



A Strategy to Tackle and Prevent Child Exploitation in Rotherham

(Child Exploitation includes Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal Exploitation, Radicalisation, Modern slavery, Human Trafficking and Honour Based Violence)

2019-2022

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1. Introduction - The journey so far

In 2014 the publication of the 'Jay Report' (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham¹) highlighted a level of concern around organised child Sexual abuse in Rotherham that seemed to be on an unprecedented scale. Within Rotherham the RLSCB developed the previous CSE strategy '*The Way Forward for Rotherham*' (2015-2018)². This strategy reflected the agreed accountability and grip that the partnership wanted to demonstrate to ensure there were lessons learnt, that victims were heard and that there was a different 'way forward'. The key tenets were that the child was at the centre and the key objectives were to PREVENT CSE; PROTECT children; PURSUE perpetrators; PROVIDE support to victims – historical and recent and to ensure we hear their voices (PARTICIPATION).

'The Way forward' highlighted the strategic commitment as to how the Partnership would work together to address CSE in Rotherham in relation to historical and current victims. The delivery of this on an operational level is reflected in the development and evolution of the EVOLVE service. This comprised of a Multi-agency Service created to offer a preventative, investigative and safeguarding response to children at risk of, and who have been or are being abused through CSE.

In 2019 it has been five years since the publication of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham. The EVOLVE service, true to its name, has continued to evolve from an investigative team to a service that fully supports the Rotherham's 5 P's through partnership working. The EVOLVE team offers a co-working service for young people open to Children and Young Peoples' Services, that focuses on Trauma stabilisation as confidence around the understanding and grasp of CSE identification and assessment by the CYPS fieldwork team has strengthened. Co-located with Police, Health Partners and Barnardo's there is a real connection between supporting the investigation and providing support to work with families to keep young people safe, and to develop young people's skills and awareness around safe and healthy relationships. The recognition of CSE teams offering a co-working practice as the most effective way to support victims of CSE is identified in the 2014 Ofsted Thematic report³.

¹ Jay, Alexis (2014) '[Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham](#)'

² Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board (2015) '[Child Sexual Exploitation: The Way Forward for Rotherham](#)'

³ Ofsted (2014) '[the sexual exploitation of children: it couldn't happen here, could it?](#)'

For historical victims (between 1997 – 2013) there is Operation Stovewood, led by the National Crime Agency (NCA) The operation has demonstrated its success via the number of arrests achieved, the number of on-going investigations and the positive on-going identification and support of victims, and identification of perpetrators. The original estimate of historical victims of CSE by Alexis Jay in 2014 was 1,400; the latest figure from the NCA identified 1,523 potential victims. South Yorkshire Police lead on the investigations from 2014 onwards and work closely with the NCA to manage and support arrests. Operation Stovewood should not be considered purely a 'historical' investigation, as the profiles of the suspects (many of whom are still under 40 years of age) indicate that not only are past victims still at risk, but that there is a continuing threat to current and future generations of children.

Key in relation to both Stovewood and the EVOLVE service is the learning that we have continued to carry forward. This demonstrates an on-going tenacity to check and challenge ourselves and individual agencies and as a partnership to where we are in our understanding and response to CSE. A recent Multi-agency CSE Audit highlighted that there was no child found to be at risk of significant harm that had not been identified and responded to effectively. The existing structures have allowed a real focus on training and awareness, oversight of complex investigations, improving community awareness, work to reduce safeguarding risks related to repeat missing episodes and a focus on need led commissioning of services There has also been an agreed performance scorecard developed, supported by a sharing and generation of intelligence and information across the partnership to provide a focused safeguarding response. Enforcement and disruption activity has also been planned and evaluated by the partnership to support maximise impact relating to victim, offender and where appropriate, location. The cohort of young people involved with the EVOLVE service has stabilised over the past 12 months and there is a very low level of referrals back into the service. This highlights the overall positive impact of the safeguarding response, intervention and disruption.

