

Project Learning Report

Details of Bespoke Support Project (BSP):	
Partnership name:	Hull
Core partner agencies involved:	Social Care, Police, Health and the wider Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group
Number of local authority areas covered:	One, although at key points in the project support and challenge was provided jointly with and through East Riding BSP
Regional area:	Yorkshire and The Humber
BSP project size:	Standard
BSP methodology/ methodologies	Partnership
Digital / face-to-face / mixed delivery	Digital
Date BSP commenced:	July 2021
Reasons why the local area requested the TCE Support programme:	
<p>At the point of application, Hull had recently constituted a new Contextual Safeguarding¹ Strategic Group. The TCE Programme team was asked to help embed the group within the local partnership context, by looking to see where the group could add most value. This was both in terms of influencing the operational and service landscape it was created to help shape and support, and the 'upward' policy and strategic landscape in terms of ensuring the most senior leaders were able to make decisions based on the best possible information and analysis.</p>	
Overall goal of BSP :	
Agreed change goal(s) agreed	What changes needed to take place in order for goal to be achieved
To establish the existing partnership networks in relation to child exploitation at strategic and operational levels. This includes considering how agencies correlate with each other in tackling child exploitation.	<p>Undertake a partnership-wide mapping exercise to map and review all the networks and activity currently taking place in relation to child exploitation and extra-familial harm within Hull.</p> <p>This includes mapping activity at governance, strategic, operational and direct service delivery levels.</p>

¹ [Contextual Safeguarding](#) is an approach to safeguarding children and young people from harm outside of the home developed by Professor Carlene Firmin, OBE, of the University of Durham. [This briefing](#) explains what Contextual Safeguarding is (and is not).

	<p>The mapping should then be used to review Terms of References for groups that either seem to duplicate each other, or for areas where gaps are identified.</p> <p>Amendments should also be made to the structure / nature of meetings as necessary.</p>
To develop a common understanding of what Contextual Safeguarding and Child Exploitation mean across all partner agencies.	<p>Be clear(er) on what keeps children in Hull safe.</p> <p>Have the space to reflect on shared / divergent understandings of risk and how data is being used across the partnership. Use this opportunity to work with East Riding as a (mutual) peer support and challenge.</p> <p>Develop core principles / priorities in relation to how risk and data are worked with.</p> <p>Use this to prepare for the implementation of the Police-led, Pan-Humberside Vulnerability Tracker tool.</p>
To understand the data and performance picture across Hull relating to child exploitation.	<p>Hold space to reflect on how the partnership wants to work with - and through - the Vulnerability Tracker, and ensure it is a useful analytical tool that supports effective strategic decision-making, rather than just using it as a performance monitoring tool.</p>
To build upon existing work currently in place around listening to, and acting on, the experiences of children.	<p>Map strategic activity against children's journeys / action planning.</p>
To consider the riskiest transition points around which child exploitation might occur from childhood to adulthood, and ensure preventative support is in place.	<p>Agree what is out of scope for the BSP.</p>

Approaches / methods taken to achieve project goal and deliver the BSP:

There were three interlinked but distinct, strands of work within the Hull BSP:

1. The mapping work came first and allowed the partnership to see 'on a page' the work already happening in relation to child exploitation and extra-familial harm. As a tool, it provided a way for the partnership to collectively reflect on the nature and balance of the work and to mutually identify – in a shared forum with shared ownership – where changes might add value.

2. Building from this, the risk and data work started to go beyond the 'what, when and where' of services being delivered to reflect more deeply as a partnership on the 'how and why'. The data and risk workshops and reflective sessions were run jointly with East Riding (Hull's geographical neighbour where a BSP was also taking place) to provide an opportunity for peer support and challenge, as well as to identify areas where joint work might be possible, thereby unlocking capacity.
3. The final stage of the project was to look in more detail at Humberside Police Force's Vulnerability Tracker and support Hull's Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group to think about its implementation. The Tracker is a scored, multi-agency risk assessment tool developed by Humberside Police and approved for implementation in relation to child exploitation and extra-familial harm in all four of the safeguarding partnerships covered by the Force². As this is a long term piece of work for Hull, the TCE team produced a reflective toolkit for the partnership to take forward, building on learning from both mapping and risk and data work to articulate *how* they want to guide the implementation of the tool.

Key issues that arose during the delivery of the BSP

- for a local area and those delivering the BSP

In reflective sessions with the local area, there were three recurrent themes:

1. **The nature and importance of partnership working** has been central to this BSP. Hull already had in place a rich and diverse membership for its contextual safeguarding partnership. This included representatives from the three statutory safeguarding partners, i.e. core partners like education, youth, adult and probation services, as well as key non-traditional partners like housing and park and leisure services. Relationships across the child safeguarding partnership were well established, which the contextual safeguarding partnership was able to draw on to generate a collective sense of ownership around things like:
 - The importance of being able to pick up the phone and deal with things directly (especially with Police).
 - The impact on the wider partnership of internal reforms and personnel changes in individual agencies.
 - The importance of, wherever possible, striving for consistency of individuals / roles in partnership representation.
 - The tension between large partnership representation at the strategic group level but less formally defined mechanisms for taking actions forwards. (Progressing work then

² For a review of important considerations when using checklists to assess for risk, see Brown, S, Brady, G, Franklin, A & Crookes, R (2017) *The use of tools and checklists to assess risk of child sexual exploitation: An exploratory study*. Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse.

<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/our-research/responding-to-csa/risk-tools/>

becomes reliant on key individuals and bi-lateral meetings, rather than through core working, or task and finish, groups, which allow for truly shared ownership and a more diffuse leadership model across the partnership.)

2. The need to strategically invest in developing prevention opportunities within the system.

Through the mapping work in particular, the partnership reflected on where activity at all levels (governance, strategic, operational and service delivery) was weighted across the prevention continuum of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. Whilst the wider Hull partnership anecdotally felt that they *were* able to identify young people for whom earlier intervention could help prevent harm – for both that young person and others – it was a shared ambition to develop primary and secondary prevention levels to facilitate better provision of support for this group of children and young people. It was noted as a point of frustration that the first point of contact with the contextual safeguarding ‘system’ was too often when a criminal justice response was also needed, requiring ‘the system’ to work with victims who were also instigators of harm. Single agency conversations further identified that whilst the partnership worked well at the tertiary level, this meant that both resource and staff capacity within the system were put under strain, and that workforce resilience was impacted by a sense that ‘more could have been done’ for that young person.

3. Finally there were collective reflections that **data still sat in ‘pockets’ across the partnership and that it was primarily being used for individual service monitoring and reporting (performance management), rather than to build a collective picture or weave a collective narrative.³ Central to this reflection was a shared ambition across the Hull Contextual Safeguarding Partnership to build on the question, ‘So what for children and young people?’ by asking, ‘How do we know what we are doing is making our children safer?’ Using data to support the partnership to define need and response *locally* was seen as the first step in this. Holding on to these reflections as the partnership comes to implement the Vulnerability Tracker will be key. As a tool, the tracker has enormous potential and is explicitly designed to pull data and intelligence from multiple sources into a single framework. As with all such tools, however, *how* this data is inputted, analysed, and used is everything. Key considerations will be:**

- a. the staff training, time and commitment needed to accurately input data
- b. how the data is interpreted and used to invite questions, identifying gaps and disproportionality to inform thematic conversations
- c. the way young people, parents, communities and the professionals who work with them are included
- d. how feedback loops across all networks are created and used.

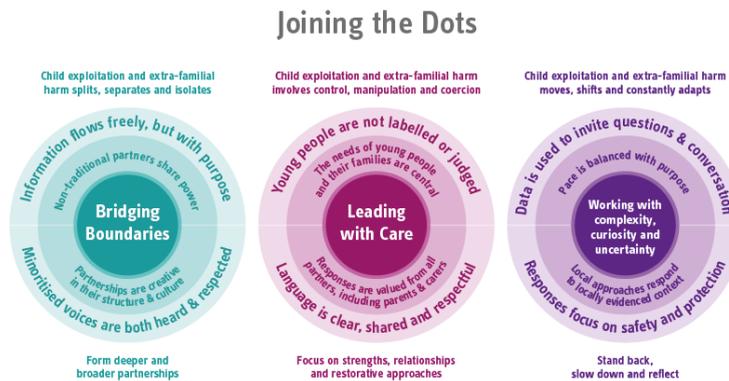
³ The TCE Programme produced [this suite of resources](#) to support the effective use of data in local areas.

Joining the Dots

[Joining the Dots](#) is the thematic approach taken by the TCE Support Programme to respond to system challenges. These three themes are intended to prompt new and innovative thinking and constructively challenge the status quo by encouraging the sector to make new links and approach strategic decisions from new angles and perspectives.

Key reflections on the Joining the Dots themes within the BSP:

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



Blurring boundaries

Building a 'deeper and broader partnership' is something the Hull Contextual Safeguarding Partnership is rightly proud of. A particular aspiration was making progress towards non-traditional partners sharing power with a high level of engagement. Whilst there are still multiple points for development – as with all partnerships – the challenges and benefits are openly reflected upon. In particular, the mechanics of actually *sharing* power, require time and focused effort to establish.⁴ Prioritising, seeking out and including minoritised perspectives (across all protected characteristics and reflecting young people's intersectional identities) need to be central to this if local need is to be genuinely understood. Much of the work of the BSP focused on unlocking how information could flow freely and with purpose, and how the partnership could be creative in structure and approach, which is needed to allow a distributed leadership model across the partnership to further progress.

Leading with care

⁴ See Ghate, D., Lewis, J. & Welbourn, D. (2013). *Systems Leadership: Exceptional leadership for exceptional times*, [Virtual Staff College](#).

Similarly, bringing expertise through experience more deeply into strategic decision-making is a priority for Hull.⁵ Whilst the work remains – and is known to remain – to be done, strengths-based, restorative and relational work is recognised by the partnership as being at the core of effective strategic development. The next stage is to embed this within the wider culture of the partnership through a) representatives from the Hull Strategic Contextual Safeguarding Group acting as champions within their parent organisations to support and enable an approach that *leads with care*, and b) being proactive in seeking out meaningful opportunities to invite the perspectives of children, young people and their families into both the group and their parent organisations, thereby fostering a two-way exchange of expertise.

Holding complexity, uncertainty and curiosity

Slowing down to allow time and space to reflect is perhaps the biggest learning point from this BSP. The Hull children's safeguarding partnership is large, committed and keen to achieve change and measure impact. Within this context there is an enormous amount of activity. The mapping exercise in particular highlighted how 'busy' and process driven much of the work was. Both individual people and representatives from agencies reflected they were, at times, overwhelmed. But the commitment to the common goal is so unwavering, it can be hard to voice this within a collective forum. All four of the Joining the Dots domains in relation to working with complexity were independently echoed in the Hull BSP (without prior reference to the framework):

- Using data to invite questions – especially in relation to the Vulnerability Tracker.
- Prioritising purpose over pace – reflections on mapping suggested capacity might be created by removing and revising some meetings, rather than adding new ones.
- Basing local approaches on local need – becoming confident that the best fit approach for Hull won't be an 'off the peg' 'solution' from somewhere else, but a collaborative 'home grown' approach that emerges from the knowledge, skills and expertise of the partnership.
- Focusing on protective and safety factors – this chimed with reflections on how to move focus further 'upstream' and challenge the pull within partnership working towards 'high risk perpetrators'.

Significant learning and transferability from the BSP for other areas:

One of the strongest reflections from Hull has been the value of working directly with East Riding in a peer partnership. Whilst the two BSPs were run separately, they were (independently) working on closely aligned change goals, so formal and informal links were made throughout the project. The data and risk workshops, and the reflective session that pulled out key learning, were run jointly – both project SPOCs and sponsors formed a close working relationship. With several agencies spanning both local partnerships (Health, Police and Probation most notably) this allowed for a high level of mutual support and challenge. Both partnerships have taken forward ideas and

⁵ The TCE Programme conducted a focused workstream on [hearing the voices of minoritised groups and those with expertise by experience](#).

approaches from the other and, as a concrete outcome, Hull's MACE panel has merged with East Riding's. This allows it to:

- meet more frequently, as core staff have only one, shared, meeting to attend
- create more time for reflection over processes
- directly address boundary-spanning issues
- share emerging patterns and trends.

Emerging evidence of how the project has positively disrupted the system response to child exploitation and extra-familial harm:

The closer working with East Riding has probably been the biggest positive disruption as reflected back to the programme team, with the links, support and connections made being highly valued. The changes in relation to reframing MACE are testament to how quickly these cross-border relationships have flourished and enabled creativity in both structure and culture. Similarly messages in relation to slowing down and building in reflection to identify purpose and, where needed, resist pace have begun to show encouraging signs. A number of 'task and finish' groups under the Strategic Group have been set up, including one progressing Transitional Safeguarding work across multiple non-contiguous service boundaries.

Further – and ongoing – work to meaningfully deepen and broaden the sharing of power will be an indication of increasing maturity across the partnership. As will the visible inclusion of parents' and minoritised and young people's voices. Seeing the Hull Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group able to a) task work across agencies and b) individually act as champions for joint work and shared values within single agencies on behalf of the partnership, will mark the point of truly positive disruption to the system.

By paying such close attention to their partnership dynamics at this point, Hull are placing themselves in a strong position to effectively support the introduction of the Vulnerability Tracker, a complex tool that will need strong, multi-agency leadership with a genuine sense of joint ownership to realise its potential benefits, while managing the known pitfalls of 'tick box' risk assessments.

Immediate reflections from the local area:

As a local area, what were the outcomes of the BSP? Do you agree with the substantive points in the report?

- The project was very helpful to be able to pause and consider the strategic approach to safeguarding children in relation to extra-familial harm and exploitation inclusive of sexual child exploitation, criminal exploitation, trafficking and modern slavery.
- It provided a good opportunity for reflection and the space to think and focus.
- It was helpful to attend joint sessions with East Riding to enable discussion and reflection around cross-cutting themes, ways of working and how priorities and work could be linked moving forward. Feedback highlighted the benefits of the two authorities working together.

What were the significant challenges to the BSP, and how did the TCE team support you in overcoming them?

- Mapping highlighted the complexity of the system. There are several meetings with a lot of potential for duplication across the different groups. This has led to additional multi-agency meetings to look at what the collective prevention and diversion approach should be. It was also acknowledged that it will take time to do work in this area well.

Do you have any reflections on the way the TCE delivery team worked with you?

- Some meetings felt more purposeful than others in relation to agenda and productivity – some repetition.
- Project has complemented existing work currently taking place through the strategic subgroups, operational subgroups and collaborative exploitation group.
- Some reflection around the project taking place over the summer period and this resulting in some reduction in attendance at meetings due to annual leave etc.

What are the key learning points for the local area? Does the report reflect these learning points?

- Focus on data across Hull was useful to consider how this can be effectively used moving forward. Having effective data will be key for future improvements and some of it will come from the Vulnerability Tracker.

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: 23/5/2022

Signed by local area: Anna Racher (on behalf of Local area)