



## London Borough of Enfield

<b>Report Title</b>	Child Exploitation (Sexual and Criminal) and Missing Children
<b>Report to</b>	Children, Young People & Education Scrutiny Panel
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	18.12.23
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
<b>Executive Director / Director</b>	Anne Stoker (Director – Children & Family Services) Tony Theodoulou (Executive Director – People)
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<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	All
<b>Classification</b>	Part 1 Public
<b>Reason for exemption</b>	

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on how Children and Family Services responds to child exploitation (sexual and criminal) and missing children.

### Main Considerations for the Panel

#### Enfield's response to child exploitation and missing

##### Adolescent Safeguarding Teams

2. The two Adolescent Safeguarding Teams (AST) which sit within the Children's Specialist Support Service under the Child Protection and Vulnerable Children service were configured in 2021 as part of a service redesign focused on the Council's response to extra-familial risk and 'edge of care' family breakdown concerns. The aim was to have a more cohesive structure that was better placed to respond holistically to the various facets of extra-familial risk, which are often intertwined. The aim being to have a more holistic response to young people that is aligned to research findings and best practice principles. Each of the two

teams consists of a team manager, an advanced practitioner, four social workers, and a youth worker.

3. The ASTs undertake a range of interventions with young people. These are often facilitated by the young person's allocated social worker, though both teams also have a youth worker who can deliver structured sessions of direct work to support the case-holder. Interventions delivered include the following:
  - Direct work on topics, such as substance misuse, safe relationships, managing emotions, safe scripts, red lines, value cards, identity/presentation in the community.
  - Family group conferences to help families to develop their own solutions.
  - Trauma-informed parenting sessions delivered jointly with the Youth Justice Service - considering historical experiences of trauma and how these may impact on the young person's current presenting behaviours to support attuned parenting.
  - Joint safety planning with the Youth Justice Service to ensure that practical, immediate keep safe measures are as robust as possible.
  - Joint sessions with Vanguard mentors around extra-familial harm. Vanguard is a therapeutic support service for young people at risk of and affected by violence aged up to 25.
  - Accessing grant provision - for example, Buttle UK provided gym membership, stationery for school, money for a family day out, and a stab-proof vest for a young person.
  - Referrals to partner agencies, including those in the voluntary sector to support casework and to promote robust exit plans – for example Sister System who offer a mentoring and befriending service to girls who are in care or on the edge of care, Family Based Solutions offer intensive sessions with the whole families to prevent family breakdown, St Giles Trust offer youth mentors and direct work to young people who have been a victim of serious youth violence, HEART CAMHS who work with children looked after to support their mental wellbeing.
4. Two case examples have been detailed in the [appendices](#) to illustrate the impact of such interventions in practice.

### **Contextual Safeguarding Hub**

5. The Contextual Safeguarding Hub was also launched in 2021. As well as having a lead role for missing issues, including the offer of return home interviews, the Hub provide support for staff across Children and Family Services around exploitation and missing children. This includes availability for individual case consultations, attending key meetings, like strategy discussions, providing training, and contributing to operational and strategic multi-agency working through participation with the Safeguarding Adolescents from Exploitation (SAFE) panel and Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panel. Additionally, the Hub have a lead role in facilitating the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) pilot panel.
6. The Hub's establishment is one practice lead, two missing co-ordinators (one full time and one half time), one half time triage and multi-agency co-ordinator, and one half time co-ordinator for the NRM panel.

7. The Hub's practice lead regularly facilitates consultations to support practitioners and undertook 54 between April and September this year. The vast majority are undertaken with regard to young people that are open to children's social care and have an allocated social worker, though some consultations have also been undertaken with caseworkers from the Youth Justice Service and practitioners from Early Help.
8. The practice lead has developed tools that practitioners can use within interventions with young people. For example, around strengths-based rapport building, healthy relationships and sexual consent work.
9. The practice lead has also facilitated mapping exercises to build on existing intelligence by setting out networks of alliances and conflicts between different groups and individual young people in Enfield. There were three mapping meetings of this kind between April and September this year. This has made a valuable contribution to strategic discussions and planning within the MACE meeting – for example, when several incidents of youth violence occurred within a short timeframe, and all had links to a particular educational setting.
10. The missing co-ordinators have a lead role for offering and facilitating return home interviews when children are found after being reported as missing from home or from care. Additionally, the Hub have developed a pathway for the most vulnerable young people who are missing and at risk of extra-familial harm. In this context, the Hub cross reference children who have exploitation markers, using data from the SAFE and MACE panels, with the children who go missing most regularly to identify those who would benefit from additional support. The missing children co-ordinators are proactive in contacting these children before they go missing to build trust, rapport, and confidence in the service.
11. A new centralised process for recording missing episodes has been developed and will be implemented in December 2023. It is anticipated that this new approach will improve standards around recording missing episodes and offering return home interviews in a timely fashion. This will also enable more comprehensive management oversight of this cohort of young people, which in turn will facilitate scrutiny of the efficacy of the new approach.

