



**STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD  
4 November 2014**

**Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Update Paper**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of the paper is to update members of the Strategic Policing and Crime Board (SPCB) about our key partnership response to Child Sexual Exploitation.

The paper follows a direct briefing to the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2014.

The purpose of this report is as follows:

- To set the context of Child Sexual Exploitation
- To review the strategic importance placed on this area in the overall context of the force's approach to vulnerable people.
- To assess the West Midlands Police response to the National CSE Action Plan which was refreshed in September 2014.

**INTRODUCTION**

1. This report will update members of the SCPB in relation to how the West Midlands Police (WMP) identifies and investigates CSE, and how the force is pro-actively responding to the National CSE Action Plan. ACC Foulkes is now responsible for the Public Protection portfolio. The paper will complement the previous SPCB PPU and Local Policing paper that was submitted to the board in September 2014. It will provide an update specifically in relation to the West Midlands Police response to CSE.

**CSE**

2. Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them,

sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability<sup>1</sup>.

3. Research has shown that children are more likely to suffer abuse by someone known to them and often within a private setting. CSE is often a 'hidden crime' and imposes a responsibility on professionals to detect and act upon key signs or concerns.

## **WEST MIDLANDS POLICE**

4. At the inception of Paragon in 2010, West Midlands Police sought to increase the number of specialist resources committed on a daily basis to the protection of vulnerable people. A Public Protection Unit (PPU) was formed to provide dedicated standalone capability for the safeguarding and investigation of offences committed against the most vulnerable members of our communities. West Midlands Police ring-fenced public protection resources in relation to child abuse investigation and invested in the provision of specialist capabilities for the investigation of "on line" paedophile activity.
5. WMP has carried out regular problem profiles to examine the current context of CSE which it has shared with partner agencies. It is currently leading a joint CSE problem profile using police and partner data.
6. In 2013 the Force undertook a wholesale review of its investigative function which resulted in the allocation of additional resources to the PPU (as previously reported to the board in September 2014). The additional staff afforded the force with increased capacity to investigate domestic abuse, sexual offences, child sexual abuse, FGM and honour based crimes.
7. In 2013 the Force launched Operation Sentinel - a long term initiative aimed at "breaking the chain of vulnerability" by enhancing the service provided by WMP and its partners to the most vulnerable members of society, and includes a particular focus on those children at risk of harm through sexual exploitation.
8. Since 2013, the Force has part-funded and supported the collective work of all seven local authorities and the police to improve the Protection from Violence for Vulnerable People (PVVP) through the work and leadership of Stephen Rimmer.
9. WMP also recognises that protecting our children from such horrendous crimes is of high public importance. Recent events have identified this is an issue for every part of the UK and there is much to learn about the extent of the problem and the most effective responses. WMP recognises that whilst progress has been made, there is more work to be done.

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<sup>1</sup> This definition of CSE was created by the UK National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People (NWG) and is used in statutory guidance for England. Taken from <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/what-is-child-sexual-exploitation>.

## **WMP Performance against the National CSE Action Plan**

10. The National CSE Action plan is owned by the National CSE lead, director Johnny Gwynne of the CEOP Command. The Action Plan has passed through a number of iterations and was most recently revised in September 2014. The purpose of the plan is to develop consistency across UK law enforcement agencies around the understanding and investigation of CSE. The plan is based around the four P's principle (Pursue, Protect, Prevent, and Prepare). West Midlands Police has recently amended its own action plan to deliver against the same principles and approach.

### **PURSUE**

#### **Disrupting, arresting and prosecuting CSE offenders**

11. 'Pursue' focuses on how the force successfully targets and prosecutes CSE offenders. This is a very difficult area as many victims do not always identify their own victimisation and prosecutions can be very hard to achieve.
12. As already highlighted, WMP invested additional specialist officers into Public Protection in 2010, thus recognising the growing threat of risk and vulnerability. On-call specialist rape trained officers were introduced to deliver a specialist response to victims of sexual crimes on a 24/7 basis. To complement the child abuse investigation teams and the Online Child Safeguarding Team, a small team of dedicated CSE officers was formed in the autumn of 2012. This provides additional resilience and capability in support of complex CSE investigations.
13. This strategy supports the locally-based child abuse investigators who, together with partners, investigate CSE. In recognition of the complicated nature of such investigations, additional resourcing capability was provided to the teams in 2012.
14. This dedicated approach has secured a number of successful prosecutions to date. Operation Encompass, for example, was an historic enquiry into an OCG identified as responsible for actively trafficking vulnerable teenage girls for sex. During the course of the investigation, 14 search warrants were executed, 13 arrests were made, and over 400 statements were taken from victims and witnesses of crime. This was successfully concluded with the convictions of 5 men and a total of 11 years imprisonment.
15. The WMP approach is committed to focusing on the safeguarding and protection of victims. Criminal enquiries have been largely reactive with resources not always able to be deployed as proactively as the threat requires. The HMIC National Child Protection Inspection of WMP during June 2014 identifies WMP should be reviewing plans for identifying, disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators involved in CSE.
16. This was recognised in the 2013 Service Transformation Opportunity Assessment which has underpinned the reform of this area. The review recognised the need to extend major crime investigation support to more serious public protection investigations such as child deaths, and to ensure a more robust review function to scrutinise major enquiries and more dedicated CSE resources.
17. Additional specialist officers were transferred to CSE safeguarding and investigation to improve the force's ability to disrupt and prosecute CSE perpetrators. On the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014, WMP launched the dedicated Central CSE Team, targeting perpetrators, Organised Crime Group, and gang-related CSE. This is in addition to a bespoke and well established Online Child Sexual Exploitation Team. This team works

in partnership with the NCA and CEOP to disrupt online offending. Operation Notarise provides a recent example of this partnership working. Operation Notarise was a national online CSE operation that resulted in over 40 West Midlands CSE-related arrests. The combined establishment for both areas of CSE Investigation is – 1 x Detective Chief Inspector, 2 x Detective Inspectors, 4 x Detective Sergeants and 24 x Detective Constables.

18. The force capability to address major CSE investigations is not capped at this level. The Force Tasking process prioritises all major enquires.
19. Whilst there is an improving picture in terms of more proactive targeting of CSE perpetrators, a number of opportunities have been identified to advance WMP's ability to disrupt offending and prosecute perpetrators. All CSE action undertaken following the HMIC report has been captured within a development plan, which is monitored in terms of progress in line with the WMP CSE Action Plan.
20. In addition to increased resources of the CSE and PPU teams, we continue to develop our ability to collect intelligence and map offending. In accordance with the WMP and National CSE Action Plan, we continue to examine the best and most appropriate use of criminal and civil legislation to prosecute CSE perpetrators in partnership with the Crown Prosecution Service (contained within HMIC recommendations). Furthermore, WMP are currently reviewing successful national CSE prosecutions to identify best practice and learning for the force, such as Operation Erle; a Cambridgeshire/Peterborough Constabulary-led CSE operation which resulted in a number of CSE offenders being successfully prosecuted.
21. Prosecuting offenders is difficult and highly resource intensive and even with the extra resources prosecutions will be complex and challenging.
22. The 2014 CSE Problem Profile outlines that ethnicity of offenders is 39% white and as 26% Asian. Further analysis will be conducted to identify how this data differs between online and street CSE.

## **PREVENT**

### **Raising awareness of CSE among young people, parents, carers and potential perpetrators**

23. Prevention of CSE is vital. There are many features of victims and effective action by parents and professionals can reduce the risk of victimisation. Sexual exploitation can take place in hotels or other premises and action can be taken by operators to prevent this.
24. WMP identified the requirement to develop a community response to the risks of CSE and the requirement to educate police officers and staff to be alert to CSE in all aspects of policing.
25. These interventions are as follows:

Operation Protection 2 was launched in the summer of 2012 to raise awareness internally across the force. Building on work undertaken with the Black Country Hoteliers, and working in partnership with the Local Children's Safeguarding Boards, a 'Say something if you see something' campaign commenced in May 2013. This campaign sought to raise awareness of CSE within the leisure industry across the region as hotels had previously featured in some aspects of CSE offending. The

campaign was partner-led and publicised via local media. Posters and suggested training materials were distributed to hoteliers and Bed and Breakfast associations to raise awareness among staff and to alert those working within the industry to the key warning signs and the reporting mechanism.

WMP has developed a CSE Communication Plan to continue to raise awareness, both internally and externally. Operation Sentinel supports a targeted publicity campaign to raise public awareness of CSE and hidden abuse crimes; and encourage victims to come forward. This received much media attention and publicity.

26. Operation Sentinel has been refreshed and the 2014 campaign, launched in October 2014, focuses its initial activity entirely on CSE. Sentinel will then progressing to other hidden crime types, such as Honour Based Violence. This is in coordination with the West Midlands Local Authority Partnership Regional Communications Plan, which is being promoted under the banner of the newly formulated regional “*See Me Hear Me Framework*” <http://www.seeme-hearme.org.uk>
27. A West Midlands Regional Partnership CSE Protocol has been developed over the last twelve months by WMP and CSE partners. The regional protocol seeks to build on existing CSE partnership working to improve CSE professional awareness and provide commonality and consistency in the identification of CSE, how the risk is assessed, how children are protected (and subsequently tracked), and how perpetrators are disrupted by the implementation of proactive partnership interventions. The CSE protocol includes the implementation of a regional risk and CSE screening assessment, in addition to investigative tool kits and guidance to raise awareness of CSE to all members of the public.
28. The development and future delivery of the Regional CSE Protocol exceeds the recent HMIC recommendation to develop a force-wide good practice regime to improve standards of investigation. The protocol provides guidance to all organisations that safeguard CSE victims – not focusing solely upon police action.
29. West Midlands Police recognises that more can be done to raise awareness of CSE in all communities in order to address all manifestation of CSE both online and offline. This will be developed within the Communication Plan, in partnership with Local Policing Units and key statutory and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector CSE stakeholders.

## **PROTECT**

### **Safeguarding young people and supporting professionals**

30. WMP has supported local partnerships in safeguarding forums aimed at understanding the scope of CSE, and providing intervention to reduce the risks to victims. In order to assess what was known of the scale of CSE and identify opportunities to pursue CSE offenders, WMP commissioned three CSE Problem profiles between 2010 and 2013.
31. WMP are currently leading the preparation of a renewed 2014 CSE Problem Profile with Local Authorities and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector organisations as part of the areas Protecting Violence against Vulnerable People work. This will provide a richer picture and understanding of the CSE threat posed across the wider region. The report will highlight opportunities to better safeguard children at risk of CSE; especially children who are reported missing or absent and/or are in the care of Children’s Services.

32. Some early findings from the 2014 Problem Profile show 210 children have been identified as being at risk of CSE; WMP has experienced a 42% increase in child abuse referrals since 2009; victims of CSE are female (87%), white (54%) and with an average age of 15 years, and 68% of victims are or have been in local authority care.
33. There is a clear link between children who go missing and the risk of CSE (referred to by Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Board 2013 and HMIC Inspection of WMP June 2014). WMP believes there is a need to increase the sensitivity to this risk through Sentinel and ensure a consistent professional response in cases of missing children who are at risk. This can be very challenging for officers but provides a clear opportunity to protect and secure intelligence. There remains too much inconsistency in this area.
34. WMP is able to target vulnerable locations through our intelligence systems but also acknowledges that this presents an opportunity for further improvement. Tasking processes are currently being reviewed to ensure intelligence is shared correctly between partners, central departments, and local policing teams to better target locations where CSE is prevalent. WMP is currently using innovative legislation to manage locations and individuals across the force area.
35. To ensure that every effort is made to safeguard children at risk of CSE and identify potential suspects, WMP is currently conducting a review of historic sexual offences against 12-17 year olds together with a trawl of databases held by WMP from 2009 to 2014 (referred to as 2014 WMP CSE Intelligence Chronology). This exercise will assist WMP and partners to develop an improved understanding of the wider and current CSE picture, whilst thereafter ensuring that every effort is made to safeguard known victims. This approach was adopted by Cambridgeshire Constabulary as the starting point for Operation Erle and is now considered best practice.
36. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014 West Midlands Police created new CSE co-ordinator posts within the Public Protection Unit to improve safeguarding of children at risk. Co-ordinators work within PPU Child Abuse Investigation Teams and review all child 'missing' and 'absent' records. Thereafter, co-ordinators develop bespoke safeguarding plans in consultation with Children's Service's and Local Policing Units. Co-ordinators work closely with Local Intelligence Officers and Local Authority CSE Officers. This maximises intelligence sharing opportunities to better inform risk assessments and safeguarding plans. WMP has invested 8 Constables into the CSE co-ordinator posts and will increase this to 10 on completion of STT roll out. This will provide each Local Policing Unit with a dedicated co-ordinator which complements the function of the dedicated central CSE team referred to earlier in the report.
37. During 2014, each Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LCSB) agreed to the creation of a CSE & Missing Children Operational Group (CMOG). The meeting is very much an operational meeting, chaired by a senior police Public Protection officer and attended by all key CSE organisations for each of the seven local authorities. Information and intelligence regarding children 'at risk' is shared by the group from their respective organisations and actions to safeguard and disrupt offending are agreed. Once again, the concept across the region remains in its infancy but it has shown encouraging signs regarding the implementation of improved safeguarding provisions and early identification of perpetrators.
38. With further investment and prioritisation, CMOG will help the wider partnership identify all children at risk of CSE where intelligence is known or reported, and thereafter inform tasking processes to prevent/reduce risk and prioritise offender enforcement and disruption opportunities.

## **PREPARE**

### **Providing strong leadership, effective systems and working with partners to tackle CSE**

39. Detective Chief Inspector Martin Hurcomb, who is the force lead for CSE, is currently refreshing WMP's CSE Action Plan for 2014/15. This will focus on the principles of Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare. This method will encompass national CSE actions and will address local issues and needs. DCI Hurcomb will form part of a national review team to examine the effectiveness of police forces dealing with CSE, in turn providing WMP with an opportunity to gain learning and national best practice to improve CSE delivery.
40. During 2014, a Strategic Partnership CSE Task & Finish Group was created to help provide a consistent and clear approach to CSE across the wider West Midlands region. This is chaired by the Chief Executive at Dudley. Organisations worked together to develop the See Me Hear Me Campaign, in addition to completing the Regional CSE Protocols, helping to provide a consistent and clear approach to CSE.
41. Public Protection senior leaders play a proactive role within Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) and Chair CSE Strategic Sub-Group and CSE/Missing Operational Group (CMOG) Meetings. Police attendance and participation at all LSCB's has improved across the region during the past 12 months. This is still an area where consistency needs to be improved to secure regular senior level attendance from both Public Protection and Local Policing Command Teams.
42. There is no formal national performance indicator or mechanism in place to capture solely CSE related offences. WMP recognise the need to review how to capture information and data for all CSE related incidents and have actively begun to progress this work. A report will shortly be finalised with recommendations concerning WMP Missing/Absent Persons Policy and force IT systems, with an intention to revise Force Policy to better protect children when reported missing.
43. A review has recently been completed to consider how force and local tasking mechanisms can better inform Local Policing Units, Public Protection Teams and Partners of CSE risk and opportunities to prevent victimisation and pursue enforcement and prosecution of offenders. This is a key priority for the CSE lead officer to develop during 2014, which will enable the force to have a better understanding of the threat posed by CSE and ensure the most vulnerable are better protected and those who pose risk are robustly pursued and managed. This will also better inform and direct Local Policing Units (LPUs) and front line officers with regard to patrol strategies – thereby ensuring that locations prevalent to CSE form part of daily patrol plans.
44. A number of Local Authorities have now implemented or are actively working towards the creation of Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH), in partnership with Public Protection teams. This presents an opportunity for key partners to share intelligence and make dynamic and considered decisions to safeguard children at risk of CSE. Pending a future model/system that enables all agencies to share effective systems, this may be considered as the best way forward in the interim.
45. Working with partners from across the West Midlands area WMP is leading on Project Opera which aims to better inform and identify those most at risk and ensure proportionate interventions according to all available information. It is the intention and ambition of the programme to be predictive in nature, developing analytics to provide an

automated early risk assessment for vulnerable people based on shared multi-agency data.

