



Date of Meeting: 4 September 2019

Lead Member: Cllr Andrew Parry - Lead Member for Education and Early Help

Lead Officer: Sarah Parker – Executive Director for People – Children

Executive Summary:

The Joint Targeted Area Inspection carried out in in May 2018, focussed on child sexual exploitation, children associated with gangs and at risk of exploitation and children missing from home, care or education, identified gaps in the partnership understanding and joint working in these areas. Since the inspection, significant work has been completed to develop the understanding of the issues across Dorset and to improve practice with individual children and young people. This work has been completed pan-Dorset to support a consistent approach across the partnership and to share best practice.

This report provides a summary of some of the work completed and how we will see better understanding of the risks, risk reduction and improved outcomes for children and young people.

Equalities Impact Assessment:

Not applicable

Budget:

Not applicable

Risk Assessment:

Medium

Climate implications:

Not applicable

Other Implications:

Not applicable

Recommendation: Not applicable
Reason for Recommendation:
Appendices: None
Background Papers: None
Officer Contact: Name: Maggie Aldwell Tel: 01305 225829 Email: maggie.aldwell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Young person who goes missing or run away are at increased risk of potential harm and research suggests that approximately 25% are at risk of serious harm. The most significant risk is that of Child Criminal Exploitation. which occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal or sexual activity. This will be carried out in exchange for something the young person needs or wants, and/or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or through violence or threat of violence. A young person may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Criminal exploitation of children is broader than Child Sexual Exploitation and county lines and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft, modern slavery, radicalisation and trafficking.

2. Return Home Interviews

- 2.1 When a child is found following a period of being missing, they must be offered an independent Return Home Interview (RHI). Independent RHIs provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing as described above or from risk factors in their home.

- 2.2 RHIs should be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting. This should be an in-depth interview and is normally best carried out by an independent person (i.e. someone not involved in caring for the child) who is trained to carry out these interviews and is able to follow-up any actions that emerge. Children sometimes need to build up trust with a person before they will discuss in depth the reasons why they ran away.
- 2.3 We are now offering most looked after children who have been reported missing an interview with a practitioner who is not involved in their care, through the Family Focus Team. The exception to this is the young people placed outside of Dorset who are often those at most risk. It is not possible for these RHIs be completed by the two workers as this would significantly impact their ability to undertake the local RHIs. This is being managed by the Care and Support Team by offering telephone RHIs and interviews as part of the social work visits. These measures are not adequate as they offer no independence, are not timely and are unlikely to be successful in reducing risk.
- 2.4 We have consistently found meeting the timeline requirements of all RHIs difficult and despite now having dedicated Family Workers to undertake the task, the data available continues to show under performance.

3. Missing Data Q1 2019/20

- 3.1 There were 189 missing episodes reported to the Police during Q1 (April – end June 2019), relating to 105 individual children. 12 of the episodes were re-categorised as ‘Absent’ by the Children’s Services Front Door Managers; that is the information indicated that the child or young person was not ‘missing’ but was not where they were supposed to be for some reason for a short period of time. Fig. 1 below provides a breakdown of the missing data, by age, gender, length of time missing and category. Although the number’s of looked after children reported missing is the lowest, they are statistically more likely to go missing than any other group of young people.

Description	Missing	Absent	Total
01. Number of missing incidences during the period	177	12	189
02. Number of missing children during the period	93	12	105
03. Number of missing Incidences where child is still missing	1	0	1
04. Number who were male	85	8	93
05. Number who were female	88	4	92
06. Number of missing Incidents where child is missing more than 24 hours	39	2	41
07. Number of children who were missing more than 24 hours	27	2	29
08. Number of missing incidents where child is missing more than 72 hours	11	0	11
09. Number of children who were missing more than 72 hours	9	0	9
10. Number of children who went missing on one occasion	61	8	69
11. Number of children who went missing on more than one occasion	32	4	36
12. Number who are LAC	25	0	25
13. Number who are CIN	37	2	39
14. Number who are children who are vulnerable	34	10	44

Fig.1 Children reported missing Q1 2019/20

3.2 Fig.2 provides the detail on the numbers of RHIs completed and the timeliness of the visit. Ideally each of the children missing would have been offered and accepted an RHI, on each occasion they were reported missing which would therefore equate to 189 RHIs being completed during Q1. The data shows that this was not the case for 81 episodes.

