaine use



Opiate and crack use rate ranked by local authority (per 1000 population of working- age adults)

1-	Middlesbrough	25.51
2-	Blackpool	23.45
3-	Hartlepool	20.53
4-	Blackburn with Darwen	18.84
5-	Hull	18.15
6-	Liverpool	17.06
7-	Bristol	15.66
8-	Wirral	15.63
9-	Bournemouth	15.05
10-	Stoke-on- Trent	14.67

6. The Council has worked with partners to establish an effective and coordinated response to child exploitation, localised to BCP. **The strategic approach was developed in line with the 4Ps principle below:**
- Prepare - enhancing systems and process to enable better understanding of local need, raising awareness and knowledge, and developing a responsive culture through embedding exploitation awareness within all agencies in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area.
 - Prevent - prevent children and vulnerable adults experiencing any issues of exploitation by ensuring as many people as possible know the risks and signs and how to report them.
 - Protect - identify those at risk, providing them with early intervention and support victims of exploitation to break free from exploitation and help rebuild their lives.
7. Pursue - identify, disrupt, and prosecute those who are intent on exploiting children and vulnerable adults.
8. Over the past two years the strategic focus established a strategic (Gold) group and a tactical (Silver) group to set policy and strategy, including securing resources necessary for investigating incidents. The structure provides effective and supportive senior leadership to help coordinate child exploitation.
9. The Community Safety Strategy for BCP, agreed at the Community Safety Partnership Executive Board on 26 April 2022, is based on three strategic priorities for the three-year period to March 2025, which are:

Tackle violent crime in all its forms

- Proactively tackle crime and work with schools and youth services to raise awareness at an early age about how to prevent violence
- Work with the Business Improvement Districts in Bournemouth and Poole in respect of safety in our town centres and in the night-time economy

Keep young people and adults-at-risk safe from exploitation, including online risks

- Identify and take enforcement action against those who exploit vulnerable residents
- Equip the community to recognise and report exploitation and to know how to minimise risks

Work with communities to deal with antisocial behaviour (ASB) and crime hotspots, including ASB linked to substance misuse

- Regularly consult local communities to identify ASB and crime hotspots and work with residents and businesses to improve safety in the affected areas, using a combination of civil and criminal legislation, as well as wider supportive and community-resolution measures available to the council and the police
 - Reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable victims through effective case management and multi-agency resolution.
10. Operationally, Children's Services Complex Safeguarding Service works closely with the Police's IMPACT Team to proactively intervene where children and young people have been identified as being exploited. This provides a specialist wrap-around package of intervention and support for the young people, intensive investigation and enforcement against those believed to be involved in the exploitation. This sometimes leads to the

identification of vulnerable adults who may have been themselves coerced into supporting the exploitation (cuckooing, drug supply, etc.)

11. Contextual Safeguarding work includes links to Adult Social Care, Commissioned Services, and community resources to ensure other vulnerable individuals are supported where required, such as referrals to substance misuse services.
12. Recently introduced a parallel operational format to help identify, prevent, and deter children and young people who are vulnerable to exploitation, based on some of the common indicators, such as gang association, missing episodes, criminal behaviour, inappropriate sexualised behaviour, etc.
13. BCP Children's Services the Community Safety Partnership, the Police and Health have been working hard to establish effective and co-ordinated response to children and young people at risk of or linked to exploitation which identifies potential risk to early and seeks to reduce risk and harm. Some of the regular activities as follows:
14. IMPACT Meetings are held weekly and currently chaired by a DI from IMPACT. Exploitation Team around the Child approach (ETAC) is firmly embedded in practice. Children identified with exploitation flags have regular ETACS.
15. Children Missing from care or home, daily briefings are held with the Missing Police Team and CST to discuss, and plan plans to locate them and disrupt them. Missing Strategy meetings are held in a timely manner and actions identified and followed up. Dorset Police are now completing Trigger Plans for all high-risk missing children and for those children who frequently come to the police attention. When they are completed, they are shared with the children's social workers for an input and assist with information sharing.
16. Philomena Protocol is completed for children that go missing to help and support then safely returning home or care. These are regularly reviewed and updated every 12 weeks. Return Home Interviews (RHIs) are offered to young people when they return, and this is at times completed by a professional the young person has an established relationship with.
17. Top Ten Panel Meetings are now firmly embedded. The purpose of the Top Ten panel meeting is to set up, monitor and review multi-agency safety plans for each child and to highlight the most vulnerable children to Senior leadership. Themes and patterns identified in the Top Ten Panel are referred to the appropriate operational/subgroups by the chair. Practice development issues are reported back to workforce development to contribute to future planning.
18. Reachable Moments Initiative have now been launched in BCP, signed up by all partners. This new initiative maximises the opportunities for engagement with young people vulnerable to criminal exploitation when they are in custody. This offer extended to include young people presenting at the Emergency Departments at Poole and Royal Bournemouth Hospitals who may be vulnerable to exploitation. The offer is for all young people who attend an ED irrespective of the local authority they reside in.
19. There is an identified need to expand Contextual Safeguarding activities to include those children assessed as at risk of exploitation that do not meet the thresholds for interventions through the social care route and fall within the universal, targeted, and early help services with strong emphasis on early help and prevention and avoiding situations escalating. Therefore, there is a plan to move into Phase 2 of the Contextual Safeguarding offer in BCP. It is proposed that the Contextual Safeguarding Service will become an integrated young people's service with staff holding a nationally recognized professional qualification in youth work or careers guidance and extensive experience in a relevant area such as youth work.

