

Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

Project Learning Report

Details of Bespoke Support Project (BSP):	
Partnership name:	Torbay Safeguarding Partnership (TSCP)
Core partner agencies involved:	TSCP core group (police, health, education, voluntary sector partners)
Number of local authority areas covered:	Single authority
Regional area:	South West
BSP size:	Unitary
BSP methodology / methodologies	Cultural Change Project
Digital / face-to-face / Mixed delivery	Digital Delivery
Date BSP commenced:	Nov 2020
Reasons why the local area requested the TCE Support Programme:	
<p>At the point of applying to TCE, the local area safeguarding partnership were developing an exploitation and extra-familial harm strategy and wanted to work with TCE to galvanise support around a new approach to child exploitation in Torbay.</p>	
Overall goal of BSP:	
<p>The overall goal of Torbay's safeguarding partnership for this Bespoke Support Project developed through application, consultation and core group discussion, focussed on how a binding document or shared vision for responding to exploitation (and the complexity for people, places and processes inherent to it) could help to mitigate sudden changes in support for young people. Having this reflection, discussion and subsequent agreement would help the partnership to feel more adaptable and jointly supported to respond to complex challenges presented by exploitation.</p>	
Approaches / methods taken to achieve project goal and deliver the BSP:	
<p>The approach taken by TCE was a) to hold space for partners to share their unique perspective on partnership arrangements and b) to amplify local area expertise in interactions with different multi-agency teams. This took the form of workshops and single-agency discussions.</p>	

Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

TCE intentionally asked partners to describe their own strategic plans and suggestions before referencing what other areas are doing around similar themes.

TCE supported the partnership to frame strategy discussions to consider a 'whole-system' approach and reflect not just on practical issues, such as the frequency of meetings, but also on what the environment for that meeting should look like. A natural affinity with some of the Programme's principles was evident in the local area, such as leading with care and holding complexity.

Being at a 'foundational' stage in the local area's development was cited at times as being a challenge because there was a lot of work to be done. However, it was also a key enabler to prompt reflection and identify action on the issues the local area described. Recognising that the local area was on a 'journey' (at a strategic and operational level), was helpful as it allowed for the opportunity to 'join the dots' between challenging themes and potential opportunities to catalyse stronger collaborative responses.

Having this mindset also enabled partners to concentrate on solving the right problems before solving the problems right, i.e., looking for what would or could catalyse positive change for the partnership in the short term to inform their longer-term strategic thinking. Given the short-term nature of a BSP, this was an ideal framing for the project to learn from partners' experience and expertise.

Key issues that arose during the delivery of the BSP:

- for a local area and those delivering the BSP

Through this process, the following themes were identified:

'Adult safeguarding thresholds' noted by partners as being a challenge for enabling more agile and transitional safeguarding practice

The need to address 'cliff edges' in support was highlighted. A focus in the workshops and core group discussions centred on the need to retain flexibility across the partnership to avoid sudden ends or gaps in support. For instance, beyond the recognised challenge of thresholds to support, it was recognised that strategic leaders might need to think about where multiple offers of support might need to be transitioned to safely exit. This would help to avoid sudden 'gaps' in support across the local system where multiple services may end their involvement at the same time. Partners talked about how in the past they felt that adult safeguarding thresholds were very high for young people to receive support post 18, so having a more flexible threshold was identified as a way to help avoid this.

Engaging young people and the community as partners

There was discussion around how to include or empower young people's voices in strategic considerations. A key principle throughout the BSP was to take a strengths-based approach, so, in this instance, to focus on 'safety' and positives. It was reflected that it is often easier, more beneficial and insightful to ask someone what is going 'well' in addition to what is causing concern in local areas.

There was some reflection on how to invite Torbay's community as a partner and how they may feel joined up to the process or 'ambition'. It was noted that thinking about this through the lens of bringing in empowered voices as 'new partners' could be influential. It was noted that, although absent from previous discussions it felt very relevant to the overarching partnership ambitions for change. This also 'joined up' with thoughts about

Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

accountability, and explicitly related back to both partnership obligations and accountability to communities and vulnerable individuals.

Information sharing and 'interoperability'

Police partners referenced the challenges surrounding information sharing when in fact we may be talking about communication and how we 'broaden' the voices involved in information sharing. A challenge from police colleagues was whether the TSCP group could use data – but not just traditional quantitative data and performance measures – to inform an understanding of child exploitation at a strategic level. The value of qualitative data and feedback could enhance understanding and confidence of 'what is happening' within the local area in relation to child exploitation. It was noted that this could help some partners come 'unstuck' from crisis response (or to be more culturally attentive to crisis response) and allow for preventative work or more community-based interoperability.

From the workshop and other sessions with the local area, the focus on prevention to 'break a cycle', ultimately helping to address and hold complexity, was seen as a means to bring focus to shared values within the safeguarding partnership.