There are areas that we continue to seek to strengthen; for example our understanding of the constantly changing impact of technology and social media on abuse and the immediacy of the harm and risk as a result. We are seeking to promote more child led prosecutions and consider how we understand the impact of the abuse, the trauma it leaves in its wake and to be trauma informed in both our language and practice

2. The Safeguarding Context

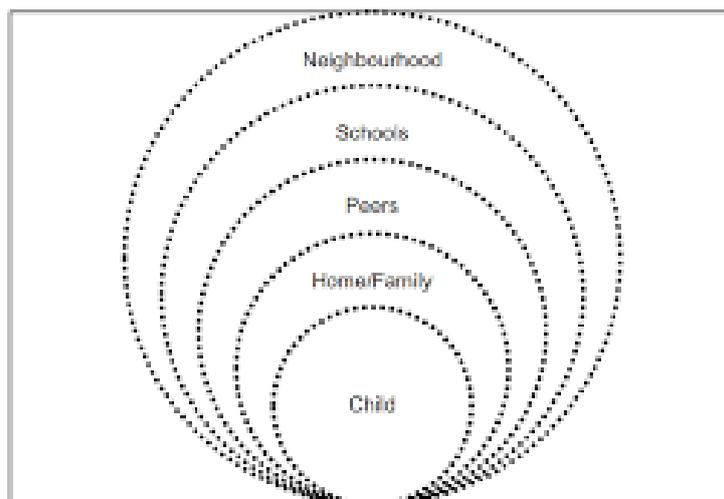
The development of this strategy reflects the continued learning journey across the partnership in Rotherham and the development in our understanding of CSE and other forms of exploitation. This strategy seeks to refresh the partnership commitment to ensuring that CSE remains a key priority, whilst also acknowledging the increasing impact and recognition of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and how this presents us with renewed

challenges around how we work with children and families to tackle the extra-familial risks that children face.

The partnership vision remains **seeing the child first – not the behaviour**; to consider the child within, but also beyond their home environment. This is an important message from Rotherham survivors of historical CSE; that we need to listen to and see the child. The partnership wants to offer an assessment of need and risk; to ensure an offer of support that includes a safety plan within their family and community, where it is safe to do so, in the knowledge that this supports better long term outcomes. This means there is a particular emphasis on pursuing perpetrators, intervening with and supporting families, and building safer communities.

On a National level over the past 5 years there has been an increased awareness and naming of the risks that sit beyond the family, within our communities, both geographical and online. In a world where young people form relationships quickly and are heavily influenced by their peer group, the safeguarding challenges in relation to child exploitation have increased and our understanding of them has developed. This includes CSE, Child Criminal Exploitation (also known as county lines), radicalisation, modern slavery, human trafficking and honour based violence. The risks posed to young people beyond their family are often also referred to as **contextual safeguarding**. This is an approach that *'...recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse.'* (Firmin, 2017)⁴

The diagram below highlights the contexts in which our children live and the layers that can support but also be the source of harm and vulnerability.



⁴ Firmin, C (2017) ['Contextual Safeguarding: an Overview of the Operational, strategic and conceptual framework'](#)

(Fig.1 Carlene Firmin (2013:47) Contexts of Adolescent Safety and Vulnerability)⁵

Child Criminal Exploitation (also known as County lines) has grown in public awareness over the past 5 years. There has been a growing recognition in relation to the exploitation of children as young as 11 by organised crime groups/gangs, with children used to transport and deal drugs as their age means they may go under the radar of the police more readily. This exploitative relationship has been developed by a variety of means; for example, befriending, grooming, threats to the child and their families, creating debt and acts of violence. In a similar vein to CSE, young people involved in CCE often struggle to see themselves as exploited, or to be able to seek help and support due to the threat posed and being enmeshed in gang culture/lifestyle. Like CSE, CCE requires a way of working that recognises that significant harm can be extra-familial and be linked to the community, associations and links beyond the boundaries of the area in which they reside.

3. Working together

The experiences that we have heard from the victims of CSE, the learning from the evolution of the EVOLVE partnership arrangements and Operation Stovewood, has provided the Rotherham Partnership with a learning and development experience not usually encountered by many other partnerships in terms of the scale and enormity of the concerns around CSE. This is the learning that we as a partnership want to apply to Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE).

This strategy seeks to acknowledge the clear links between Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal Exploitation, and exploitation into radicalisation and extremism. In addition, the Strategy will also consider Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriage, and Female Genital Mutilation and the preventative and protective role the wider community can play within these complex safeguarding concerns. The national research and our learning from working with CSE is that to ensure there is the right safeguarding response we have to not only consider the risks posed by the immediate family, but also the strong and often very influential links to the wider family, community and the role of culture in parenting norms and serious safeguarding issues. The importance of aligning this commitment at a strategic partnership level was also highlighted in a recent Serious Case Review completed by Newham LSCB in August 2018⁶. Following the murder of young male victim of CCE the SCR puts forward a call to all partners to '*Strategically and operationally realign work with young people at risk of CCE with CSE*' (Hill, p.53).