### **What worked well, what have we learnt and what we need to do to improve**

46. Significant progress has been made since 2011/12 to improve how we safeguard victims and target perpetrators of CSE. Whilst police numbers continue to reduce, the investment within the PPU has increased – from approximately 350 to 800 police officers. Online CSE crime is increasing faster than many other crime types and it is important to also acknowledge that whilst improvements have been made to develop how we deal with the threat of 'street CSE grooming', there is still much more to be done. With this in mind, further growth of CSE Teams and functions may need to be considered as we continue to gain an understanding of the extent of reported CSE crime in the coming months.
47. We have learnt that WMP and partnership IT systems do not adequately capture CSE crime/risk. CSE is not a crime type in its own right, therefore the police service do not record a crime specifically as CSE. For example, most CSE crime will be recorded as sexual abuse, with a marker attached indicating CSE as a driver for committing the offence. CSE can be reported in many different forms to the police or local authority which create difficulty in gaining an absolute understanding of demand. This is a national concern for all police forces/partnerships. WMP are examining short to medium term solutions to modify current systems to better capture CSE incidents.
48. We must strive to embed CSE awareness within the mind-set of frontline officers and local neighbourhood policing teams. This has improved during 2014 as a result of Sentinel but there is still room for improvement. The panacea must be for officers to consider the conditions surrounding a child who is frequently reported missing or absent, and recognise the potential threat and risks. This is particularly pertinent for children residing in care home settings (contained within HMIC Child Inspection recommendations).
49. Officers and staff within WMP are well versed in recognising the signs of domestic abuse and taking positive action (development of DASH model). We will endeavour to follow the same pathway to ensure police staff recognise CSE in the same way.
50. We have learnt the importance of targeting perpetrators of CSE within our operating model. WMP have correctly provided investment in recent times to better safeguard victims of CSE. Safeguarding children at risk must always be our priority – but this must run parallel to more effective targeting perpetrators of CSE. The newly created Central CSE team will focus solely upon CSE perpetrators and will develop tactics to assist senior investigating officers pursue and disrupt offending.
51. The importance of being intelligence led in our approach to identifying perpetrators of CSE cannot be underestimated. To become truly mature, we must better share intelligence with our key partners and transfer this into WMP tasking systems, thereby ensuring officers are correctly sighted concerning risk and providing intelligence to help disrupt offending.
52. WMP understand the need to better protect vulnerable children from CSE and are absolutely committed to doing so. Over the course of next year we expect to be able to demonstrate the following:
  - Increase our understanding across all agencies of the true CSE threat.



- Improve staff awareness of the significance of drawing together all available information from police systems to better inform their risk assessment.
- Positively influence local and force intelligence led tasking processes and embed a local policing response to tackling and targeting CSE offenders.
- Continue to raise awareness of CSE within WMP.
- Fully implement Regional CSE Protocols across WMP and the wider partnership, which will ensure all CSE referrals are correctly risk assessed and managed.
- Fully develop CSE Operational Safeguarding groups (CMOG) in a consistent fashion across the seven local authority areas, improving our ability to safeguard correctly and identify perpetrators.
- Continue to develop offender management opportunities to reduce the risks posed by CSE perpetrators.
- Examine in more detail the link between missing/absent children, care home residence and CSE. This will assist CSE co-ordinators develop bespoke trigger and safeguarding plans to prevent further missing and CSE related incidents.
- Improve staff awareness of their responsibilities for protecting children who are reported missing from home and assessed as absent – in particular, those cases where absences are a regular occurrence (HMIC recommendation).

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

53. There are no financial implications.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

54. There are no legal implications.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

55. The Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable believe CSE and areas related to it are of high public importance. HMIC inspected the Force's Child Abuse capabilities in June 2014 at the time the Service Transformation Review was carried out. The inspection identifies a number of areas for improvement which the Force accepts. The Police and Crime Commissioner intends to ask HMIC to re-inspect the force in this area in one year. The PCC will work with the Chief Constable to develop the terms for this re-inspection.

56. The Board is asked to note the content of this report.

**Chief Constable C. Sims OBE QPM**