Project Learning Report

Details of Bespoke Support Project (BSP):	
Partnership Name:	Warwickshire
Core partner agencies involved:	Warwickshire Police, Warwickshire County Council, Warwickshire CCG and Rugby & Coventry CCG
Number of Local Authority areas covered:	Warwickshire County Council plus 5 District Councils (North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Rugby, Stratford and Warwick)
Regional Area:	Midlands
BSP Project Size:	Standard
BSP Methodology/ methodologies	Partnership
Date BSP commenced:	December 2019

Reasons why the local area requested the TCE Support programme:

Warwickshire are in the process of developing a whole system, all age approach to exploitation. This ambitious approach is built upon new safeguarding arrangements, bringing together children's and adults functions, and which includes the establishment of an exploitation sub group. This group has been established to bring colleagues together from across the partnership to develop an all age strategy and the associated operational functions required to implement and deliver this. The new approach sees Warwickshire building on well-established approaches to child sexual exploitation to encompass all forms of exploitation across the life course.

Warwickshire approached the TCE Programme to help review local partnership arrangements as they begin to undertake this ambitious programme of work.

Aims of the BSP as identified in the Project Specification:

The initial aims of the project were framed in terms of developing and clarifying the partnership's strategic vision for a system wide response to exploitation and to consider and embed the partnership structures which are required to support local implementation. Throughout the delivery phase, however, the aims of the BSP have been further refined in line with developing partnership thinking and feedback from local colleagues An overview of this is provided throughout this report.

Approaches / methods taken to achieve the aims and deliver the BSP:

As a partnership review project, the approach the TCE Programme sought to adopt in Warwickshire was one of collaboration and co-production, working alongside local colleagues and recognising them as the experts in their local systems and the challenges they face as part of their change approach. Following initial scoping conversations between the TCE project lead and the local single point of contact (SPOC), an introductory session took place involving TCE delivery partners and members of the Warwickshire

Safeguarding Executive Board. As part of this, the delivery aims of the project were clarified as the following-

1. Raising community awareness, understanding and ownership of the issues of exploitation of children and adults, so that more people can take action themselves
2. Further developing professional awareness and understanding of the breadth of exploitation issues i.e. beyond CSE to CCE, and beyond children to vulnerable adults
3. Developing better transitions from children's to adult services, backed by better systems
4. Establishing better ways to hear the voices and perspectives of children and vulnerable adults about the challenges they face in recognising and finding ways out of exploitation

These aims helped shape the focus of two delivery workshop sessions involving a wide range of local senior colleagues from across Warwickshire.

The first session, which involved around 30 people from a range of partner agencies including police, youth justice, schools, adult social care, community safety and health; focused on transitions, both in terms of raising professional awareness of the challenges and opportunities presented in adopting an all age approach to exploitation, and in exploring how these translate into the local system, with a view to identifying where further strategic development may be required. A key issue identified was the importance of identifying key relationships that were protective factors for young people and considering how they could be continued or handed over well beyond the engagement of a particular service, or beyond the 18th birthday.

A strong message coming through from colleagues was that in order to undertake such significant and ambitious changes within the local system, supportive and joined-up leadership was needed. The foundations of this approach are in place locally at Safeguarding Executive Board level, through the multi-agency child exploitation and missing team and evident across other local strategic partnerships such as community safety and local criminal justice board.

The second delivery workshop therefore focused on identifying the practical, physical and emotional capabilities that were already in place to make change, and the practical, physical and emotional resources that were needed in addition. Examples of existing capabilities were the successful "something's not right" campaign that an integrated team had developed to spot the signs of CSE, and the existing information sharing protocol (ISP). Examples of support that was needed in addition included a wider group of people sharing information (for example, DWP staff were not yet using the ISP), and more opportunities for staff to reflect together on the emotional impact on working with child and adult exploitation.

The key themes that came out of these sessions are detailed below.

Key issues that arose during the delivery of the BSP:
- for a local area and those delivering the BSP

From the discussions over the two days, there were three main areas that participants highlighted should be the focus of future change. Warwickshire would be able to make more progress on tackling exploitation and achieve better outcomes for children and vulnerable adults if these areas were addressed:

Raising awareness of exploitation

1) Raising awareness of exploitation among a wider group of professionals and other key people who were in touch with adults and children who might be subject to exploitation. This group (including GPs, housing staff, teachers, home care workers) were the eyes and ears of the system and were likely to be the first to spot that 'something's not right'.

