

## **Project Learning Report**

<b>Details of Bespoke Support Project (BSP):</b>	
Partnership Name:	Coventry
Core partner agencies involved:	Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Board, Children's Social Care, Adult's Social Care, Police, Voluntary sector, Youth Offending team,
Number of Local Authority areas covered:	One unitary authority, one regional Police force (West Midlands Police)
Regional Area:	Midlands
BSP Project Type:	Standard
BSP Methodology/ methodologies	Bespoke – Conceptualising child exploitation and approach to assessing risk
Date BSP commenced:	January 2020 – April 2020
<b>Reasons why the local area requested the TCE Support programme:</b>	
<p>Locally, Coventry's child sexual exploitation strategic subgroup has recently expanded to focus on child exploitation and extra-familial harm. There were reflections from the strategic group and the Chief Executive's that they cannot assume that what works to tackle and disrupt child sexual exploitation will automatically transfer to wider forms of child exploitation, but the partnership did not want to lose sight of what they believe has worked well previously. As a partnership they applied to the Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) programme for a bespoke support project as they wished to firstly explore and conceptualise the definitions of child exploitation (CE), child criminal exploitation (CCE) and child sexual exploitation (CSE) which would underpin the principles of developing a data set to expand their current understanding of the local profile beyond child sexual exploitation to child exploitation.</p>	
<b>Aims of the BSP as identified in the Project Specification:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity around the use of definitions and terminology for child exploitation and extra-familial harm</li> <li>• To develop the local area's understanding of the child exploitation and extra-familial harm profile</li> <li>• Understand what questions are needed to be asked to the partnership to collate the right data</li> <li>• To explore opportunities to develop a partnership data set</li> </ul> <p>In addition the TCE project team felt that due to the support requested regarding conceptualising child exploitation it felt there was an opportunity to provide the partnership with some external guidance on the screening tool which is previously being trialled.</p>	
<b>Approaches / methods taken to achieve the aims and deliver the BSP:</b>	
<p>The TCE project team have taken an engaging and coaching support, seeking to support leaders in Coventry to develop their own critique of the screening tool, supporting them</p>	

to explore the types of data they require and what they might need to do to ensure consistent analysis of this. The TCE project team facilitated reflective discussions to encourage the local area to approach their own conclusions due to their localised knowledge. There was a notable passion and motivation of staff in Coventry who engaged in the project who were really keen to make progress in understanding and responding to their local profile around exploitation. Initially, the TCE programme completed a document review of Coventry's child exploitation screening tool followed by a workshop facilitation to look at the definitions of child exploitation and the relationships between them, as well as their response to child sexual exploitation and changes that may be needed to respond appropriately to multiple forms of exploitation. The second delivery workshop reflected with the local area on the screening tool ensuring that the local area still had ownership of their tool with TCE facilitating reflective discussions and empower the partnership to troubleshoot. For the second workshop building on from the previous workshop, the partnership were engaged in discussions that prompted their thinking about what type of data is currently available and collected around child exploitation, who from and how is it analysed and shared. The group acknowledged that there was work to be done, specifically when thinking about wider exploitation and not just child sexual exploitation and how data could be analysed and shared to inform at a strategic level for resources but also the workforce to upskill.

**Key issues that arose during the delivery of the BSP:**

- for a local area and those delivering the BSP

**Clarity regarding how agencies collectively understand child exploitation and extra-familial harm:**

We know that nationally, there are differentiating understanding of the language and definitions used within this sector. With emerging terminology such as extra-familial harm, contextual safeguarding and peer on peer abuse it has been highlighted that this is a shared feeling on a national level. Across the programme it was agreed that the foundations to the project relied upon a shared and agreed set of definitions to conceptualise child exploitation and extra-familial harm. The project supported those who attended to consider that by agreeing a set of defined definitions this could help shape the principles needed for a strategy or screening tool for example. What was really positive, was how open and reflective the group were and an admittance that if they didn't get this part right, it would have an impact on the other elements ranging from a data set to a community wide campaign message. From the workshops the partnership did not yet have a shared definition for differentiating child exploitation to youth violence, and that even on an individual agency level what the police for example may understand as child exploitation could differ from Health services or the youth offending team. The motivation from the group supported the feeling of needing to "get this right" due to the positive impact it would have at an individual agency level, but also as a partnership to share consistent messages.

