

People Overview Committee  
Tackling Exploitation in Shropshire

29 November 2019

# Introduction

The exploitation of children and vulnerable adults, particularly with regard to criminal exploitation, has become one of the most complex challenges for the public sector.

There is a realisation that to tackle criminal exploitation and to protect children and vulnerable adults will require new ways of working.

# Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership (SSP)

Ivan Powell  
Independent Chair

# SSP activity to date

- Exploitation priority
- Establish joint sub group
- Joint conference
- Commissioned Independent Review
- Exploitation pathway
- Training strategy
- Strategic and operational connectivity

# SSP definition of exploitation

- Exploitation is a form of abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to: force, coerce, compel, threaten, manipulate, deceive, arrange or facilitate the involvement or travel (trafficking) of a child, young person or adult (including those with care and support needs) into any activity that results in financial or other advantage for the perpetrator or facilitator. Specific types of exploitation include:
  - Modern Slavery (including human trafficking)
  - Sexual Exploitation
  - Criminal Exploitation
  - Financial Exploitation
  - Any other Exploitation that enables services or benefits of any kind, including:
    - Removal of organs
    - Forced marriage
    - Illegal adoption
  -
- The victim may still be exploited even if the activities that they are engaging in appear consensual



# **Shropshire Policing Area Exploitation**

**Mike Nally**



## Definitions

### Child Criminal Exploitation

- An imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity
- In **exchange** for something **the victim needs or wants**
- For the **financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator**
- Through **violence or the threat of violence**. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual.



## County lines

- Gangs and organised criminal networks involved in **exporting illegal drugs** into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “**deal line**”
- **Likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move [and store] the drugs and money**
- **Will often** use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons



## Approach



- Exploitation is a key strategic priority for West Mercia Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in building safer and resilient communities
- Reflected in the PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan 2016-2021 and West Mercia Police force priorities.
- Contribute to joint adults and children Exploitation Sub-Group as part of the Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership arrangements
- Exploitation Pathway



## Approach

- Co-ordinate and chair the Shropshire Serious and Organised Crime Joint Advisory Group (SOCJAG) Partnership Forum.
- The purpose of the SOCJAG is to focus multi agency activity on the prevention, disruption and dismantling of Serious Organised Crime to the benefit of our communities which includes exploitation
- Produce the Serious Organised Crime Local Profile which is shared with partners. This profile identifies areas of vulnerability and risk within Shropshire
- Dedicated Local Organised Crime Team (LOCT) which focuses on exploitation investigations which encompass children and adults.
- LOCT work with Safer Neighbourhood Officers



**PROTECT**

Tackling serious and organised crime together

#Protect

**Pursue**

Prosecuting and disrupting those involved in SOC



**Prevent**

Stopping individuals from becoming involved in SOC



**Protect**

Increased levels of protection against SOC



**Prepare**

Reducing the impact of SOC where it occurs



We all have a role to play in reducing the impact of serious and organised crime and tackling those responsible.



## Structure

- Patrol Officers – Response and Disruption
- Safer Neighbourhood Teams – Problem Solving, Intelligence Gathering and Safeguarding
- Local Organised Crime Team – Investigation and Intelligence function at local level
- Force Serious Organised Crime Team – Investigation at Force and Regional Level
- Lead Responsible Officer – Senior Investigating Officer



## **Current picture**

- Children and young persons on CSE tracker approx. 150 annually
- A number of referrals around Criminal Exploitation through the newly formed partnership Criminal Exploitation pathway. These are individual cases mostly relating to drugs
- The most high profile investigation is the OCG into Oswestry which is around county lines where local children have been exploited by a criminal network from Merseyside. 12 children identified and safeguarded. This is subject to an OCG operation (local and regional assets) and partnership working with Children's Services and Force level resources.