2) Reaching these people effectively meant

   1) Developing a shared definition of exploitation that fitted Warwickshire's circumstances and a shared description of 'what to look for' (covering adults as well as children)

   2) Identifying a clear shared offer of what to do if you were worried that someone was being exploited – locally for Warwickshire, this was perceived as being something which needed to be developed in addition to the existing MASH offer

Collaboration at a strategic / service level

3) Collaboration at a strategic / service level. This involved

   1) Aligning training / awareness events across the county (both geographically and thematically)

   2) Aligning Commissioning plans in order to prevent duplication and to ensure effective use of resources across the partnership

   3) Including a wider range of partners in the strategic conversations - including experts such as those commissioned to deliver specialist services across the children's and adults landscape

4) Developing a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities across the partnership

5) Considering governance implications – what is the role of the Safeguarding Partnership, it's sub groups, and other, more operational leads

6) Finding spaces for informal conversations and networks so that people know who is who, are able to build strong and trusting working relationships, and have the opportunity to build professional peer support networks

Support / Resources

7) Support / Resources to enable both collaboration and awareness raising to happen. This included

   1) Integrated systems that 'talk' to each other

   2) A variety of specific suggestions such as hubs, maps and networks

   3) Support for staff wellbeing - both in individual 1-1s and supervision (making sure that supervision covered wellbeing as well as case management), as well as group support such as 'soft spaces' where people could share their experiences, concerns and offload together.

Joining the Dots. Key reflections on:
1. Leading with care
2. Blurring boundaries
3. Holding complexity, uncertainty and curiosity

Colleagues from across Warwickshire recognise that in moving towards an all age approach to exploitation, there is a need to reframe the system in such a way that mirrors and enables this ambition. The recognition that silos remain across geography, agency and areas of practice is important to acknowledge and highlights an area for focus as this work progresses. This approach to system change requires strong leadership which acknowledges and holds space for the uncertainty individuals are facing as they seek to navigate new and emerging forms of practice which perhaps fall outside of existing statutory frameworks or established ways of working.

The clear commitment and enthusiasm to taking forward the approach to all age approach to exploitation was evident from local colleagues with challenges and opportunities identified through honest and reflective partnership discussion. The range of partner agencies involved in the sessions demonstrated that Warwickshire have embraced a board understanding of exploitation, though it was noted that throughout the project, social care were not as central to a response as in other similar areas. This is perhaps a reflection of the fact that a specialist exploitation team is in place, but a

question remains as to how this fits with a system wide response where exploitation is seen as everyone's business.

Transitions from children's to adult services were identified as a significant focus of the project with the need to explore and critically challenge the boundaries which exist between them to effectively build a supportive system which both safeguards and empowers young people in line with their individual circumstance a clear focus. A recognition that thresholds within adult social care do not currently provide space to meet this need prompted discussion amongst local colleagues around extending the network of people involved in tackling exploitation and thinking expansively as to who our partners may be in this approach. The idea that working collaboratively can build capacity is one which came through strongly as part of the project, recognising the unlocked potential within local communities which could serve to bolster the Warwickshire approach to exploitation. Potential partners identified throughout discussion included faith communities, taxi drivers, fast food outlets and community based support groups, recognising the contexts in which exploitation exists and acknowledging the need to think beyond traditional partnership or statutory parameters.

Significant learning and transferability from the BSP for other areas:

At all stages of the project, ownership and leadership have been highlighted as presenting both opportunities and challenges. For Warwickshire, the involvement of a committed and highly engaged Independent Chair who has had the opportunity to hear directly from those working in more operational roles has been a significant asset. Similarly, the SPOC for project sitting on the Safeguarding Executive Board provided a drive to the work which might not otherwise have been present.

During the project it became clear that it would have been helpful to have spent more time at the beginning understanding the perspectives, challenges and objectives of each of the senior leaders at Executive level, in order to put together a project which would, as far as possible, address any differing perspectives. This has highlighted the need for the TCE Programme to give consideration to extended specification periods, and extending beyond the SPOC, to ensure clarity around project objectives.

One of the emerging themes coming out of the Warwickshire project and one which is common to several other projects taken forward by the TCE programme to date, is the value we are seeing in giving space for multi-agency colleagues to simply come together to share and explore ideas. Whilst this may appear to be a small or insignificant action in the scheme of ambitious system change, it is fundamental to the building of a successful partnership response and should not be underestimated. Many local colleagues who attended delivery workshops had not previously met and the connections made provide a strong basis on which to develop a professional peer support network. The importance of relationships in work with children and young people is recognised at a strategic level and held up as positive practice when

developing approaches to child exploitation and extra familial harm. Should we consider how we mirror this in our approach to partnership development, ensuring that relationships are at the heart of all that we do?

In taking forward the work as part of the BSP, it has unsurprisingly become increasingly apparent in the discussions amongst local colleagues that there is significant complexity within this work. This shouldn't however serve to stifle action and in Warwickshire and the wider sector as a whole. We should seek to lean into the complexity and allow it to act as a focus for building innovation and the development of enhanced partnership approaches. In adopting a strengths based approach to this work and identifying an existing area of work which can be developed and built upon, we have a starting point on which to begin to tackle and unpick wider complexity within the system. For Warwickshire, an opportunity would appear to sit within the 'Something's not Right' campaign which colleagues spoke of in positive terms and were keen to explore how this could be reignited with a boarder exploitation focus.

Emerging evidence of how the project has positively disrupted the system response to exploitation:

The project has demonstrated a number of areas of positive movement with regards to system change. These vary in scale, but all provide evidence of a shift in strategic thinking across the local area.

