

## LEARNING BRIEFING:

### Child Criminal Exploitation, learning from recent reviews

#### Introduction

This briefing note has been completed to summarise the learning in respect of a recent learning review commissioning and completed by the Nottingham City Safeguarding Childrens Partnership. The aim of the briefing is to:

- Share key learning across the partnership
- To inform frontline practitioners of the issues identified and learning that can be applied to improve practice.

#### How this document can be used

- Please read this document carefully and consider the learning in respect of families you are currently working with.
- Keep this document in a handy place to support easy reference in future work.
- Take this document to team meetings and share with colleagues.
- Use this document in supervisions for reference and to support case management / reflective practice.

#### Case Summary

The review focused on the circumstances and interventions delivered to three teenage siblings involved in child criminal exploitation, two of whom were found guilty of, and received a significant custodial sentence for, a serious violent offence.

#### Case Characteristics:

- A number of vulnerabilities were identified:
  - The family were split across two countries.
  - There was a lack of consistent parenting and support offered by the parents
  - Poor supervision and home alone incidents
  - Financial difficulties
  - Parental resistance to support

Over a five year period, the family received varying levels of support including a period on a Child Protection Plan, targeted family support interventions, YJS interventions, and the initiation of care proceedings. There were reports of physical altercations within the family, behaviour beyond parental control, poor school attendance and frequent episodes of going missing. There was also evidence of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) during this time, and increasingly, two of the siblings were brought to the attention of the police.

There was evidence of good communication sharing between key professionals and appropriate interventions and escalations.

## **Learning points**

- Neglect

Neglect and failure to fully address concerns around parenting at an early stage contributed to the vulnerability of these young people to criminal exploitation and involvement in criminal activity. It is of critical importance that workers understand the associated risk outside of the home when parents fail to provide appropriate supervision and guidance and do not take responsibility for children's physical and emotional needs.

- Recognising and managing the young person's fear

Despite good communications sharing, periods of intensive support and appropriate escalations, these young people still ended up involved in a serious violent event with life altering consequences. The level of fear and entrenchment created by criminal exploitation and specifically debt bondage cannot be underestimated, and must be considered, and reflected in care plans and interventions. The risks posed are extra familial and do not respond to the traditional family based interventions and support that are used for other forms of abuse. By the time individuals are exploited to this degree, there appear to be very few effective strategies to disengage them from the situation and therefore early identification and interventions are key.

- Legislation

This case highlighted a national issue in relation to the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) act, 1984. The PACE codes of practice were revised in 2017 when the relevant sections of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 were commenced. This effectively stopped Police using pre-charge bail and introduced 'Release Under Investigation' (RUI). This made a significant difference as it prevented the use of restrictive bail conditions which might have otherwise been imposed. Following further Home Office guidance in early 2018 the emphasis has now changed to allow the use of pre-charge bail where it is appropriate.

Police bail conditions were first imposed on 11/04/18 at which point the twins were already open to TYS and one or both had been arrested on 4 separate occasions. Two of these matters were subsequently referred to the CPS/authorised for charge. Due to this, the possibility of imposing any statutory enforcements/control measures was not realised until some five months after their first arrest.

## **Actions already taken to address CCE**

- Raising awareness amongst health professionals of CCE. Multi-agency training (Every Colleague Matters) was open to all agencies working to safeguard children with a focus on CCE and contextualised safeguarding (February 2019).
- The crime and drugs partnership are working in partnership with Nottingham Trent University to work on developing an evidence based data model to support early identification of those children who may be more vulnerable to involvement with youth crime and exploitation.
- Developed and implemented the use of a CCE toolkit aimed at identifying those who are involved in or vulnerable to CCE

- Establishment of complex strategy meetings for those identified in the CCE toolkit as being involved in or vulnerable to child criminal exploitation.
- Establishment of a multi-agency CCE panel - aim of enabling information sharing, a focused discussion and a quality assurance role with regards to ensuring all agencies are working together, and that all possible powers and options are being used to safeguard child victims and disrupt offender activities
- Police focus and new guidance on knife crime
- “Street Aware” – Awareness raising project within schools regarding the dangers of knife crime.
- Establishment of Serious Youth violence and exploitation hub

### **What can you do?**

- Continue raising awareness within your organisation of what CCE is, how professionals should respond and the available guidance and support. If we can identify vulnerable young people early on, we have more chance of making a difference
- Encourage your organisation to include CCE in mandatory training.

### **Useful Summaries**

#### **What is Criminal exploitation?**

Criminal exploitation interlinks with a number of multiple vulnerabilities and offences including the child being exposed to and/or victim of physical and emotional violence, neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation, modern day slavery and human trafficking, domestic abuse and missing episodes. (Childrens Society 2017)

#### **Key factors**

- In most cases of county lines exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange (e.g. carrying drugs in return for something).
- The victim is offered, promised or given something they need or want, the exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or clothes) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived friendship or affection).

#### **Victim not suspect**

- It is still exploitation even if the activity appears consensual;
- Exploitation can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
- It can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and young people or adults;
- It is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation.

#### **Impact and Trauma**

- Risk of significant physical harm from weapon enabled violence
- Trafficking (arranged moves around country)
- Criminal record
- Psychological harm due to trauma of experiencing and or witnessing violence.
- Unpayable debts.
- Sexual violence and sexual exploitation.

### **Child Exploitation - Grooming Cohesion the common thread**

- Tricking young people into getting into their debt, for example, by arranging for them to be robbed. They will then be in '**debt bondage**' to the gang, owing it a debt that may also have interest.
- Giving them gifts, protection, using the word family making them feel they belong.
- Peer grooming is common and takes place in schools, communities and via social media.
- **These methods can lead to children firmly believing they have made an active choice to join and to deny that they have been exploited whilst also being scared.**

### **Signs to look out for – Key Indicators**

- Excess cash
- New clothing
- Going missing – (out of county)
- Leaving home / care without explanation
- Suspicion of physical assault / unexplained injuries
- Increase in mobile phone use
- Change in behaviours – ASB
- The term O.T. (Out of town) / Gone Foreign/ Country
- Suddenly employed working out of town, no previous mention of interview, limited details of role and company working for.
- Regularly being found away or going to other cities;
- Relationships with controlling individuals or groups these may be older; (Don't forget as with CSE, peer victims can be used to groom and recruit.)
- Significant decline in school results / performance;
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being

### **Key Vulnerabilities**

- Having a prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse.
- Lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past(domestic abuse or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example);
- Social isolation or social difficulties;
- Economic vulnerability;
- Homelessness or insecure accommodation status;
- Connections with other people involved in gangs;
- Having a physical or learning disability
- Having mental health or substance misuse issues;
- Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories).

## Useful links / resources

[CCE risk analysis toolkit.docx](#)

[CCE Pathway.docx](#)

[Child Criminal Exploitation guide.pdf](#)

[County Lines guidance.pdf](#)

[Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-exploitation-disruption-toolkit>

Appropriate language Guide Child Sexual / and or Criminal exploitation

<https://www.csepoliceandprevention.org.uk/sites/default/files/Guidance%20App%20Language%20Toolkit.pdf>