## County Lines

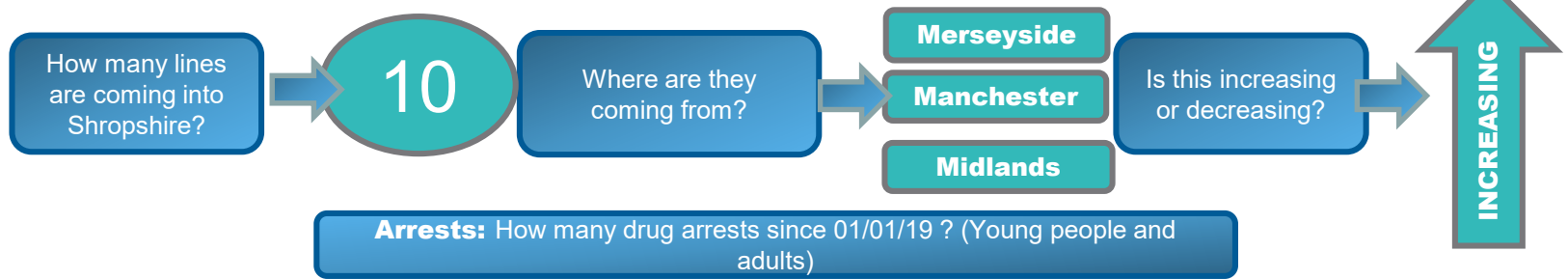
10 identified County Lines investigations in Shropshire with lines originating from Merseyside, Manchester and West Midlands

Investigations into Organised Crime Groups:-  
Two current investigations into mapped OCG's

Latest intelligence/tasking picture identifies the following locations as vulnerable:-

- Oswestry
- Whitchurch
- Wem
- Shrewsbury
- Bridgnorth
- Ludlow

# COUNTY LINES, DRUG AND GANG ACTIVITY DASHBOARD



	How many juveniles have been identified?	How many PWITS?	How many local juveniles?	How many out of force juveniles?	How many referrals to the NRM?	How many other children identified as at risk?	How many Children currently awaiting charging decision?
Youth	23	14	21	2	10	31	8
Adult	0	9	1				14

## Jeanette Hill

Service Manager Compass and  
Assessment Teams, Lead for Exploitation  
and Missing children