Description	Missing	Absent	Total
01. Number of RHIs conducted	99	9	108
02. Number of RHIs not conducted	78	3	81
03. Number of children who had at least one RHI	69	9	78
04. Number of children who did not have an RHI	24	3	27
05. Number of RHIs conducted within 72 hours	47	3	50
06. Number of RHIs conducted within 3 working days of being notified	68	6	74
07. Number of RHIs not offered as child missing on subsequent occasion(s)	1	0	1
08. Number of RHIs not offered as 24 hr decision did not identify risk	0	0	0
09. Number of RHIs not accepted	62	3	65
10. Number of children not accepting RHIs	33	3	36

Fig 2 – RHI statistics Q1 2019/20

3.3 There some known reasons for RHIs not taking place:

- *A management decision is made that an RHI is not appropriate.*

During Q1 there were just 5 cases (4.6%) where a decision was made that an RHI was not required. Two young people were unwell, one being in hospital and a manager felt a visit at that time was not in the best interests of the young person. One young person was seen by his social worker on the day and it was established that he was not in fact missing. In two cases the recorded reason for the decision is unclear.

- *The child or young person has gone missing again, within 72 hours of the previous episode and before the RHI can be completed. In this situation, the RHI would be completed only once.*

In Q1 just one young person went missing for a second time within 72 hours.

- *Recording errors/duplicate records were created.*

In two cases there was a duplicate record created in error.

- *The offer of an RHI was declined by the young person or their parent/carer, or the practitioner attended but the young person declined to meet with them.*

RHIs are rightly not imposed on children and young people, and although there should be a positive approach made, we do need to respect the views of the child and their family unless there is an evidenced risk of significant harm. I am however concerned that in some cases there was not a robust enough offer and persistence would support a better outcome. In Q1 65 (60%) young people or their family declined the offer of an RHI. This is an area of practice that required further examination.

3.4 A further area where performance needs to be improved is in the timeliness of the RHIs being completed. A safe and well check is usually completed by the Police as soon as the child is located or returned. An RHI needs to be completed within 72 hours.

3.5 In Q1 2019/20 just 50 of the 108 (46.3%) RHIs completed met the expected timeframe. There are again, known reasons why the visits might be delayed:

- *There is a delay in notification being received from the Police.*

This is data we have only recently been able to collect and for Q1 it is incomplete. However, at least 68.5% of RHIs were completed within 3 working days of Children's Services being made aware of the young person's return.

- *There is a delay in being able to contact the family and make the arrangements.*

This is reported by the RHI practitioners as an issue but at the current time there is no available data to confirm.

- *There is a delay in assigning the work*

This is an issue but again, there is no clear data on this.

3.6 Although there continues to be work required to improve our response to children who are at risk through going missing, we have made changes that will identify risk more robustly. The RHI practitioners who have been in post since October 2018 have been developing their experience and expertise. They are ensuring that responsible social workers for looked after children are made aware of risk quickly and the development of a Child Exploitation Screening Tool identifies the risks more explicitly. This tool is now embedded into the RHI assessment document and must be completed for all children over 10 years of age where an RHI has been completed.

4. Criminal Child Exploitation

- 4.1 Significant work had been completed across the partnership in our understanding of and management of the risk of Child Criminal Exploitation. A toolkit has been developed and is available to all multi-agency practitioners. The toolkit contains the CE Screening Tool, the CE Risk Assessment and CE Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Meeting and Plan templates. There is guidance to support practitioners in the use of the toolkit.
- 4.2 Risk Assessments can and should be completed by all partner agencies. The assessments indicate three levels of risk:
- Significant Risk – where a significant risk is identified there will be a Moderation Meeting to consider the risk. This meeting is attended by the assessing practitioner, and MASH Police, Health and Social Care. The Moderation Meeting is a benchmarking and intelligence gathering forum. Where a Significant Risk is confirmed at the Moderation Meeting, a Strategy Meeting will be held within 24 hours. All children and young people where there is a significant risk identified will have an allocated social worker and an initial Multi Agency Child Exploitation Meeting (MACE) will take place within 15 working days. There will be continued MACE Meetings at least every 6 weeks until the risk is reduced.
 - Moderate Risk - where a moderate risk is identified and confirmed at a Moderation Meeting, a Social Work assessment will commence if there is not already an allocated social worker. All children and young people where a moderate risk is identified will have an allocated social worker and an initial MACE Meeting will take place within 15 working days. There will be continued MACE Meetings at least every 12 weeks until the risk is reduced.
 - Emerging Risk – where a potential emerging risk is identified, a Moderation Meeting is not required but a MACE Meeting should be considered by the assessing practitioner and a MACE plan developed to reduce the risk. This can be managed through the Team Around the Family (TAF) process.

