

2020-2023

HIPS Child Exploitation Strategy



INTRODUCTION

The Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships (LSCPs) across the Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton (HIPS) areas, via the HIPS Executive Group, have made a strong commitment to collaborate and find common ways of working for shared and complex areas of child safeguarding.

This strategy sets out how all agencies will work together to ensure the most effective and coordinated response to identify and protect children (all those under 18yrs) at risk of exploitation both within and across the HIPS LSCP areas.

There are clear links between child exploitation and those children who are trafficked and/or that go missing. Agencies cannot address these issues alone or in isolation from other related safeguarding issues. The HIPS Executive is committed to securing a robust multi-agency response to children vulnerable as a result of, or at risk of:

- Missing from home or care.
- Exploitation - including child sexual exploitation (CSE), online exploitation, criminal (CCE) exploitation including County Lines, drug related harm, knife crime and serious violence; as well as other forms of exploitation that involve coercion and control such as radicalisation and extremism; forced marriage, female genital mutilation.
- Trafficking and/or Modern Slavery.

As such any reference to 'exploitation' should be read to include the above risk areas.

There is a HIPS Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Children Information Guide, that all practitioners who work with (or routinely come into contact with) children and families in are expected to be familiar with, that should be referred to for more information on these definitions.

Please note though that a focus on child exploitation should not be viewed in isolation from other forms abuse nor overshadow a focus on other safeguarding issues the child may be experiencing. All forms of harm in childhood and adolescence should be fully and appropriately responded to in line with the Working Together 2018 guidance.





VISION

Our vision is simple: to ensure that agencies (including adult services) understand their roles and responsibilities; to secure a coordinated, effective response to safeguard children and young people from harm as a result of all forms of exploitation; and to have a clear focus on the prevention of harm through identification, disruption and prosecution of offenders.



OUR PRIORITIES ARE:

- Providing a coordinated and effective multi-agency response to all forms of child exploitation across the HIPS areas.
- Enhancing our understanding of why children go missing and the most effective responses to keep children safe.
- Strengthening engagement with education settings and working in partnership to understand the specific risks associated with children who are missing from, absent from or not in full time education and whom may be at risk from exploitation.
- To strengthen our traditional safeguarding responses so they are effective in responding to the experience of children and young people of significant harm beyond their families.
- Strengthening partnership with family members/carers to support engagement in joint protection and management of risk.
- Understand and consider the use of disruption tactics to keep children safe
- To identify individuals, groups and organisations within the communities in which children live that have influence over/within extra-familial contexts; to develop relationships with these to ensure they become an effective partner in developing safeguarding responses to exploitation.
- Share information and develop an enhanced understanding of perpetrator networks and tactics
- Consider and identify our collective 'critical points' in children's lives and circumstances where partnership intervention can be best targeted to have significant impact.
- Increasing the knowledgebase of professionals involved in working with children who are at risk of or are being exploited to assist in the early identification and onward referral to relevant local services.
- Through LSCP networks, better understanding the lived experience of children who have experienced exploitation to inform our ongoing work at a strategic and local level.
- Embedding a methodology of reflective practice and shared learning to best understand 'what works' well in a partnership response to children at risk of exploitation.

In addition to the priorities outlined in this HIPS wide strategy, each respective LSCP will in parallel develop its own Delivery Plans for coordinated activity in response to the scale and nature of risks arising from exploitation within its own local geography and demographics. This will include the design of local services developed to respond to all areas of child exploitation and linked safeguarding themes, and mechanisms to identify and review individual cases of children who are, or are at risk of, being exploited. This may also extend to locally commissioned scrutiny and development work informed by local needs and evidence derived in each LSCP area.

PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING OUR STRATEGY

- We have the safety and welfare of the child at the heart of everything we do.
- We listen to children and their families and seek their views in the development and review of services.
- We recognise that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse.
- We focus our work on early identification, intervention and prevention as well as disrupting and bringing perpetrators to justice.
- We take account of the views expressed by children and their family circumstances when deciding how best to safeguard and protect the welfare of children.
- We scrutinise, challenge, monitor and review our work so that our collective effort has a positive impact and makes a difference to the lives of children and their families. We will achieve this by continually improving our performance and auditing framework.
- We challenge fixed / uninformed views and language and work in different ways to respond to the new techniques being used to identify, groom and exploit vulnerable children.
- We liaise with neighbouring authorities to promote effective information sharing and partnership working for the purposes of safeguarding children.





OPERATING FRAMEWORK

The HIPS Exploitation strategy focuses on five key themes, to support strengthened partnership working and a more targeted approach. These themes include:

- **Scrutiny and Oversight;** to evidence that the strategy is making a positive difference to the safety and welfare of children in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton
- **Understand and identify;** strengthen the identification and assessment of children at risk of exploitation.
- **Prevention;** raise awareness of exploitation issues across agencies, children and their families and the wider community.
- **Intervene and support;** improve safeguarding of vulnerable children deemed to be at risk of exploitation. Provide direct therapeutic support and access to specialist services.
- **Disrupt and Bring to Justice;** lead in disrupting perpetrator behaviour and bringing those offenders to justice by building an accurate and clear picture of local trends and networks.

SCRUTINY AND OVERSIGHT

Overall objective

To evidence that the strategy is making a positive difference to the safety and welfare of children in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton (HIPS).

