

Independent Scrutiny Activity: *Thematic Assurance Event – Child exploitation including transitions to adulthood*

Date: November to January 2024

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Scope of independent scrutiny activity (including number of cases)

This thematic assurance focused on the Multi-Agency Criminal Exploitation arrangements primarily for 17-18 year old young people who are transitioning into adulthood. The terms of reference covered the help and support made available to this age group around the transition to adulthood, including the assessment of risk and purposeful planning to make them safer, as well responding to their education and employment needs.

Meetings were held with the following;

- Attendance at the November MACE meeting
- Multi agency managers and practitioners to discuss their roles, remit and responsibilities
- Attendance at the MACE Triage meeting
- Multi-agency practitioners who presented their work through case discussions relating to 3 young people
- 14 cases in total were considered in detail across all meetings

Areas of strengths and good practice

- The managers and practitioners who attended the discussion about roles and responsibilities talked passionately about establishing meaningful and purposeful professional relationships with the young people
- Good sense of leadership, learning culture and evidence of strong local partnerships
- There is a 'Build the team around the relationship' mindset, that is strengths based and relationship driven
- Both practitioners and managers felt their leaders promoted relationship-based working and built capacity to allow practitioners to develop skills and have time to do the work
- Good multi-agency attendance from a wide range of agencies and bodies across the safeguarding partnership
- Practice is young person centered with the appropriate use of professional language therefore avoiding any shaming or blaming language
- Evidence of disrupting 'pull factors' and suspected perpetrator activity
- Both the MACE and the Triage meeting assess and analyse the young persons' circumstances, when necessary, in terms of both victim and perpetrator
- The meetings were well attended by the relevant agencies - past actions were reviewed, updated and added to the meeting record

- The meetings considered individual needs as well as location mapping and hotspots, focusing on locations, places and spaces where actual or suspected exploitation, took place. Good knowledge of local hotspots and robust targeted interventions was evident
- Detailed updates on police operations with a focus on prevention and disruption of suspected exploitation/harm
- Crime suspects were discussed and profiles displayed showing a strong emphasis on tackling suspected perpetrators
- All agencies in attendance at the MACE and the triage meeting were well prepared in sharing information about risk and needs, including health, education and specific disabilities, as well as contributing to relevant and robust plans of help, support and intervention
- Throughout the many cases discussed at the MACE there was appropriate consideration of current risk, past history, analysis of context and purposeful disruption and safety planning. Cases were RAG rated around a high, medium, low risk framework which helped risk analysis
- Assessment was holistic including consideration of other children in the family, issues relating to drugs, domestic abuse and mental wellbeing, as well as friendship /peer group connections, with any themes analysed and factored in
- Funding from community safety bids had been secured to invest in known 'hotspot areas
- The three case studies evidenced strong multi agency working and tenacity in developing relational approaches
- **Case 1** showed good, timely transition planning with adult services and effective communication and working by a range of agencies: Children's social care, adults social care, learning disability service, Youth Justice Partnership (YJP), Child Exploitation Intervention Team, The Blue Door and GPs. The young people continued to be discussed in MACE beyond the age of 18 to ensure the targeted support achieved the desired outcomes of making the young person safer from criminal and sexual exploitation. Agencies worked together to involve the young person's family and friends, both before and after, she attained the age of 18
- **Case 2** highlighted the tenacious attempts to engage with the young person and reflective practice in considering who would be best suited to help and support the young person and his family, both in terms of his identity and culture. There was proactive planning for transition through adult services and purposeful working between children's social care, adult social care and the YJP
- **Case 3** evidenced better outcomes for the young person through effective inter-agency working between the YJP and the Probation Service

Key areas for further consideration and development

- The role and contribution from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) services may require some element of examination. There was no representation from CAMHS at the practitioners case discussion meetings or the MACE Triage meeting when considering some young people with significant mental health issues. There were some issues raised about gaps in service and proactivity from CAMHS which is worthy of further exploration.

- The case of CS discussed at the MACE Triage meeting raised many challenges for the professionals involved, particularly the police. Maybe this case would benefit from some level of reflection separate from such meetings. It was reported that the young person had been subject of police powers of protection 5 times in 6 weeks. There was talk of the young person 'putting herself at risk' and being 'brazen' in her behaviour and need for a 'secure 'home. The young person had a significant learning disability and vulnerabilities. Whilst the agencies were trying their hardest to keep the young person safe and possibly done all that they could, it felt as an independent observer, that the challenges were becoming overwhelming and in need of some pause for reflection and learning about what more, if anything could be tried or done differently

Actions (identified SMART actions)	
Action	Timescale
CAMHS representation and contribution to the MACE process be reviewed and strengthened where required	July 2024
The MARPF meeting to undertake a deep dive on the case CS and feedback the learning to the SPLIG/ROTH Strategic Group as appropriate	July 2024