

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	Monday 14 January 2019
Officer	Mary Taylor, Senior Manager, Safeguarding and Standards.
Subject of Report	Safeguarding vulnerable children
Executive Summary	For information.
Impact Assessment:	Equalities Impact Assessment: N/A
	Use of Evidence: N/A
	Budget: N/A
	Risk Assessment: Not required

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	Outcomes: N/A
	Other Implications: None
Recommendation	The report is for information following articles in the Dorset Echo regarding Children's Services response to vulnerable children. No further action is required.
Reason for Recommendation	See above
Appendices	None
Background Papers	None
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1. Introduction.

1.1 This report was requested following an article published in the Dorset Echo on 20.11.18.

1.2 The article was entitled "The government report says Dorset council is not safeguarding the most vulnerable children" and it quoted from the report following the Joint Targeted Area Inspection of the multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation, children associated with gangs and at risk of exploitation and children missing from home, care or education in Dorset.

1.3 The article also commented on the exploitation conference which was held on 14.11.18 by the 2 Local Safeguarding Children's Boards and included the Police and Crime Commissioner's problem-solving forum on County lines.

1.4 The purpose of the conference was to consider the picture of prevalence of child exploitation across Dorset and also to confirm a proposed new model for effectively tackling child exploitation through strategic, tactical and operational lines.

2. Progress update.

2.1 As a response to the JTAI a written statement of proposed action was submitted on 9th October 2019 and was accepted without amendment. The action plan is comprehensive and includes a multi-agency mechanism to ensure that intelligence, knowledge and themes are known by all the agencies and acted upon in a timely and effective way.

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- 2.2 The new mechanism has a clear structure of a strategic group, where the membership are organisational senior leaders who will have the authority to assign resources and maintain strategic oversight of this area of work. A tactical group sits below this and will track high risk cases to ensure that risks are being managed and perpetrators are being disrupted. This group will also receive and disseminate intelligence and current information about threats and risks. Meetings of this new group are set to begin in January 2019.
- 2.3 All staff within CSC have had updated training in respect of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Criminal Exploitation training is currently being secured. Multi-agency training is also available through the DCSB.
- 2.4 A Criminal Exploitation screening tool and an assessment tool have been developed across the statutory agencies and these are out for final consultation prior to being launched in the New Year. Within Children's Social Care, we have used the screening tool to screen all children who are open to the service and are aged 10 years or older. This will provide a useful benchmark in terms of the scale of the problem for our young people.
- 2.5 We have established a Children Missing Education group which identifies those children who are permanently excluded from school as we know that they are particularly vulnerable to being exploited. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that excluded children are re-introduced to a new school as soon as possible and that there is an appropriate plan in place to support them in remaining within an educational setting following their reintegration.
- 2.6 Additional training and mentoring has been provided to Managers to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities in ensuring that children and families receive a good service and that cases are not closed prematurely. Where there is non-engagement from young people and/or their families, any closure has to be signed off by the Operational manager as an additional quality assurance process.
- 2.7 There is ongoing work, both within DCC and with partners through the Safeguarding children boards to ensure that we have measures in place to identify and protect young people from exploitation and to be ahead of the curve as the risks continue to emerge and change.

3. Neglect.

- 3.1 There have been recent articles in the local press about the prevalence of neglect in Dorset. Over the last 2 years there have been awareness raising campaigns for the general public and professionals regarding how to identify and respond to neglect. The purpose of launching these campaigns was to ensure that we are aware of children who are being neglected and can respond. An increase in numbers of cases, was anticipated and indeed, the desired outcome.
- 3.2 There is specific training for staff regarding neglect and we have an assessment tool to support staff in being able to quantify the extent of neglect and to re-assess to ensure that progress is being made.
- 3.3 There is a neglect sub-group of the 2 Local Safeguarding Children Boards which is in the process of refreshing the neglect strategy and beginning a new round of awareness raising.

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3.4 Other forms of child abuse, such as physical abuse and domestic abuse, are often seen against a background of neglect. It is also true to say that neglected children are more likely to suffer other forms of abuse and exploitation. Long term neglect has a cumulative impact on children which often remains with them into adulthood, and therefore we are committed to tackling neglect at the earliest stage.