20. There is a proposed plan for Contextual Safeguarding Team to co-locate with the Police as this would further strengthen Contextual safeguarding multi-agency partnership working, collaboration and better utilising the existing resources
21. Contextual Safeguarding work includes links with Adult Social Care, commissioned services, and other community resources to ensure vulnerable adults are supported where required, such as referrals to substance misuse services.
22. Recently introduced parallel operational format to help identify, prevent, and deter children and young people who are vulnerable to exploitation, based on some of the common indicators, such as gang association, missing episodes, criminal behaviour, inappropriate sexualised behaviour, etc.

Relevant Data

23. The table below is based on police recorded offences, where the suspect or arrested person is aged 18 or under at the time of a weapons-related offence. It does not contain offences where the suspect is unidentified or more serious offences where a knife or other weapon is used.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Total
Specific Weapons Offences	62	76	74	87	299
Repeat offenders	61	69	65	80	275

24. The Community Safety Partnership is developing analytical work that will present a full picture of serious offences. This is largely a manual process due to the 'flags' used by police officers and there are some cases where some offences are not correctly flagged.
25. At the end of April 2022 there were 20 young people suffering harm from exploitation, 47 at risk of harm from exploitation, and 20 young people with potential concerns about exploitation. 26 of these young people were open to the Complex Safeguarding service at the end of April.

A breakdown by type of exploitation is shown below:

	Criminal exploitation	Sexual exploitation	Both criminal and sexual exploitation	Not yet identified
Suffering harm	12	3	5	0
At risk of harm	27	6	13	1
Potential concerns	13	2	5	0
Total	52	11	23	1

26. Twenty-eight children in care were at risk of or suffering exploitation at the end of April 2022. A further 10 children were on child protection plans.

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Youth Justice Service Response to Weapons Offences

28. A presentation summarising the Youth Justice Service response to weapon offences is appended to this report. Key points from the presentation are briefly summarised here:
- There has been an increase in weapon offences by children in the last three years.
 - Children committing weapon offences have mostly experienced trauma at home in their earlier lives, have been identified as having special educational needs and have experienced exclusions from school.
 - Dorset Police work together with Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service to decide the appropriate response to weapon offences by children, leading mostly to court orders or Youth Conditional Cautions.
 - The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) process for identifying and supporting victims of exploitation causes significant delays in the youth justice system. This has a detrimental effect on the outcomes for children and for victims of offences by children.
 - The Youth Justice Service work with other services to manage the risks posed by children who may commit weapon-related offences.
 - The Youth Justice Service works individually with children to understand and address their reasons for carrying a weapon.
 - The College of Policing has published a helpful guide that shows the evidence base for different responses to knife crime. (Knife crime: A problem solving guide).
 - Work with individual children will not be sufficient to resolve local concerns about knife crime. A strategic response is required, consistent with the evidence base outlined in the College of Policing guide, led by the Community Safety Partnership.

Options Appraisal

29. For information and update

Summary of financial implications

30. There are no financial implications

Summary of legal implications

31. All activities around Contextual Safeguarding, county lines and knife crime are covered by the relevant legislative frameworks and statutory regulations.

