

LOCAL AUTHORITY REVIEW OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

Background

There are three specialist CSE teams that currently serve Lancashire – Engage Partnership in the East; Operation Deter in Central; and Awaken in the North. Lancashire Children's Social Care's staffing contribution to these teams is four social workers (one in Central, one in North, and two in the East), and more recently a Practice Manager covering the County. In addition, four Community Support Workers have caseloads heavily weighted towards CSE work to support the specialist and dedicated social workers. Each of these multi agency teams, whilst operating under the agreed Standard Operating Procedures, function very differently and are at different stages in terms of their development.

Children's Social Care has undertaken a review of its CSE provision and discussed with Police and Health the current challenges and how we can manage risk more effectively.

Findings

Current pathways, processes and work

The roles adopted by the social workers in post have huge disparities across County, and agreed pathways are not been adhered to. The CSE provision provided by CSE social workers is dependent upon the CSE team they are attached to, although primarily the focus is on purely undertaking risk assessments as opposed to providing any CSE service/intervention. Referral pathways are intercepted by CSE police and social workers due to a lack of faith in the CART system.

There has been some criticism from partner agencies about the poor initial response provided to some CSE referrals at the point of entry into Children's Social Care. Delays in CART are often cited and the request and availability for strategy discussions is reported by police to be lacking by Children's Social Care in some areas. Whilst the terminology used by the police does not mirror that of Working Together, and relates more to "professional discussions", it has to be acknowledged that current management arrangements in CSC do not promote effective information sharing for high risk CSE victims.

For those individuals where CSE has been identified as a significant risk, the referral will be processed through CART and into the district teams and will bypass our specialist teams. Here we have many Social Workers assessing young people with no specialist knowledge of CSE (both assessment and intervention). For those less risky young people, referrals are made direct to the specialist CSE Social Workers who will undertake a CSE risk assessment but do not have the capacity to undertake intervention work.

There is also a need to develop our information systems and processes to ensure that we are sharing our data in way to understand the needs of young people and practice.

Interface with Early Help

CSE interventions with young people are currently delivered by CSC community support workers, who have caseloads heavily weighted towards CSE, although sit in substantive CSC posts and undertake tasks commensurate with this post also. This intervention work sits across all levels of the CoN as opposed to targeted work at a statutory level. There is further work to be undertaken with Early Help to agree criteria for referral into the service, and collaboration between CSC and Early Help to upskill the workforce and manage CSE risk.

Information sharing

The quality of information sharing between agencies differs dramatically on an individual case-by-case and worker basis as well as by locality. The interface between Children's Social Care and the CSE team is also variable and can cause duplication of work and a disjointed approach to supporting children at times. The information sharing governance has been interpreted differently in each area.

Key Principles

Based on the findings from significant research undertaken and attendance at a Getting to Good seminar, we know that central to effectively understanding and addressing CSE, and informing practice:

- Young people must be at the centre
- CSE is complex; therefore the response cannot be linear
- No agency can address CSE in isolation; collaboration is essential
- Knowledge is crucial
- Communities and families are valuable assets, and may also need support
- Effective services require resilient practitioners

To remodel Lancashire Children's Social Care's response to CSE, based on these key principles, a set of objectives need to be set against these key principles.

How "good" can be achieved

It is clear that to achieve "good" and be able to demonstrate and evidence this, we need to consider substantial changes to current referral pathways; the way in which we work with partners on establishing clear remits of the social work role; and implement systems that allow us to collect meaningful accurate data. Additional resources have also be agreed to support this change. The multi-agency strategic sub-group of the LSCB will be crucial to lead on implementation of any agreed remodel, and demonstrate high level buy in and commitment to tackling CSE within Lancashire. .

The future model will:

- undertake basic screening of all referrals received via CART and MASH (where CSE is a feature) and appropriately signpost – providing a Single Point Of Contract for all agencies
- establish and promote consistency of threshold and decision making
- develop stronger links with Well Being Prevention and Early Help services to provide interventions and support co-ordinated by a CAF from initial referral deemed to fall below level 4 of the Continuum of Need
- track all CSE referrals linking these with children missing and providing an audit and review function of return home interviews
- undertake strategy discussions on new referrals with police, health and education, linking in the locality CSE teams
- act as a central collation point and develop set of standards around missing from home return interviews
- allow CSE interventions to be delivered by specialist workers
- support CSC social workers to undertake CSE risk assessments within the locality as a referral vehicle to specialist CSE intervention
- provide specialist support and mentoring for CSC social care staff working with children at risk of CSE

- develop a CSE offer for children at risk of CSE falling within level 4 of the CoN
- Promote the standardisation of information sharing governance
- Source and commission specialist CSE training to skill up the CSE workforce
- Support County CSE manager to develop and implement appropriate case management recording systems to enable accurate recording of CSE work

Next steps

In order to implement the changes required, Lancashire County Council has invested further into its CSE provision. This is through the recruitment of an additional 19 posts, including: Managements posts, Social Workers, Support Workers, Performance Officer and Business Support staff.

An action plan will be presented to the LSCB subgroup and monitored via the LSCB and a Task and Finish Group establish to progress the plan. The implementation will require multi agency involvement to develop and embed an enhanced model in order to address the concerns outlined in this report.

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