**Child exploitation and extra-familial harm data sets:**

Nationally, there is currently no comprehensive system that enables data specifically about child exploitation and extra-familial harm to be captured and analysed across

partners, therefore traditionally, silo datasets are collated across partnerships. Part of this project considered what data is available across the partnership to develop a child exploitation data set. Previously for data collated to report on child sexual exploitation the partnership fed into regional sources of data collection via West Midlands Police and it was felt by multi-agencies that there was a lot of work conducted to collate data to analyse themes and trends for child sexual exploitation but as of yet this had not been progressed for others forms of child exploitation and extra-familial harm. What was highlighted by the local area through delivery is the data they currently collate is predominately victim focussed and organised crime group boundaries for example were not readily available to be shared across the partnership. It is positive that there is a wealth of information and data held but there is currently no data collection process or structure that enables the data to be centrally collected which suggested some silo working taking place due to process, not by choice of agencies. It was suggested that meeting structures need to be understood and reconfigured to support the collation and production of a partnership data set.

For data to be used to understand the nature of exploitation, local areas need to look beyond specialist teams working with those children we know are at particular risk of, or experiencing, exploitation. These are only the children we know about. Capturing data about wider patterns of risk and harm (critical to a holistic strategic response) requires a more holistic approach, drawing in data from other local authority provision, partner agencies and the community and voluntary sector. It is also important to ensure that the perspectives of children and young people, and those that support them, are appropriately represented within data sets that inform strategic responses. The partnership noted the value in the data, learning and information that the multi-agency child exploitation team; Horizon and other commissioned services from the voluntary sector and education bring to the partnership and if this data was used more cohesively it would enable strategic priorities to be informed by local practice and themes to tell the story of child exploitation in Coventry. To resolve these, the project recommended that before developing a framework for data the local area needs to explore; where the data is held and who by (source), analytical capacity, an agreed set of indicators to report on and the purpose of this data being collected. If there is no purpose, it can lose its meaning. Linked to this is a need for the partnership to consider how they share the themes across the partnership to increase intelligence sharing and develop the qualitative narrative of the data set, as quantitative data should not be the only type of data relied upon.

**Joining the Dots.** Key reflections on:

1. Leading with care
2. Blurring boundaries
3. Holding complexity, uncertainty and curiosity

**Leading with care**

The project team undertook an engaging and inquisitive approach to delivery that sought to support leaders in Coventry to develop their own critique of the screening tool and supporting them to explore the types of data they require and what they might need to

do to ensure consistent analysis of this. The project team were keen not to present as 'experts' but as facilitators with a shared experiences exploring some of the dilemmas faced.

What we know across the sector is that child exploitation and extra-familial harm is complex by its nature and noting in particular the paradigm shift that has been experienced (risk perpetrated outside the family home and child criminal exploitation victims supported as victims compared to offenders) can make professionals feel anxious on how to assess risk or put responsive actions in place to appropriately safeguard a victim. If these professional anxieties are then partnered with a screening tool that uses a check list method it encourages individuals to become reliant on the "result" of the check lists, and less of a focus on professional/clinical decision making at a multi-agency level. Through the reflective exercise with partners regarding the screening tool TCE encouraged professionals to demonstrate curiosity about the experiences of professionals in Coventry and have heard and considered these in forming their hypothesis about what some of the complicating factors might be. Engaging them in a period of uncertainty where there is a lack of consensus about what the screening tool should be for has encouraged their thinking about what their next steps might be. To overcome this a task and finish group has been identified to continue this piece of work and streamline other pieces of work from the project that will develop the workforce's knowledge and awareness. This group is motivated to arrive at a position where they better understanding the local profile and to support these messages to be disseminated to the workforce to inform practice.

### **Blurring boundaries**

There was a recognised link between data and no clearly defined understanding or shared definitions across the partnership about child exploitation and extra-familial harm, and some anxiety picked up from the area of questions about data. It was felt that across the workforce there is a gap in knowledge around the local profile of child exploitation and extra-familial harm, but that professionals are keen to move forward to a shared approach and committed to get to a position where they have a good understanding of the local profile and to have this disseminated to key staff to inform practice. What would support this is the mapping and intelligence sharing that takes place between Police and the local authority, along with the mapping conducted within the Horizon team as well as the piece of work completed by the safeguarding partnership that engaged children and young people on where they feel safe and unsafe. What needs to be decided is how strategic leads agree to sensitively share the information to inform universal services, including operational staff? This would help practitioners to feel more confident about what data and intelligence to share, rather than assumptions made that the workforce understand what can and cannot be shared.

The Adult's Safeguarding Coordinator was also engaged and participated in the bespoke support project but there was recognition that this working relationship to focus on child exploitation and extra-familial harm was in its infancy. It is important to note that

transitional safeguarding was not explored as part of this project and the project focussed on children and young people up until the age of 18 only.