- As part of the initial application to the TCE programme, there was a sense that the development of a strategy document would be central in taking forward the new approach to exploitation. Throughout delivery, we have seen views on this shift and the thinking mature to a point that there is now a recognition that a strategy alone will not enable the changes required to provide the foundations for such ambitious system change

- Reflecting the need for responses to span children's and adults services and particularly taking account of transitions within this, there is now discussion taking place which recognises that current policies and procedures (such as key workers engaged for a defined period and not "handing over" the relationship when that is finished) are getting in the way of giving people the meaningful and supportive relationships that would protect them from exploitation. Although at early stages, there appears to be a recognition that more creative and expansive thinking is required in order to blur the boundaries across policy, commissioning and practice which will enable a true system wide approach to exploitation to be implemented

- Taking an evidence informed approach to exploitation throughout the project has prompted critical thinking about the roll out of a school based package across the county, with senior leaders pausing to reflect and consider the impact of commissioning decisions. Although a seemingly small and perhaps unintended consequence of the project,

this is a tangible example of the local area reflecting on the best available evidence to help support decision making

- Individuals brought together for the first time through the project have made professional connections and are considering how best to work together to support one another, in order to collaborate and to share ideas. We are seeing this both at practitioner and strategic levels

- Conversations have begun which are seeking to explore and understand the emotional impact on professionals who are working to support those affected by exploitation. This has been a bottom up approach with senior practitioners coming together to explore the needs of their teams and reflecting this back to senior leaders

- Colleagues are giving consideration to the "tiers" and nuance in operation in the system – those who are experts and need to keep up to date, those who work with children and vulnerable adults and need to be more aware and more confident, and those who may come across exploitation from time to time and who need to be able to spot when something isn't right, and know how to escalate.

Immediate reflections from the local area:

When the new safeguarding arrangements in Warwickshire went live in the autumn of 2019 it was decided by the partners that there was a need to create an exploitation subgroup to tackle threats posed to children and adults by things such as County Lines, modern slavery, labour exploitation etc. The reason why exploitation was chosen as one of the four subgroups was because it was considered to be a 'wicked' problem to solve.

Warwickshire Safeguarding asked for support from TCE programme to help develop a strategy to address the problem. What quickly became apparent during the sessions facilitated by the professionals from TCE was that a strategy alone (a glossy document) would not solve the problem of exploitation.

The professionals from the TCE programme encouraged the safeguarding partners to think wider when inviting people to participate in the workshops. The involvement of new people with a different perspective was found to be very useful. Although Warwickshire is a relatively small county it was clear from the workshops that in the past we had not consulted widely enough to capture the views of the professionals working with people at risk of exploitation. The workshops highlighted how we, as professionals, need to do more to truly work in partnership as the exploiters will in all likelihood find the gaps in the partnership response that could leave vulnerable people at risk.

It was evident from research that there was a gap between the strategic vision and the experience of professionals working at an operational level. It highlighted the need to ensure that exploitation was understood at every level within every organisation and the wider community. Everyone needs to understand the role they can play in tackling exploitation.

There is clearly more work that needs to be done to raise awareness in schools, within the community, with hotels/B&Bs, supermarket staff, taxi drivers, bus drivers, licensed premises, statutory and voluntary partners so they understand the invaluable role they can play in preventing exploitation.

In busy schedules it is often easy to overlook the value of building relationships with other practitioners/professionals. It is clear that relationship building is necessary to achieve a more fluid system wide response. What came through loud and clear was that any senior strategic changes needed to be made in conjunction with the input from frontline staff to better understand the operational implications.

We need to do more to raise awareness amongst the vulnerable people themselves who are at risk of exploitation to enable them to recognise the signs, to empower and support them to reduce the likelihood of them becoming victims. In developing our response to exploitation we need to make sure that we actively listen to the voice of the child or vulnerable adult, that we involve them in the decisions affecting their lives and capture feedback from them on the service that was provided to learn and develop our response.

A professional from education provided feedback that the most beneficial aspect of the process has been meeting with colleagues across a range of services to afford a better understanding of how educational safeguarding fits within and complements the wider context of safeguarding within Warwickshire.

There was a feeling more flexibility was needed amongst professionals to prevent a person at risk of exploitation being 'handed over' between professionals, having to repeat versions of the same information to different partners from different agencies. Could person at risk of exploitation have one trusted adult? The view of professionals was that there was need to consider more carefully how we step down services as the risk that a person will be exploited diminishes.

It was also acknowledged that the adult and child specific legislation made tackling the problem more challenging but there was a feeling that this was a challenge that needed to be overcome by professionals as the exploiters are not worried about the age or vulnerabilities of a potential victim.

In summary, the support from the TCE programme enabled the partnership to engage more widely, to think more carefully about how to tackle the problem of exploitation, to give appropriate thought and consideration to what the next steps need to be.

Please tick this box if there is an agreement for the Project Learning Report to be shared via the TCE Support programme's Microsite for other local areas:

Date: 28/05/20   Signed by local area: Peter Hill

Date: 27/05/20   Signed by TCE programme team: Amy Hurst