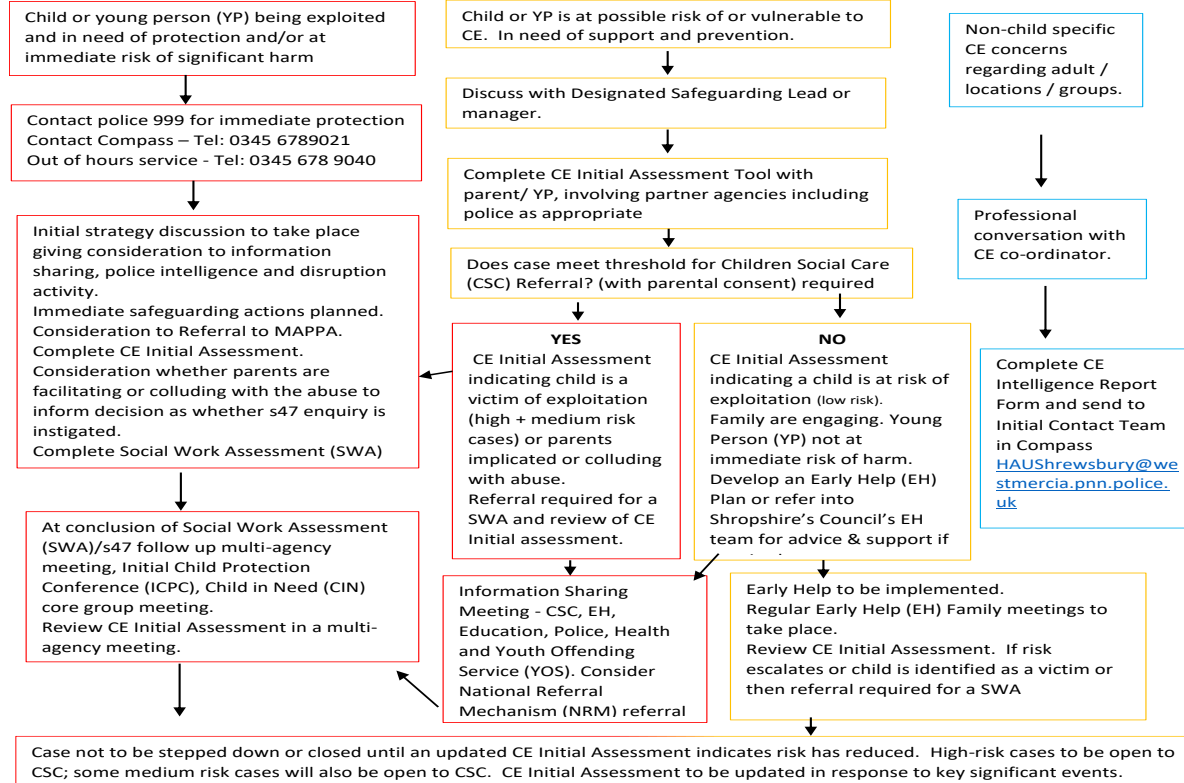


- 2019 – Independent Review
- 24.09.19 – exploitation pathway

## Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership

### Child Exploitation (CE) Pathway

Concerns that a child or young person may be at risk of child exploitation



Through course of Child Protection (CP) and Child in Need (CIN) core group meetings and Early Help meetings, details of perpetrators and location to be sent to Compass on CE Intelligence Report. Core group meetings to give consideration to addressing CE and disrupting perpetrators.

**Child Exploitation Panel**  
 Consideration of known cases, in respect of risk status and whether open to Children's Social Care (CSC) or not, victim/location/offender associations across cases.  
 Emergency/missing profile and how wider partnership can support prevention and disruption giving consideration to Intelligence Submission forms and referrals to NRM.

- Local Tasking Groups**
1. Consider intelligence & profile of CE in local area.
  2. Share information to support work to safeguard children & adults with care & support needs.
  3. Identify actions in respect of how the wider partnership can support prevention & disruption

- Other developments since September include:
  - Exploitation tracker
  - Exploitation triage
  - Monthly exploitation panel
  - Locality meetings

- We have only started to collate data around criminal exploitation since end of September therefore it is very early days, however currently our data shows:
- 7 tracked children at low risk of CSE
- 17 tracked children at medium risk of CSE (4 of these young people are subject to a CP plan)
- 4 tracked children at high risk of CSE (2 of these young people are subject to a CP plan, 1 a LAC plan and 1 a CIN plan)
- 3 tracked children at low risk of CCE
- 17 children at medium risk of CCE
- 2 children at high risk of CCE

#### Conclusion:

- 50 children who currently have an exploitation risk, we suspect it is much higher and as we continue our work we will be able to interrogate the data further.

# Reality for children

# Reality for children

Children in Shropshire have and are facing the following issues from County Lines involvement.

- Threats or violence and risks of physical assault from part of the gang or other gangs. Knives are encouraged to be carried by the gangs.
- Disassociation with education through fear of being caught out or needed by the gang, therefore loss of educational stability and reduced attendance.

# Reality for children

Children in Shropshire have and are facing the following issues from County Lines involvement.

- Carrying large amounts of cash or drugs on them through carrying for the gang, these are often stored in bags in bedrooms with parents/ carers unaware. Family fallouts due to concerns by parents/ carers.
- Increased drug taking or alcohol consumption as being part of the gang.
- Reduced involvement with peers and added risks of being trafficked to carry drugs from one area to another and in and out of schools.

# Impact on children



# Impact on children

For those students targeted or at risk of criminal exploitation involvement will experience some of the following:

- Positive encouragement to be part of a group, made to feel wanted in the gang.
- Given money, drugs, alcohol, mobile phones to become part of the gang.

# Impact on children

For those students targeted or at risk of criminal exploitation involvement will experience some of the following:

- Self belief in themselves through coercion and being part of a gang.
- Status amongst peers through associates they are with.
- Status through increased involvement within crime and association with crime, violence and carrying of weapons.

# What are schools doing?

- Schools across Shropshire are now concerned for the safety of their children and are now self funding courses, presentations to children and parents/ carers.
- Searches are taking place in schools to aim to reduce any illegal substances being brought into school.
- Parent/carers are being invited into schools to talk through concerns, but there are times when family members are involved in County Lines.
- Referrals are being made to highlight criminal exploitation risks.

# Shropshire Youth Offending Service

Lucia Malin

## Working together to support young people regarding Child Exploitation

- The youth justice service recognises that there is a need to be responsive to young people on the periphery of Child exploitation and County Lines at a much earlier stage in their journey with the criminal justice system
- The youth justice service have recently implemented revised joint decision making panels, attended by police, Children's social care, Early Help and liaison and Diversion to provide the young person with an opportunity to engage in a preventative and diversionary route
- Joint decision making panels focus on early identification of a child and families need, by viewing the young person as a victim and recognising what help and support they may require
- Early intervention, support and multi-agency working are integral to providing them with support as a victim or of Child Exploitation before a more formalised justice route is explored
- JDMP involves sign-posting, interventions, and referrals to our partnership agencies

## Partnership Working

- All young people who are victims of CE are referred to Children's social care, and this is integral to us engaging with young people and their families
- We work alongside Children's Social Care regarding Triage, Child Exploitation panel, SOCJAG, HRP and our JDMP process
- Assessment screening and intervention underpins our work with young people
- YJS deliver sexual health interventions with a specific focus on Child Exploitation, in which safe and healthy relationships, staying safe in the community and making positive choices are all individualised and tailored to the young person's need
- We also deliver AIM 3 sexually harmful behaviour intervention
- We work pro-actively with our police partners, early help, liaison and diversion and Children's social care to ensure we are being responsive to all young people who are at risk of Child Exploitation.
- Seeing the young person as a 'victim' and putting the child at the forefront of our practice
- The child's voice often tells their own story

## Young person's Journey with the YJS- good practice example

- YP came through JDMP for possession of cannabis offence
- Living on the streets using Class A drugs after a break down of family relationships
- Heavily entrenched in CE as a runner
- Was placed on a CP Plan to live with grandmother which was significant turn around
- Was receiving support intervention from Addaction, Children's Social Care and YJS regarding CE
- Received support from school to complete GCSE's
- Moved away from the area and formed positive and healthy friendships

“When times were tough and I was down, you never let me fail”.

## Working with the young person as a Victim of Child Exploitation

- Frontline practitioners should seek to ask the question 'how and 'why' a young person may be involved in CE
- Child trafficking and exploitation is often further exasperated by various types of control, suppression, fear- the majority do not recognise that they are being exploited
- Often the young person will have a positive NRM status indicating that they are a victim of Child Exploitation
- If a young person appears in Court for a possession with intent to supply offence, the YJS are minded to offer a bail support package to the Court, in which all safeguarding, risk and risk of harm is assessed and a tailored plan devised to support the young person if they are going to be in the community
- In court we speak to the defence and CPS and ask if they are in agreement with such a proposal to support any young people who may be at risk of or involved in serious organised crime
- prosecutors follow the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) guidance on the approach to prosecuting county lines offences, including a focus on the Modern Slavery Act 2015, and, where appropriate, consider whether there is clear evidence of the statutory defence.



# Next Steps

- Member to be able to proactively support awareness raising activity in their wards.
- To continue to awareness raise across Shropshire, in communities.
- Safeguarding Partnership to continue to lead the strategic partnership response to Criminal Exploitation.
- To evaluate and review recent school led awareness raising sessions and plan for future developments,
- LCS Social Care Recording - CCE flag and NRM flag -enable us to report on children at risk of CCE and those with trafficked status.
- Ensure quality information, guidance and support is available through signposting.
- Ensure the pathway enables effective referrals and sharing of concerns.
- Continue to collate and understand Criminal Exploitation in Shropshire, and respond to it in a co-ordinated way.
- Ensure effective training opportunities for all professionals involved in supporting those children and young people who have been, are being or are at risk of being Criminally Exploited.