

Child Criminal Exploitation Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Reason for review

The Bracknell Exploitation Annual Report 2021/22 noted significant multi agency work in Bracknell Forest to tackle county lines drug dealing. In this period, there was one county drugs line active in Bracknell that was known to have exploited children to move drugs. Services did not identify any instances where children had been trafficked outside the borough to be exploited as drug mules or runners, and there were no known missing children linked to child criminal exploitation (CCE). There were two arrests for possession with intent to supply class A drugs for children in Bracknell.

The reductions suggest the problem profile is now largely confined to the town itself. In response to the emerging intelligence picture of more localised CCE, this review will look at how effective local networks, partnerships and responses are in tackling it.

The review will look at any changes to CCE activity as a result of the pandemic. In March 2021, a National Youth Agency report¹ on county lines identified that:

- There is an increasing trend for gangs to target vulnerable children and young people in county-towns, as well as moving young people across county boundaries
- There is a lack of sufficient youth services and support for young people in many of the county towns and rural areas, with a concentration of diversionary projects in the urban cities where gangs operate from.

This also points to more localised CCE activity and the need to ensure effective community and partnership responses.

The Bracknell Forest Makesafe is a small team comprising a manager, a specialist social worker and specialist family worker. The team undertakes direct work with children at risk of exploitation. In 2021/22 the Council's Makesafe team reported that the number of vulnerable children assessed as Level 3 (evidence of active exploitation) had halved from the previous year.

The changes are:

	2020/21	2021/22
Assessed as Level 1 (Vulnerabilities to exploitation but no indications child is being groomed)	51%	67%
Assessed as Level 2 (Indicators that the child is being groomed for the purposes of exploitation)	24.5%	22%
Assessed as Level 3 (Evidence of active exploitation.)	24.5%	11%

The reduction in level 3 cases creates a shift towards more awareness raising and preventative support for young people. This review will look at the role of the community and business in this early help.

The Makesafe team noted that “nothing has been usual for children since the pandemic began. The goal is to move forward collaboratively to make Bracknell Forest as safe as it can be for children as they regain some of the opportunities lost in covid”. This review aims to support that goal by considering key aspects of safeguarding and scrutinising how effective they are.

Objectives/scope

The review will look at:

1. Contextual safeguarding

- assess whether best use is made of the communities and businesses in Bracknell Forest to address the issues associated with child exploitation
- analyse the effectiveness and impact of activities designed to educate businesses and the community about child exploitation
- understand how businesses and community groups are/can be included in a strategic response to child exploitation
- consider the effectiveness of the Bracknell Safer Spaces Scheme and any changes required following the town centre regeneration
- what is the local understanding of new gateways, such as the increase of vaping and vape shops?
- as community leaders, how can councillors support a strong safeguarding approach amongst our communities?

2. Transitional safeguarding

- how consistent and effective is safeguarding support for vulnerable young people particularly as they transition from 18 to 25 years old?

3. Links between exclusion and exploitation

- understand the impact of exclusion on the risk of exploitation
- assess the effectiveness of strategies for keeping children in school and away from harm
- assess the effectiveness of recovery strategies to bring previously excluded and exploited children back into education or training

The review will consider how a range of partners, including public health, parks and countryside teams, local police force, schools and local businesses work together to reduce opportunities for exploitation. It will also look at other local authorities and organisations to identify and share good practice relating to these areas.

The review will seek to understand how the voices of children and young people are included in shaping the local approach, and will include the experience of children and young people in its research.

Delivery methods:

- Interviewing services and partners
- Hearing the voice of young people
- Desktop review of relevant data
- Consulting other local authorities to understand their approach

Council theme: Education and skills, Communities	Council team: Makesafe
Review due: February 2023	Proposed by: Councillor Mrs Gill Birch
<p>Equalities Impact Assessment</p> <p>The LGA recognisesⁱⁱ that some children may be at greater risk of exploitation than others. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children Looked After • Children living in poverty • Children with special educational needs and disabilities • Children who are not UK citizens or do not have immigration status • Children with poor mental health and wellbeing <p>The review will ensure these groups in particular are included and considered.</p>	
<p>Financial and legal implications</p> <p>There are potentially legal and financial implications of any recommendations arising from this review which will be fully addressed in the review report.</p>	
<p>Climate Change implications</p> <p>The implications of any recommendations arising from this review will be fully addressed in the review report.</p>	

ⁱ [Between the lines \(nya.org.uk\)](http://www.nya.org.uk)

ⁱⁱ [Tackling child exploitation: resources pack | Local Government Association](#)