How we will achieve this

- Regularly interrogate data relating to missing, exploited and trafficked children to develop an up-to-date understanding of the current threat, which is used to inform the multi-agency response.
- Undertake quality assurance activity where appropriate to assess partner agencies compliance with statutory guidance.
- Review our collective response to exploitation across HIPS and report progress against the strategy to the HIPS Executive Group on a six-monthly basis.
- Review the effectiveness of partners' responses to child exploitation to inform each LSCPs annual report.
- Share good practice following national reviews / research and local multi-agency audits and inspections.

UNDERSTAND AND IDENTIFY

Overall objective

To ensure that we have effective and well-established information sharing and risk assessment mechanisms in place to understand and identify those at risk of or experiencing any issues of exploitation.

How we will achieve this

- Work with local partners to ensure that our shared risk assessment tools for identifying and assessing exploitation risks/concerns across the multi-agency workforce are well understood and embedded.
- Promote consistency between partner agencies in reported occurrences of child exploitation.
- Use agreed engagement forums to learn from the experiences of / seek the views of children and young people in relation to exploitation.
- Promote the importance of information and intelligence relating to victim, offender and locations being shared effectively across the HIPS LSCPs.
- To work with colleagues in the respective Local Safeguarding Adult Boards to develop effective transition arrangements for those at risk of going missing, being exploited and/or trafficked when they turn 18, to manage ongoing risk and vulnerability.
- The development of a shared HIPS dataset focussing on forms of exploitation that is scrutinised alongside intelligence profiles developed by police to inform an up to date picture of the nature and scale of exploitation in the local areas.
- The sharing of learning from locally commissioned multi-agency reviews and scrutiny work (audits etc) to inform ongoing broader HIPS wide work to reduce exploitation.
- Working with our local delivery partners to ensure there is an effective response to children who go missing.
- Raising awareness across professionals, young people, parents and carers, residential and foster care settings so that all know how to recognise the signs and take appropriate actions to keep themselves and others safe.
- Identifying new trends or emerging themes of harm or need in children to inform the work of agencies / professionals across the HIPS areas.



PREVENTION

Overall objective

To prevent children experiencing any issues of exploitation in the first place.

How we will achieve this

- Coordinate message so that the public, professionals, children and families are well informed and able to recognise the early signs of children who are at risk of exploitation.
- Promote the need for staff in agencies to be professionally curious in this area of safeguarding, and, confident about the identification, prevention and disruption of exploitation risks.
- Continue to work with relevant LSCP subgroups to establish effective information-sharing mechanisms with front line services such as schools and health settings including learning from good practice.
- Develop effective information sharing mechanisms with faith groups and diverse communities, including the local business community, to promote increased understanding and response to exploitation risks.
- Work with those who commission or provide services to provide care to children, including transport services, to identify children at risk of exploitation and know how to report concerns.
- Listen to children and ensuring that they and their parents'/carers' views inform service design and delivery.
- Work with local delivery partners to ensure adherence to statutory duties in relation to missing episodes and children returning from missing episodes.
- Work with local delivery partners to address vulnerability when pathway planning at the point of children leaving care.





INTERVENE AND SUPPORT

Overall objective

To intervene and support so that the right support is available for child victims and adult survivors when this is required.

How we will achieve this

- Work with local partners to ensure that preventative/early help services have a robust awareness of exploitation issues/plans and are supporting those children who might be identified as at risk of MET.
- Work with LSCP commissioners to map access to specialist trauma and therapeutic support services to work with the child / family as necessary so that local agencies are clear on what is available, and, commissioners can consider any additional requirements at a strategic level.
- Ensuring that the workforce is aware of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and their duty under Section 52 of the Act to use the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to report individuals who they suspect are a victim of slavery and/or trafficking. That all children who are victims of trafficking (be that from another country to the UK or internally within the UK) be referred to the Independent Child Trafficking Advocacy (ICTA) Service.
- Work with LSCPs to ensure any themes arising from missing/ return interviews are shared across the HIPS partnership to build a stronger intelligence picture of local push and pull factors to inform service design and delivery.



DISRUPT AND BRING TO JUSTICE

Overall objective

To identify, disrupt and prosecute those who are intent on exploiting children.


How we will achieve this

- Produce a regular multi-agency exploitation profile including victims, perpetrators and hot spots to inform our collective response and interventions.
- Provide a vehicle for information and intelligence relating to victims and perpetrators to be shared and acted upon.
- Work with partners in the criminal justice process to ensure common mechanisms are in place to risk assess perpetrators.
- Promote the use of the disruption toolkit, including the use of civil orders, to maximum effect to assist investigations, restrict and manage offenders and support and safeguard victims/potential victim.
- Provide strategic coordination for any HIPS wide initiatives or campaigns targeting specific groups, e.g. the night-time economy, taxi drivers, parents and carers.

GOVERNANCE

All HIPS Executive partners are fully committed to the priorities and objectives outlined in this strategy. The operational delivery of this strategy will be undertaken by, and accountable to, each LSCP across their respective partnership. HIPS Executive partners will work with local delivery partners in each LSCP area to develop a local Exploitation Delivery Plan to monitor the local implementation of the strategic objectives outlined in this plan. Each LSCP will provide an update on progress and highlight any areas of good practice and / or challenge, to the HIPS Exploitation Group every six months.





MEASURING IMPACT

Local LSCPs will measure the impact of the implementation of their local Exploitation Delivery Plans and include this in their updates to HIPS Exploitation Group, and, their respective Annual Reports.

The HIPS Exploitation Group will provide an annual overview of exploitation across the HIPS area including an assessment of themes and trends informed by the analysis of partnership data, areas of success and innovation and areas of challenge and further development for partnership working. In addition, the HIPS Exploitation Group will produce a quarterly bulletin for multi-agency partners across the HIPS areas to aid communication of ongoing work and initiatives.