#### **Other targeted response offer**

12. Within the Youth Development Service, the contextual safeguarding youth workers provide wellbeing workshops to schools to raise awareness of different types of extra-familial harm. These include lunchtime clubs, pop-up stalls, and after-school outreach support. These events are generally well attended - for example, the sessions at Bishops Stopford School regularly have 25-30 young people in attendance.
13. The service also provides a range of other interventions that include support around extra-familial exploitation risks. These include community outreach work, such as youth workers focusing on 'hotspot areas', which are identified as having high rates of youth anti-social behaviour and/or crime. Youth workers walk around these locations, speaking to young people they come across, exploring any worries, and signposting them to positive activities. Similarly, the Youth Bus

is a mobile provision that enables young people to access information, advice and guidance, free activities, advocacy, and early help support on their doorstep. 1274 young people accessed the outreach service between June and September this year, which demonstrates extensive reach. Additionally, this was an increase of 341 on the previous quarter when 933 young people accessed the service, which suggests that the impact of this service provision is increasing.

14. Early Help, Youth and Community safety offer programmes, such as the Turnaround project in Early Help that works to divert young people away from criminality and entering the youth justice, Operation engage aimed to reduce serious youth violence, Project Dove and the comprehensive youth offer including youth clubs and summer university support our response to tackle exploitation and missing.
15. For those young people aged 18+, who are no longer entitled to a service from children service, but extra familiar risk still a concern, a transitional safeguarding response include support from Precious Moments who provide mentoring and advocacy for young people.
16. Plans are in place to strengthen how services capture feedback from young people and their families within children's social care and the Youth Development Service, to ensure that service user perspectives are understood and factored into service development considerations.

### **Multi-agency panels**

17. The Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panel and the SAFE Panel are the partnership forums for safeguarding children and young people at risk of extra familial harm. MACE and the SAFE panel contribute to the wider Enfield contextual (extra familial) safeguarding approach. Both panels meet monthly and are chaired jointly by the police and children's social care
18. Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Meeting (MACE) The Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Meeting (MACE) has strategic oversight of all exploitation cases, information, intelligence and activity across each LA area and across BCU boundaries. MACE uses Victim, offender, location, themes (VOLT) mnemonic and works in line with the Pan London guidance.
19. The main purpose of the SAFE panel is to be a multi-agency panel that maintains operational/casework oversight of children and young people, aged up to 18, and where appropriate, care leavers or those on an Education, Health and Care Plan (up to age 25), at risk of significant harm through exploitation.
20. The Vulnerable Young People group, is a subgroup of the Enfield Safeguarding Partnership, this year developed the Safeguarding Adolescent Strategy 2023-26 which has 4 key priorities; a) Embed a contextual safeguarding approach across the partnership, b) Deliver innovative and evidence based prevention and early intervention activities, c) Provide effective protection and support at the right place and the right time, d) Develop a multi-agency approach to identification and disruption of those who pose a risk to children and young people. An action is currently in development.
21. Enfield was successful its bid to be one of 20 sites within the Home Office National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Pilot Programme, to trial an approach of devolved decision-making around modern slavery concerns for children under 18

years old. This means that decisions are made locally instead of by the national Single Competent Agency (SCA) with the aim of facilitating faster decision-making that is more informed by local knowledge, so that young people receive a timelier outcome.

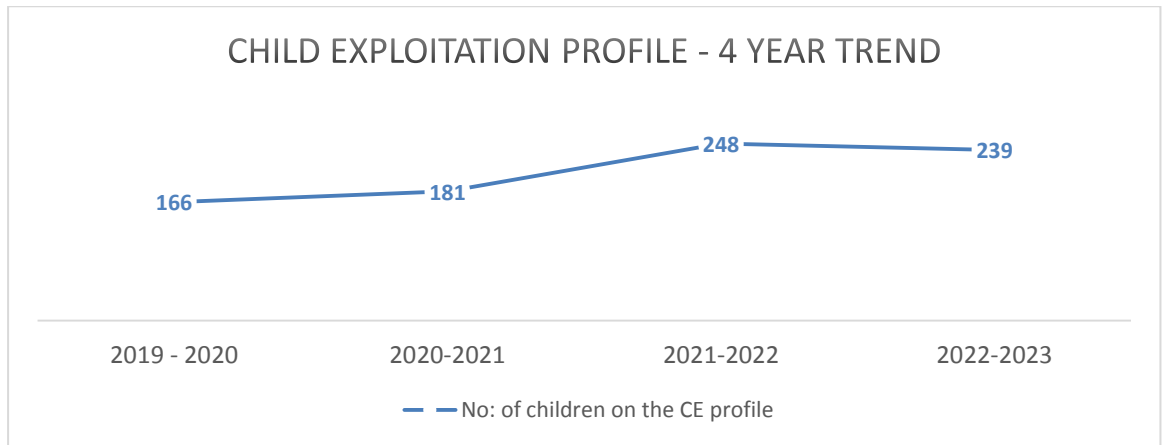
22. The Enfield panel commenced in April this year and consists of a monthly meeting, attended by key partner agencies, and chaired by the service manager of the Children's Specialist Support Service. The panel is run in accordance with Home Office standards and has received positive feedback from them. For example, the requirement to have a SCA observer present has recently been dropped, which demonstrates that the Home Office have confidence in the progress made by the Enfield panel. To date, the pilot panel has made decisions for 28 young people.

