



**To:** Business Co-ordination Board

**From:** Chief Constable

**Date:** 17 December 2014

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Business Coordination Board (“the Board”) with an update on Cambridgeshire Constabulary’s (“the Constabulary”) response to Child Protection (CP) issues.
- 1.2 The report aims to respond to concerns recently expressed by the Home Secretary to the Police Service nationally concerning Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and those findings raised by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) Child Protection inspection findings of another police force.

### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board notes the contents of this report.

### **3. Force Structure and Response**

- 3.1 The Constabulary trains all officers in safeguarding to equip them with the skills to recognise a safeguarding concern involving a child or young person. Safeguarding the vulnerable is a priority for the Constabulary and all first response officers have received refresher training this year. The Senior Command Team recognises the complexity of need when responding to offences against children and is committed to supporting positive outcomes for young people beyond a simple criminal justice outcome. The Constabulary’s response is therefore based on having first responders who can identify, take immediate protective action and refer onwards appropriately, a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which can share information and risk

assess effectively with partners, and specialist teams who have the skills to investigate and safeguard effectively.

- 3.2 The MASH is one of the few in the Country that operates across authority boundaries. It is based in two main operating hubs, at Peterborough and Godmanchester. Its key aim is to integrate services, share information and risk assess in a speedy and effective manner. It functions seven days a week, 365 days a year and involves multiple agencies. Police commitment to this is high with 22 officers and police staff deployed into the unit. Governance is provided by a Project Board headed by a Detective Superintendent reporting to the two Safeguarding Children's Boards.
- 3.3 The Child Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding Unit consisting of 33 officers who are all qualified detectives and undergo specialist training in responding to interfamilial abuse involving sexual, physical, emotional and neglect issues. They work closely with Social Work colleagues from Local Authority children's services.
- 3.4 The CSE Team consists of six specially trained officers whose responsibility is primarily the identification and response to CSE involving group or gang activity and they have an officer permanently deployed alongside Social Work colleagues in Peterborough. The team have the capacity to maintain long periods of relationship building with vulnerable young people to reach a point where young people see themselves as victims and disclose. This approach is recognised nationally as best practice to proactively identifying CSE.
- 3.5 The Rape Investigation Team (RIT) have 27 officers that are able to support both the specialist CP and CSE teams but also investigate offences against young people in their own right. The nature of offending against young people, particularly sex offending is complex and often involves relationships outside the established norm. The RIT are able to ensure that such offending does not 'slip through the gap'.
- 3.6 The Paedophile and On Line Investigation Unit has seven officers who investigate offences against young people in a cyber-environment. Every indecent image of a child is an image of child abuse and young people can be vulnerable to exploitation on line. The team work closely with Social Work colleagues locally and support the international effort to safeguard children through internet based abuse.
- 3.7 The Missing Persons Unit of unit of five officers responds to all cases of missing people but are co-located with the CSE team to ensure that no opportunities to identify young people vulnerable to CSE are missed. For that reason they also have an officer based alongside Social Work colleagues in Peterborough.

#### **4. Prioritising Child Sexual Exploitation**

- 4.1 In addition to the dedicated CSE team and emphasis on awareness training, the Constabulary has also committed significant resources to the proactive response to

CSE. This is best demonstrated by reference to Operation Erle at Peterborough which is now two years old and on-going. This is an innovative joint approach to CSE which has received national recognition and supported by the Association of Chief Police Officers nationally as best practice. This operation has seen significant custodial sentences for perpetrators, has engaged with over 110 young people and safeguarded a large number of vulnerable young people either as victims or potential victims.

- 4.2 The Constabulary also commits resources to the two Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB's) and are one of the minority of police forces that have an Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) as a full board member. The LSCB has a county wide CSE sub group chaired by a Detective Chief Inspector and this has delivered extensive prevention work across the county (notably the 'Chelsea's Choice' theatre group which has been delivered to all secondary schools).

## **5. Understanding the extent of Child Sexual Exploitation**

- 5.1 The Constabulary has a bespoke intelligence assessment for CSE but recognises that assumptions about, for instance, the ethnicity of perpetrators may be flawed. Therefore an internal CSE steering group, chaired by the ACC, monitors the Constabulary's response to CSE and identifies further proactive opportunities to learn more about this type of offending. Operation Erle, for instance, identified potential offending from across 12 different communities.

## **6. Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence**

- 6.1 The Constabulary has implemented the Victims' Hub which provides increased support for victims.
- 6.2 The Constabulary is also very active at the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference which focuses on victims of Domestic Abuse (DA) but very often involves sexual violence.
- 6.3 A Detective Superintendent attends the multi-agency DA and Sexual Violence Governance Groups for Peterborough and Cambridgeshire.
- 6.4 The commitment of specialist resources into this area of policing ensures that victims receive not only an effective investigation but a 'victim centred' policing response.

## **7. National Policing CSE action plan**

- 7.1 The national CSE action plan has been benchmarked against the countywide CSE action plan and no significant gaps in practice were found. The county plan now reflects the key recommendations from the national action plan.

7.2 A Constabulary Detective Superintendent is the regional representative on the national working group for CP.

7.3 All Serious Case Reviews are considered in detail by the ACC (Operations) Management Group to ensure that any learning by the Constabulary has been captured and are subject to significant scrutiny at an operational level.

**8. Summary**

8.1 The Constabulary is committed to a multi-agency response to CP and CSE and highlights the significant specialist resources dedicated to this important area.

8.2 The Constabulary is also committed to on-going proactive operations such as Operation Erle.

8.3 The Constabulary is driving forward the Countywide MASH and highlights that every referral involving a child or young person is assessed, triaged and information shared with partners speedily and effectively on every day of the year, including all bank holidays.

8.4 The MASH is again one of the few in the Country that aligns child protection referrals, vulnerable adult referrals and DA incidents to ensure a holistic approach is taken to achieve the best possible outcomes for young people.

**9. Recommendation**

9.1 It is recommended that the Board notes contents of this report.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

<b>Source Document(s)</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Detective Superintendent Gary Ridgway, Head of the Public Protection Department, Cambridgeshire Constabulary