Significant learning and transferability from the BSP for other areas:

The Torbay partners and core group reflected back key questions and areas they felt needed to be explored to underpin effective strategic thinking, most of which were significant for reflection in other areas and strategic contexts:

'How do we 'hold' exploitation across the system collectively by a partnership and how does this bring alignment between operational and strategic colleagues?'

The fact that child exploitation sits across multiple strategies and services required leaders to consider the transitions between all partners and services to better and collectively 'hold' the risks and vulnerabilities. A participant from the core group reflected on the tension of how 'adult safeguarding' and 'child safeguarding' culturally view risk and vulnerability through different lenses and have different approaches to interventions and thresholds for support.

'How do we communicate internally and externally around child exploitation?'

Torbay partners reflected there were two distinct 'angles' to communication from a strategic perspective:

1. A responsibility to internally communicate the 'vision' senior leaders have in relation to responding to exploitation, not just sharing the strategic plans.
2. 'External communication' and how this relates to sharing a vision with communities and families. This included thinking about how safeguarding partnerships hold themselves as accountable to communities, which would support feedback loops and information sharing. For example, showing 'what you asked and we did' through community engagement and forums.

Accountability and ambitions

Leadership discussions centred on the need to reflect on how the partnership could communicate what is meant by 'accountability'. The partnership thought about how to translate this from being solely about 'oversight and scrutiny' to being focused on

Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

'ambitions'. An opportunity to provide leadership on this was identified when reflecting on the terms of reference within the strategy in draft. How 'leaders' in a variety of contexts could chart a 'destination' for the safeguarding partnership was identified as a way to underpin a new effective strategy. Thinking about ambitions and destinations also placed a requirement on strategic leaders to value the 'journey' that partners will have to go on in order to support and enable different partners to buy-in to a shared vision or ambition around child exploitation.

Confidence

Amplifying and increasing confidence in a partnership approach to child exploitation through internal and external communication was also reflected as a leadership challenge for sharing a strategy with partners alongside implementation. Strategic leaders reflected on making it explicit that a key role or behaviour amongst strategic partners involves enabling environments for cross-partnership working and disruption. This was potentially uncomfortable and challenging, and requires a culture of resilience amongst strategic leaders to navigate. This involves being confident that all partners understand what is happening for children, young people and communities in Torbay in relation to child exploitation, bringing the focus to create opportunities to engage communities in context and bringing this information and understanding back to strategic leaders to be able to inform strategic thinking.

What creates the 'silos' you see in partnerships? How can they be mitigated against?

- Relationships

Relationships can make or break silo working. A lack of relationships can mean 'we don't understand' or make assumptions about what others 'do' within partnerships (akin to how assumptions of young people being exploited creates a distance or lack of empathy for their contextual circumstances at times). It was important to the local area to capture in their governance the importance of understanding roles and remits across different agencies and how this could lead to the establishment of supportive relationships.

- Structure

How a partnership is set up has implications for silos, i.e., how they come about and how to break them down. Actively creating intersecting forums and structures was viewed as important to addressing this challenge.

- Performance measures

Organisations working to different performative measures can lead to more 'siloed' responses. Elements of this cannot be changed and might at times feel disempowering and therefore need to be acknowledged. But consideration was also given to where this could be addressed at a local level. Partners discussed how local commissioning arrangements or the structure of a new Torbay strategy could help create new overarching 'measures of success' they could work towards. This prompted reflection on thinking about how public services can or may need to create [a new kind of accountability](#) in order to work more effectively with one another.

Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

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

In order to sum up learning from the Torbay BSP, the Programme would draw attention to the following considerations after exploring 'what else' besides the strategy itself helps develop more bespoke approaches to strategic responses.

Ensuring that the safeguarding partnership can communicate its values both internally and externally, without assuming that all partners are or can 'pull' in the same direction:

- The local area is now thinking about a 100-day plan for the rollout of the strategy and utilising reflections from the workshop to plan activities to support strategy development.
- The local area reflected that further conversations around organisational cultures and perspectives on what child exploitation is and how it manifests in the local area would support sign-up to shared principles and values.

Ensuring that communities and wider non-traditional partners feel connected to the safeguarding strategy:

- The incoming exploitation coordinator identified the community engagement focus of supporting activities as a priority for helping communities become allies in disruption.
- Accessing direct feedback from communities, focusing on safety and wellbeing was seen as a means to immediately start including and empowering the voice of service users in strategic thinking.

Acknowledging the complexity of child exploitation and the need to draw understanding from a wider variety of unique perspectives in order for any strategy to be successful in implementation:

- The partnership has been thinking about how and who else could join the TSCP forum, or be added to distribution lists for information from or on the forum.
- The partnership reflected on 'change' for the local area involving 'breaking cycles' of behaviour. Longer-term change and making change sustainable involves thinking about how short-term actions (such as promoting more qualitative information sharing between partners) might influence the more complex and longer-term behaviours that the partnership wishes to embed.

Immediate reflections from the local area:

Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

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:

Signed by local area: