

Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

Multi-agency Audit Children at risk of or experiencing exploitation.

Between December 2022 and January 2023, agencies across the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership took part in a multi-agency audit to determine how well the partnership identifies and responds to children and young people at risk of or experiencing exploitation (CRE). The audit covered 6 cases from each local authority, across a range of risk and need aged 15. Information was collated from a wide variety of agencies across the partnership. The following briefing is a short summary of what we found in the sample of cases reviewed.

Preventing exploitation:

We saw common themes in presenting needs, for example neurodiverse conditions such as ASC and ADHD, poor mental health, family conflict/family breakdown and cumulative harm. Most had previous interventions through multi-agency teams, however most were not identified as being subject to or at risk of exploitation until the most recent interventions.

To support prevention of exploitation, attention to these and other risk factors need to be consistently acknowledged as part of ongoing support for the family as the child/ren grow up.

Identifying and safeguarding children:

Most of the young people reviewed were already working with children's services, when risk of/exploitation was identified, having been referred for a wide variety of reasons. Once identified, support was timely and appropriate referrals made to a wide variety of services.

We saw evidence of effective [risk assessments](#) which showed clear understanding of the risks, strengths, and contributing factors. Triggers and drivers appeared well understood supported by analytical assessments. By necessity plans and work were often directed by managing immediate safety.

Information sharing was prompt and plentiful in both local areas, particularly in response to incidents and new information including cross border (Notts, Bradford, British Transport Police). This allowed prompt analysis and support in response to rapidly changing situations and was a particular strength in high-risk criminal exploitation cases.

Direct work around self-esteem, personal recognition of risk and promoting safety was detailed, with wide ranging implementation across a variety of services, and was well structured around the young person needs.

Where relevant, we saw good balance between the risk to the young person, as well as any risks they posed to others. This created challenge between practitioners, which were resolved through well developed networks and professional discussion.

In both areas there were observations around the feedback loop following referrals to some external services being underdeveloped, which meant the network of

professionals were unclear on progress made towards outcomes. In addition, we saw a small number of examples where young people were referred to specialist services and ultimately received no support. In some cases, this was because the referral was too complex and it was therefore not the right service, and a lack of onward referral/signposting from these services meant that support was delayed. We also saw a small number where commissioned services such as CAHMS and Breakout closed due to lack of engagement/attendance. It is important to remember that the wider context and lived experience of the young person engagement and attendance is often a barrier to be overcome, and we also saw examples where the wider network supported young people to access appointments.

Written language was a strength in both local areas, and gave a clear sense of positive, caring relationships with practitioners. In most cases language used clearly showed adherence to previously circulated guidance, and in the small number of cases where this wasn't the case there was evidence of robust challenge from other practitioners.

School was a clear protective factor for many of the young people. For some, temporary or permanent exclusions and managed moves coincided with escalating risk and schools and networks should be alert to the destabilizing effect this can have on young people and their families.

Pursue, protect, and disrupt individuals responsible for exploitation.

Disruption activities were consistently and effectively used on an individual level to keep young people safe.

[Operation Liberty](#) submissions were evident across a number of agencies, some of the young people in the audit were also linked to Operation Trapped, Operation Tinman and local problem management plans. There was evidence of cross border mapping between Derby and Derbyshire, as well as out of area. There was limited evidence of disruption further up the chain as this was outside of the scope of audit.

Working in partnership with professionals, parents/carers and young people

The young people reviewed as part of this audit (and where relevant their families) were supported by tenacious and conscientious workers that know them well. There was good attention to the voice of the young person, their identity and their lived experiences, resulting in a clear understanding of the young person's strengths and needs. There was less evidence that this understanding helped to drive the plan.

We saw lots of evidence of workers across all agencies being persistent and consistent in their efforts to engage young people that were harder to reach. Where relationships with one agency were less productive with the young person or their parents/carers the multi-agency network worked closely together to ensure that any work impacted by engagement was covered elsewhere.

There was good evidence of effective safety planning in collaboration with the young person and family, however in a small number of cases the professional network was not sufficiently mindful of the impact that following the plan would have on the family, both in terms of capacity and their relationship with the young person. This was particularly evident in cases where grandparents were providing care to the young person and their siblings.

For further information please visit [Child Sexual Exploitation \(ddscp.org.uk\)](https://www.ddscp.org.uk)

If you have any comments or questions on the audit or the briefing, please contact Victoria.thornber@derby.gov.uk for further information.