5. Child Exploitation Data Q1 2019/20

- 5.1 The data for Q1 in relation to child exploitation is not yet completely clear as the reports are newly developed and there continues to be data picked up on work completed before the new process went live on Mosaic. This is evident in fig. 3 which continues to report on CSE and the 4 previous risk levels (lines 4 – 7 fig. 1). However, the report does show that during May and June, 46 new CE risk

assessments were undertaken by Dorset Council Social Workers or Family Workers.

Risk Level	CSE	CE	Both	None	Not Known	TOTAL
1. Emerging/Reducing risk of criminal/sexual exploitation	1	2	1	13	0	17
2. Moderate risk of criminal/sexual exploitation	3	9	8	3	0	23
3. Significant risk of criminal/sexual exploitation	0	4	2	0	0	6
4. Category 1 - Minimal risk of sexual exploitation	0	0	0	0	7	7
5. Category 2 - Mild risk of sexual exploitation	0	0	0	0	6	6
6. Category 3 - Moderate risk of sexual exploitation	0	0	0	0	1	1
7. Category 4 - Significant risk of sexual exploitation	0	0	0	0	2	2
8. Not calculated	0	0	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	4	15	12	16	16	63

(Fig 3 – New CE Assessments completed May/June 2019)

5.2 There were 37 Moderation Meetings held but only 29 assessments considered to be reaching Moderate or Significant risk. This implies that 8 assessments were moderated to a lower level than the initial risk identified. However, this needs to be treated with some caution as the process is very new and the report picking information up retrospectively.

Did Moderation Meeting Take Place	CSE	CE	Both	None	Not Known	TOTAL
Information Not Available	0	0	0	0	16	16
No	0	1	1	8	0	10
Yes	4	14	11	8	0	37
TOTAL	4	15	12	16	16	63

(Fig 4 – Moderation Meetings completed May/June 2019)

5.3 We are now able to look at the number of CE Assessments reviewed. This is a disappointing picture as the data suggests only 6 cases were reviewed where we should expect to see closer to the full 29 as all should have been reviewed within 15 working days of the Moderation Meeting. This will need further interrogation.

Statistic	CSE	CE	Both	None	Not Known	TOTAL
01. How many children were reviewed?	0	3	3	0	0	6
02. How many reviews took place?	0	3	3	0	0	6
03. How many reviews on time?	0	3	3	0	0	6
04. How many children where the risk increased?	0	0	0	0	0	0
05. How many children where the risk stayed the same?	0	2	3	0	0	5
06. How many children where the risk decreased?	0	1	0	0	0	1
07. How many reviews where the professional judgement risk is different from the scored risk?	0	0	0	0	0	0

(Fig 5 – CE Assessment reviews completed May/June 2019)

5.4 We can calculate the total numbers of children and young people assessed as at Moderate or Significant Risk at any given date. Fig 6 is the total number of young people assessed as of 15th July 2019.

Risk Level	CSE	CE	Both	None	Not Known	TOTAL
1. Emerging/Reducing risk of criminal/sexual exploitation	1	1	1	1	0	4
2. Moderate risk of criminal/sexual exploitation	3	6	6	1	0	16
3. Significant risk of criminal/sexual exploitation	0	3	2	0	0	5
5. Category 2 - Mild risk of sexual exploitation	0	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	4	10	9	2	1	26

(Fig 4 –All children (open to Children’s Services) assessed as at risk as of 15/07/19)

5.5 We can also report on age and gender of the children assessed at risk at the end of a defined period, 15-year-old males being most likely to be at risk of CE and 14-year-old females at risk of CSE or both CSE and CE. The numbers are small and as yet provide no trends.

Gender	Age	CSE	CE	Both	None	Not Known	TOTAL
1. Male	13	0	2	0	0	0	2
1. Male	14	0	1	0	1	0	2
1. Male	15	0	5	0	0	0	5
1. Male	16	0	0	1	0	0	1
1. Male	17	0	2	0	1	0	3
2. Female	13	0	0	2	0	0	2
2. Female	14	2	0	3	0	0	5
2. Female	15	0	0	2	0	1	3
2. Female	16	1	0	1	0	0	2
2. Female	17	1	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL		4	10	9	2	1	26

(Fig 5 –Age/Gender of children and young people assessed as at risk on 15/07/19)

6. Update on previous plan presented to CPB

Action	Responsible Manager/s	Completion Date	Expected Outcome	Actual Outcome
The introduction of two dedicated Family Workers in the Extended MASH to conduct all Return Home Interviews	Maggie Aldwell	05.11.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of RHIs completed/accepted – Target 85% • Improved timeliness of RHIs – Target 75% completed within 72 hours 	Completed - As stated above, there continues to be an issue with the numbers and timeliness of RHIs. However, we now have a clearer understanding of why this is the case which will allow further work to take place.
The development and introduction of a Child Criminal Exploitation screening tool	Maggie Aldwell/Mary Taylor	30.11.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All young people over the age of 12 years open to Social Care will have been screened for CE and there will be an emerging picture of the prevalence across Dorset 	Completed - Recent multi-agency audit has identified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new CE Screening Tool and Assessment is being used and there is very positive feedback • Organisations have confidence in the Tools and the MACE process. • Good case presented where managing the risks through MACE rather than CP was more acceptable to the family and achieved better outcomes. • Many cases would suggest that there is further work in terms of there being multi-agency plans being put together and then the risk held as at multi-agency level. However, it was acknowledged that it is early days and the MACE should help facilitate this.
The development and introduction of a Child Criminal Exploitation Risk Assessment	Maggie Aldwell	30.11.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a tool available to all professionals to support high quality assessments of all forms of child exploitation including County Lines 	Completed – part of the toolkit, see above.
Mosaic Workflow created to support Multi Agency Child Exploitation	Maggie Aldwell/Mosaic Team	30.11.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MACE Meetings will be used to review CE Risk Assessments and more consistently and risk levels will 	Completed

(MACE) Meetings			be monitored and addressed through multi-agency plans	
Update Mosaic reporting to identify prevalence of all forms of child exploitation	Maggie Aldwell/IT Support Team	01.01.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports will be available to begin to develop an understanding of the prevalence of CE across Dorset 	Completed
Update Mosaic Reporting to monitor frequency of CE risk reviews and changing risk levels	Maggie Aldwell/IT Support Team	01.01.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports will be available to monitor performance in assessing, reviewing and addressing risk for Q3 	Completed

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 We have made significant progress in the work across the partnership in assessing and understanding the risks to children and young people at risk of criminal exploitation. The toolkit developed and made available to multi-agency practitioners has been well developed and a recent multi-agency audit has identified the tools support assessment. We need to continue to monitor progress with reviews as data is more available.
- 7.2 We are offering RHIs to over 95% of children who are reported missing and when an RHI was not offered, this was a decision made in the best interests of the young person.
- 7.3 However, we have not yet reached our target of completing 85%. This is due to the high 'decline' rate which needs to be further understood. A multi-agency audit is being completed by the MASH partners at the end of August which will help us understand this issue.
- 7.4 To improve timeliness, we need to work with police to ensure notifications are sent through immediately the young person is located or returns, ensure the RHI is assigned to a missing practitioner quickly, and that the importance of a timely visit is understood by the family.
- 7.7 We are not consistently offering our looked after children placed outside of Dorset RHIs, and when they are completed, these are often not independent. This is a concern as these are potentially the young people at the highest risk of exploitation

and other harm. An options review is required to ensure we are keeping our young people who go missing placed outside of Dorset safe.

8. Actions

Action	Responsible Manager/s	Completion Date	Expected Outcome
MASH Audit of RHIs	Maggie Aldwell	30.08.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased understanding of the decline rate of RHIs offered Increased understanding of timeliness issues
Discussion with Dorset Police to understand the delays in notifications being sent to Children's Services and resolve the issues	Maggie Aldwell	30.08.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved notification and RHI timeliness
RHI Options Review to be discussed	Maggie Aldwell/Tanya Hamilton-Fletcher/Mary Taylor	30.09.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A decision made on how RHIs are managed for children placed outside of Dorset that ensures timely and independent interviews are consistently taking place.