Summary of human resources implications

32. There are no human resources implications

Summary of sustainability impact

33. There is no sustainability impact

Summary of public health implications

34. There are no public health implications

Summary of equality implications

35. There are no equality implications

Summary of risk assessment

36. There is no risk assessment

Background papers

n/a

Appendices

Appendix - DCYJS Response to Weapon Offences in the BCP Council Area

DCYJS RESPONSE TO WEAPON OFFENCES IN THE BCP COUNCIL AREA

DAVID WEBB, MANAGER, DORSET COMBINED YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE (DCYJS)

INTRODUCTION

- This is an edited version of a presentation given to the Youth Justice Service Partnership Board
- The DCYJS Partnership Board members requested information about the service's response to weapons offences, in the context of concerns about youth violence, particularly in the BCP Council area
- This presentation covers data about weapons offences; criminal justice system decision- making for youth weapon offences; YJS resources and approaches for working with young people with weapons offences; risk management; future

plans

PREVALENCE OF WEAPON OFFENCES

- Comparison of child offences dealt with in BCP in the periods Dec19-Feb 20 and Dec21-Feb 22 (ie the period just before the pandemic and the equivalent period this year)
- Possession of a weapon is categorised under 'violence against the person' offences
- Between Dec 2019 and Feb 2020 there were 31 violence against the person offences of which 9 (29%) involved possession of a knife or other weapon
- Between Dec 2021 and Feb 2022 there were 37 violence against the person offences of which 17 (46%) involved possession of a knife or weapon

- Increase in number and proportion of weapon offences by children across these periods

WEAPONS OFFENCES BY YOUNGER FIRST TIME ENTRANTS

- Analysis of 'First-Time Entrants' aged 13 and under in the past 2 years
- 25 BCP children aged 10-13 entered the justice system from April 2020 to January 2022
- 13 of the 25 had committed offences involving weapons (10 of the offences were 'possess knife') and 7 had committed other violent offences
- 24 out of the 25 were first known to police as a victim or witness of harm, not for their own behaviour., ie these children had experienced harm and trauma
- 21 out of the 25 had special educational needs and disabilities (7 had an EHCP, 14 were at 'SEN Support')
- 23 out of the 25 had had exclusions from school, with 11 of them having had permanent exclusions
- The experiences and needs of these children raise questions about earlier pro-active support for them

DECISION-MAKING FOR WEAPONS OFFENCES

- If the child does not admit the offence in interview or has previous Court convictions – decision is to charge, ie take to court
- Assault with a weapon – likely to be charged unless very significant mitigation. Police Youth Justice Sergeant reviews such cases and will seek a view from DCYJS
- Offence admitted (possession) – can lead to an Out of Court Disposal for a first offence
- Under 16 – starting position is a Youth Conditional Caution
- Over 16 – starting position is charge – unless mitigation
- DCYJS will complete an assessment to inform the decision made by Police and recommend 'conditions' for a Youth Caution or Youth Conditional Caution

NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM (NRM)

- NRM is the framework for identifying victims of trafficking, including children who are being criminally exploited, so that they can be protected and supported
- A Home Office unit makes an initial 'reasonable grounds' decision, to be followed within 45 days by a 'conclusive grounds decision'
- In practice the final decision can take many months, eg 6-12 months
- Criminal cases against a child can be delayed for long periods while waiting for the NRM decision on whether the child is being exploited
- A positive 'conclusive grounds' decision can provide mitigation for sentencing or possibly lead to the case

being discontinued

- The delays and uncertainty make it harder to respond effectively to crimes arising from exploitation

RISK MANAGEMENT

- DCYJS Risk Policy amended in 2021 so that more children with knife offences come under the DCYJS multi-agency Risk Assessment Panel process
- Pro-forma prompts now used by the team with actions to consider for parents / carers / placement staff, DCYJS police officers, education, other agencies and DCYJS case manager, plus confirmation of National Referral Mechanism status
- Active consideration of 'external controls' – doorstep curfews (ie monitored by local police)/ exclusion zones – as part of Caution or Referral Order conditions

WHAT DO WE DO? – WHAT WORKS

- Focus on safety mapping / planning and away from a consequences approach
- Build trust to get to the bottom of what's driving the behaviour, eg child's perception of threat and risk,
educational needs, communication needs
- Range of resources used by DCYJS staff – including from Youth Justice Board Resources Hub
- **Recent developments**
- Involving the police Safer Schools and Communities Team staff where there is an online element to the knife offence, eg online activity driving fear / conflict
- Working with Police to understand their capacity to enforce doorstep Curfews and exclusions.
- Helpful college of policing guide on the evidence base for different responses to knife crime: [Knife](#)

crime: A problem solving guide (college.police.uk)

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

- Understanding more about the current and possible MASH/Early Help offer to children following a police notification of a knife/weapon concern. What is best practice? – what's the current offer? Is it effective? What are we learning?
- Easy/safe amnesty arrangements – have been raised at BCP Partnership Coordinating Group
- Publicity campaign akin to CSE/County Lines – practical information for parents if they are concerned their child is carrying a weapon
- What is the health offer? “Street Doctor” / First Aid approach
- DCYJS to consider increased contact levels for all weapons related offences
- PCSC Act 2022 creates a Serious Violence Duty which will apply to public services including DCYJS
- DCYJS responses need to be part of a wider strategic response led by the CSP