### **Raising awareness**

23. This July. Save Me a 33-minute short film was released. The story is about exploitation, gangs, crime, and the impact it can have on vulnerable young people. The film is aimed at the professional community and community leaders nationally and is now used as an educational tool to raise awareness of risks of exploitation and educate young people and their parents on how to stay safe. Since release in the summer it has been viewed over 39,000 times on [You Tube](#).
24. Children and Family Services commissioned the production after successfully bidding for funding from the Ministry Housing Communities and Local Government (now known as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities). Young people from Enfield Care Council and the Young Leaders within Enfield were consulted on the storyline, the script and some took part in filming which took place in various locations in Enfield. The premiere took place at Cineworld Enfield on 3 July.
25. Children and family service ensures that all staff have access to training to raise awareness on exploitation (extra-familial harm). Part of that delivery includes the Contextual Safeguarding Hub practice lead delivering training in a range of contexts in order to promote awareness of extra-familial risk and the response to it. The practice lead has delivered a total of nine training sessions between April and September 2023. Training is delivered across Children and Family Services, with foster carers and with partner agencies.

### **Background and Options**

26. This briefing provides an overview of children services response to child exploitation and children who are missing.
27. Child exploitation is a form of child abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child under the age of 18.
28. Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, a total of 239 children were identified as either experiencing or being at risk of child exploitation in Enfield, 44 were at risk of child sexual exploitation, 175 at risk of child criminal exploitation and 20 were identified as at risk of both.



29. There had been a year-on-year increase in the number children on the child exploitation profile, in the year 2022/23 there was a slight drop from 248 to 239.
30. At the end of September 2023 95 children were on the child exploitation list, 13% (16) were at risk of child sexual exploitation, 60% (74) at risk of child criminal exploitation and 27% (5) were at risk of both.
31. In 2022/23, 269 children were missing from care or home, this totalled to 983 missing episodes. Of the 269 children who had been missing in this period 21.5% (58) were children looked after by the local authority.



32. The number of children recorded as missing has remained very similar in the last two years, the spike between 20/21 and 21/22 has been attributed to covid restrictions being lifted meaning more children and young people were more likely to be out and therefore likely to not return home when expected.
33. In the first 6 months of this year (April – September 2023) 140 children were missing from care or home a total of 632 missing episodes. Of the 140 children who had been missing in this period 31% (43) were children looked after by the local authority.
34. 52% of the children on the child exploitation list have been reported missing at some point, either for single or multiple episodes.

35. When children social care is notified that a child has returned from a missing episode a return home interview (RHI) should be offered within 72 hours. In the first six months of 23/24, 84% (531) RHIs have been offered, 11% (68) the allocated case worker took the lead and 5% (33) the offer was not made within 72 hours.
36. Most children who go missing or where there is a concern regarding exploitation are aged between 14 and 18. In the first 6 months of this year, 51% of the missing children were female. Of the 43 children who went missing who are looked after 54% of those who went missing are male.
37. Our data shows that males are most likely to be identified at risk of criminal exploitation, whilst around 98% of female are identified as at risk of sexual exploitation.
38. Data shows that those identified as Black, make up the largest group of children identified as experiencing or at risk of exploitation or going missing averaging 40% of the overall numbers.
39. Data highlights the top 4 postcodes, where children at risk/ experiencing exploitation live, 28% lived in EN3 (Turkey Street, Enfield Lock, Enfield Highway, Ponders End), 18% EN1 (Town, Southbury, Bush Hill Park, Chase) 18% N9 (Jubilee, Lower Edmonton, Haselbury, Bush Hill Park, Ponders End) and 12% N18 ((Edmonton Green, Upper Edmonton, Haselbury, Bowes and Palmers Green)
40. This complex area of practice requires a comprehensive response from across the partnership. Within Children and Family Services, all teams have a responsibility towards young people who are impacted by these issues, since 2021, there has been a bespoke provision specifically targeted at young people who are at risk of exploitation.

