

Committee: Safeguarding Sub Committee	Dated: 12 May 2022
Subject: Multi Agency Child Exploitation Forum Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Contribute to a flourishing society 1. People are safe and feel safe. 2. People enjoy good health and wellbeing.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Andrew Carter	For Information
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Summary

The purpose of the report is to enable members to be sighted on issues around child exploitation in the City of London.

The City of London holds a Multi-Agency Child Exploitation and Vulnerable Adolescent Forum on a bimonthly basis. This report outlines the work of the Forum and the action plan as set out for 2022-23.

The Forum was established to develop a detailed overview of Child Exploitation (including sexual and criminal) within the City of London and to use this profile to inform multi agency work priorities including the development of appropriate prevention and intervention strategies.

Whilst MACE focuses primarily on young people under the age of 18 years; the group also considers cases of young people up to the age of 25 years who are care leavers or young people with learning difficulties receiving services from City of London.

The group aims to reduce the risk to children and young people at risk of or experiencing exploitation (including criminal and sexual) by building an understanding of the links between victims and perpetrators, identifying emerging themes and trends, and using these to inform diversionary measures and interventions.

Discussion focuses on emerging trends, issues, and learning. The group is used, where needed and purposeful, to discuss cases.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The MACE agenda was amended in 2018 to be followed by a specific Vulnerable Adolescents agenda which has been developed to expand the oversight of the group to cover the strategic and operational response to a wider range of issues that young people face.
2. The decision to widen this scope simply reflects the fact that young people often face multiple risks. Dealing with the response to certain threats in isolation can potentially hinder the understanding of vulnerabilities that frequently intersect and overlap. For example, young people who go missing from home could be missing due to violence in their home. Young people who are exploited by gangs could have vulnerabilities in terms of their mental health and emotional wellbeing and adolescents who are at risk from CSE may be more susceptible due to their limited and/or limiting experiences of growing up in a household where domestic violence has skewed their understanding of healthy relationships.
3. Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology (Definition Department of Education 2017)
4. Child criminal exploitation is increasingly used to describe this type of exploitation where children are involved, and is defined as:
Child Criminal Exploitation is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18.

The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines, and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft. Definition (Department of Education 2017)

5. To effectively safeguard children and young people, understanding both the complexity and the context in which they live their lives is essential. The City and Hackney Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CHSCP's) developed position that children being abused, or at risk of abuse, should be seen heard and helped will be central to the overall approach of the MACE and Vulnerable Adolescent Forum:
 - **Seen**; in the context of their lives at home, friendship circles, health, education, and public spaces (including social media).
 - **Heard**; in the context of professionals taking time to hear what children and young people are saying and put themselves in their shoes and think about what their life might truly be like.
 - **Helped**; in the context of professionals remaining curious and by implementing effective and imaginative solutions that help children and young people and make them safer.
6. Practice knowledge increasingly suggests that it is unhelpful in our response to separate out and ascribe priority to diverse vulnerabilities. In this sense, the Vulnerable Adolescent Forum will develop improved integrated arrangements that actively consider and effectively respond this complexity.
7. Factors in scope include (but not limited to):
 - Child Sexual Exploitation (including Harmful Sexual Behaviours)
 - Children missing from home, care and education
 - Children and young people exposed to risk through gang involvement, county lines and serious youth violence.
 - Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA)
 - Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG)
 - Adolescent Neglect
 - Self-harm and Suicide
 - Substance Misuse
 - Radicalisation
 - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
8. Safeguarding children and young people in the context of their access to technology and use of social media will underpin the focus on the strategic and operational responses to adolescent vulnerability.
9. The forum further maintains oversight of the operational effectiveness of the partnership response to vulnerable adolescents and the direct impact on improving outcomes and the safety and welfare of young people in the City of London.

10. Membership consists of:

- City of London Police
- Children's Social Care and Early Help Service
- Health CSE Lead – CHYPS Plus
- Health CSE Lead - Safeguarding Nurse
- Education CSE Lead
- Youth Services – commissioning lead
- Drug and Alcohol Services
- Safer City Partnership representative
- Housing
- Community Engagement Service
- CHSCP representative

Current Position

1. The forum met last on 5 April 2022 and agreed an overarching plan for the financial year.
2. The forum Decided against further action on AirBnBs, as it is a non achievable action. There has been no pattern to dealing from AirBnBs, or under 18s using parental/adult credit cards to book and stay. No pattern of location within the city and from investigation, each incident is unconnected.
3. The serious case review on Child Q was fully considered, and actions recommended put forward to the City and Hackney Child Safeguarding Partnership. The team leader for substance abuse services, to whom child Q should have been referred is keen for more referrals from the City and will be visiting the Guildhall in May 2022.
4. All cases open to Children's Social Care and Early Help will be considered in the light of parental substance misuse as well as child/young person substance misuse. All children and families will have had a refreshed opportunity for support by end July 2022. All social care and early help staff will have attended Adulthood training to ensure that black children are responded to properly as children, with a safeguarding first approach. The service development plan coming to this sub committee details support for staff. The Service Development Plan will be updated accordingly with data on referrals to the substance service and for the training.
5. Extinction Rebellion (XR) was considered in the light of risk of criminal exploitation, absent parents due to incarceration. A joint plan for XR was in place to respond to children's needs during the protests was in place, and was fortunately not needed.
6. All children looked after and care leaver contracts are being reviewed to ensure that our children are not criminalised for any damage to their homes. This is to avoid needless criminalisation and to ensure we treat our children in care as our own.

7. A City of London Police conference will be held in May. The focus will be on all strands of vulnerability, including child sexual exploitation of criminal exploitation. All relevant staff will be encouraged to attend.

Key Data

8. Data collection for MACE needs to be extended and consistent; from May 2022 quarterly data on CCE and CSE as identifiers in referrals into children's social care will be made possible. It is recognised that these will largely if not wholly be external residents travelling to and through the City. With the City being an end of line with drugs imported for City workers/visitors. At the moment it is not possible to run an automated data collection for child criminal and sexual exploitation, only manual time-consuming searching is viable. It is noted that only four children have been presented to MACE in 2021-22.
9. The City of London Police will provide data on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children having their fingerprints taken as part of Operation Innerste at the next MACE forum. One child was stopped by British Transport Police, who do not have the required inkpads to take Op Innerste prints. The CoL Police will ensure the young person has their fingerprints taken and that MACE is updated. This makes young people less likely to be trafficked from home in London, as they are identifiable if stopped.

Corporate & Strategic & Risk Implications

10. Operation Innerste is a police operation that is established in the City since 2021, the purpose is to prevent children from being trafficked from London within the UK/Europe. Quarterly data to MACE will enable the Corporation to be confident the Operation is working.

Corporate & Strategic and Equalities implications

11. Child Q has implications for Education and Police services in the City and is being overseen by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

Financial implications - none

Resource implications - none

Legal implications - none

Climate implications - none

Security implications - none

Conclusion

12. There is no clear pattern of criminal or child exploitation in the City. This is checked often and well, and the police profile for the City is updated. Cocaine

use in the City fuels children delivering substances, and causes criminal exploitation of non-resident children. Child Q has challenges for all our systems in respect of being anti racist and seeing and hearing and responding to vulnerable black children. The City and Hackney Safeguarding Children's Partnership is co ordinating all agency responses so they are aligned and duplication is avoided.

Appendices

- None

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