### **Holding complexity, uncertainty and curiosity**

The project has demonstrated curiosity about the experiences of professionals in Coventry and have heard and considered these in forming our hypothesis about what some of the complicating factors might be, engaging them in a period of uncertainty where there is a lack of consensus about what the screening tool should be for and have engaged them in thinking about what their next steps might be. The second workshop's discussions highlighted some of the confusion about who/ when/ how the screening tool is used and a gap in knowledge around the local profile around exploitation. Professionals are keen to move forward to a shared approach and keen to get to a position where they have a good understanding of the local profile and to have this disseminated to key staff to inform practice. This linked to the way the screening tool felt at times over relied upon due to the gaps in training and development for staff across the partnership in understanding exploitation. In order for the workforce to feel confident and report accurately it was acknowledged that recognition at a strategic level and associated guidance behind this was required.

### **Significant learning and transferability from the BSP for other areas:**

#### **The need for a co-ordinated approach to national policy, legislation, strategy and support:**

Multiple government departments are involved in the child exploitation and extra-familial harm field. The Tackling Child Exploitation sector survey highlighted the extent to which the short-term, fragmented, national policy and funding landscape across multiple government departments 'trickles down' to local areas, meaning that partnership working can become hindered by similarly fragmented – even competing - funding and policy structures (Harris et al, 2017). This, in turn, can perpetuate isolated services responses, with some examples of duplication and omission that sector colleagues are aware of but may feel disempowered to challenge. We saw elements of this within the partnership where work streams for youth violence and child exploitation were being developed in isolation, or representatives from agencies attending both but the two areas of development not work collaboratively. The partnership felt that attempts were made to bring the two areas together which was due to the noted cross-overs but individuals feeling restricted by boundaries or the formal arrangements in place for the information to be shared, and more of a reliance of individual people to share the information. Learning and development from each of the work streams should be developed as a collective priority for the strategic boards.

#### **Opportunity is available to develop responses for child exploitation and extra-familial harm:**

What is strikingly obvious is that there is lots of opportunity available across the partnership to develop responses for child exploitation. The structures are available, but those who report into the structures require clarity about how it all fits together. It feels important the partnership utilises and focus' on the structures in place, not reinventing

the wheel. This is linked to the above and the work streams of the three strategic boards and the understanding of how a partnership functions to ensure consistent approaches/ ensures dissemination of key information and the impact of this upon operational delivery was significant. Those who attended the workshops could identify plenty of resource that could and is available at a strategic and operational level to respond to child exploitation and extra-familial harm. What we recommend is using existing structures and imaginative ways to fill some of the gaps identified. In terms of information sharing it is important to consider all 3 tiers; strategic, operational and community – what are the lines of information sharing and flow of the work and how are these disseminated/responded to.

**Combining sources of child exploitation and extra-familial harm data:**

It was felt that there are lots of agencies within Coventry that collect data but something to think further about is how it is collated as a collective partnership and what the data informs Coventry about child exploitation. Commissioned services are able to provide themes with other services offering to share analytical capacity on behalf of the partnership. Positively, it was highlighted that the children's safeguarding partnership had engaged children in a participatory piece of work focussed around where they felt safe/unsafe. Interestingly, the question was asked about agencies understanding what is meant by the term intelligence, and how/when this information can be shared. It was agreed by all that data is predominately retained about the child, rather than the person perpetrating the harm. The partnership decided that work needed to be undertaken to decide on a multi-agency data set to tell the story of exploitation in Coventry that reported to all three strategic boards to prevent silo working. In addition, the learning about understanding how the partnership functions to ensure consistent approaches/ ensures dissemination of key information and the impact of this upon operational delivery was significant.

**Other areas that felt transferable for other areas to learn from as a result of delivery of this bespoke support project were:**

- Useful analysis of definitions that can be shared with other areas. Do partners working to disrupt exploitation share language and approaches to conceptualise definitions? Across the project it was recognised that language used in screening tools such as “repeat offending” and “perpetrators” will have different meanings dependent on; individual, agency or service remit. It is important that time is taken to pause and reflect to consider how might language and definitions be collectively defined, ensuring that the messages reach to a strategic, operational and community level. Although it may seem a simple task this can have great benefits which could lead to agreeing a set of defined definitions that shape the principles needed for a strategy or screening tool for example.
- CYP participatory work to inform strategic planning including data sets, screening tools or a child exploitation strategy.
- Learning about understanding how a partnership functions to ensure consistent approaches/ ensures dissemination of key information and the impact of this upon