### **Conclusion**

41. In summary this report highlights extra-familial risks, such as child criminal exploitation (CCE), child sexual exploitation (CSE), gang affiliation, missing and trafficking, is occurring in Enfield, with between 95 -100 children are on the Enfield CSE/CCE Profile list at any given time.
42. There is a recognised correlation between children going missing and an increased risk to those children of being exploited. Children and Family services has adapted its delivery offer to provide a target response to this form of extra familial harm through the development of the contextual safeguarding hub and the adolescent safeguarding teams, whilst recognising that all services work with young people at risk.
43. Working alongside local and national partners, children services aim to reduce extra-familial harm and support young people and their families, whilst continuing to raise awareness across children services, foster carers and partners.
44. Plans are in place to improve the missing response process and improve seeking feedback from young people. The safeguarding adolescent strategy action plan is being developed and will be overseen by the safeguarding partnership.
45. There is a holistic approach to working with young people at risk of extra-familial harm and / or on the edge of care, to build a trusting relationship, reduce missing and to work with partners to disrupt the exploiters.

46. Children and Family services fulfil the Council's statutory responsibilities towards children in the Borough who are in need of help and protection or are in care or are leaving care. Services are regulated by legislation and by statutory guidance.

## **Relevance to Council Plans and Strategies**

### **47. Priority: Thriving children and young people**

- Help all children to have the best start in life
- Safeguard children and young people and increase support in-borough for looked after children with complex needs
- Improve educational outcomes for all children and young people
- Increase local education, play and leisure opportunities for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities
- Engage children and young people in positive activities
- Involve children and young people in decisions that affect their lives

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### **Appendices**

Attached two case studies

### **Background Papers**

N/A

## **Appendix 1**



## **Case Study 1 – Child Sexual Exploitation**

Amber is a 14-year-old White British girl. She transferred in from another local authority in April this year to move in with her mother locally, it was agreed that she would be supported under a child in need plan in Enfield. The principal concerns were around online grooming and child sexual exploitation, including a sexual assault perpetrated by a middle-aged man who Amber met up with after an online interaction in which he had stated that he is 19.

The following interventions have been delivered to date:

- The social worker spending time seeking to build a trusting relationship where Amber feels contained and understood – for example, completing a genogram together and going to her favourite park to do mindful colouring.
- The social worker has facilitated direct work sessions regarding healthy and appropriate relationships.
- The social worker has undertaken safety planning with Amber and her mother.
- CAMHS are involved around Amber's low moods and anxiety.
- The Lighthouse have assessed and are due to begin specialist work around Amber's experiences of sexual violence.
- A St Giles Trust mentor is supporting Amber to engage in positive activities, such as martial arts, which she has expressed an interest in.
- The Summer University and substance misuse support were also offered, but Amber did not wish to access these services.

The work remains ongoing at present, but some progress has already been made as noted by Amber, her mother, and the involved professional network at the most recent child in need review meeting.

## **Case Study 2 – Child Criminal Exploitation**

Samuel is a 17-year-old Black British African Congolese boy. He was referred to the team due to child criminal exploitation concerns and links to serious youth violence. He had previously been arrested for conspiracy to kidnap, had been chased by a group of males who had a knife on another occasion, and disclosed later that he had been shot at. Additionally, there were concerns about poorly managed diabetes.

The team delivered the following interventions over twenty months during their work with Samuel under a child in need plan:

- Joint work with the Youth Justice Service who provided access to the Young Consultants programme and CAMHS provision.
- Virtual reality headset sessions around grooming and trap house risks were undertaken separately with Samuel and his mother.
- Samuel delivered virtual reality training to social workers during a Children and Family Services practice week, which included handing out certificates that he had signed to staff who had completed the session.
- Samuel also delivered a virtual reality session to other young people who were open to the service.
- A referral to the St Giles Trust's Vanguard service was made for mentoring support, which included accompanying him to access the diabetes clinic.
- Work around being open about his diabetes with trusted friends in order to manage this effectively when he was out with his peers.
- Football session / open day – Samuel participated in a sports session.
- Support to go away during the summer holidays due to heightened risks locally.
- Crazy golf outing as a reward for positive changes made.

- A referral to Catch 22 to help to develop positive training and employment plans.

The team's involvement is due to end soon as Samuel has utilised the interventions offered and engaged well. He has ceased associating with areas that are high risk for him, has completed his GCSE's and is now attending college. Samuel enjoyed delivering virtual reality sessions and has offered to facilitate further sessions, which indicates a sense of pride and accomplishment. Currently, he is working with the Vanguard service and Catch 22 to explore accessing a business course.

Samuel's family have expressed how appreciative they are of the support offered by the adolescent support team. Samuel has indicated that he would be willing to help adolescent support team or the Youth Justice Service deliver programmes and training in the future - for the small price of an Amazon voucher!

Note: the names have been changed for the purpose of this report.