⁵ Firmin, C (2013) 'Something Old or Something New: Do Pre-Existing Conceptualisations of Abuse Enable a Sufficient Response to Abuse in Young People's Relationships and Peer Groups?' In M. Melrose and J. Pearce, *Critical Perspectives on Child Sexual Exploitation and Related Trafficking* (pp.38-51). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁶ Hill, N – on behalf of Newham Local Safeguarding Children Board (2018) '[Serious Case Review – Chris. Overview Report – August 2018](#)'

This strategy acknowledges that CSE and CCE both rely on a safeguarding approach that recognises the complexity and challenges in managing a risk of harm from outside of the family and that there needs to be a coordinated partnership response, that sees the child first, looks beyond behaviour seen as risk taking or criminal and seeks to consider the spaces and communities in which our young people live; understanding their network, what safety means for them.

The role of the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) - A contextual safeguarding approach leads the partnership to consider safeguarding in public spaces; this supports effective earlier identification of risks for groups and individuals and provides opportunities to disrupt and protect where effective intelligence from the police and communication between the Partnerships supports the focus of community safety plans to remain relevant and update to date. The previous CSE strategy and work plan clearly recognised the role of the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board in delivering these key objectives and this is an area of work that continues to be strengthened through its joint working with the CSE LSCB sub group, now reconfigured as the Child Exploitation Delivery Group, work together as a partnership to continue to improve effectiveness.

The role of Adults and importance of Transitional Safeguarding - Adolescents form a large proportion of those who are affected by exploitation. We know that contextual risks do not cease when a young person turns 18, and therefore it is key to ensure a role for the Adults Safeguarding Board within this strategy – to implement clear transitional pathways of support for vulnerable young people as they turn 18.

This document seeks to build on the work of the previous strategy in supporting a clear line of accountability in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation, and to build on this by utilising our learning to support an effective broader Child Exploitation strategy that aligns, where appropriate, objectives and activities to maximise the opportunities we have to PREVENT Child Exploitation, PROTECT young people from abuse PURSUE perpetrators of exploitation, PROVIDE support and promote the voices of the young people we seek to protect and promote meaningful PARTICIPATION.

4. Key Objectives and Actions

Rotherham will build on current momentum and work tirelessly to do everything we can, collectively, to:

- **Prevent** children and young people from child Exploitation through effective leadership, governance and a wider culture embedded within

organisations and communities that recognises the root causes of CSE, the signs and risk indicators and do all they can to tackle them

- **Protect** children and young people who are at risk of all forms of Child Exploitation as well as those who are already victims and survivors
- **Pursue**, relentlessly, perpetrators of child exploitation, leading to prosecutions of those responsible, and ensure there is effective risk management of perpetrators in the community and the region
- **Provide support** for survivors of Child Exploitation, recognising the importance of trauma informed practice, ensuring their needs are met
- Ensure the **participation** of all children and young people, their families and communities and community leaders, in awareness raising. To ensure their voices as well as the voices of survivors are heard and responded to in reviewing and coproducing services.

Annually, the Child Exploitation Delivery Group will revisit and review the work plan which sits beneath the key objectives. This will ensure action to develop and provide a targeted response to emerging themes from practice; including single, multiagency audit and or national learning reviews and research, are used to strengthen practice and outcomes.

The current 2019 - 2020 work plan focuses on the following actions:

Objective 1: Safeguarding Vulnerable Children (SRP Priority 1)

Ensure we have in place effective early identification services and intervention embedded within communities to minimise the occurrence and harm linked to CSE and CCE.

This will be delivered through:

- Embedding Child Exploitation awareness across Rotherham; the Partnership, Workforce, with families, young people, schools and communities. – Rotherham wide awareness campaign around CSE and CCE
- Developing communities to have a challenging and active role – ‘See Something, Say something’ strategy/campaign.
- Promoting the Early Help assessment as a key tool to support the early identification and intervention by universal and targeted services to reduce the likelihood that children will be harmed via Child Exploitation – ongoing learning and development offer around the EHA
- Development of a Child Exploitation competency framework for practitioners across the partnership workforce – ensuring there our workforce is trained to identify and act on early indicators around CSE and CCE and understand their role in the Safeguarding process.
- Ensure we focus on the right interventions at the right time – using audit and review to ensure that practice maximises early intervention and prevention – Multiagency audit
- Support workforce and community awareness of cyber links in relation to prevention around CSE, CCE, Radicalisation, FGM and Honour based violence.
- Use partnership data, including intelligence, to ensure there is targeted intervention in communities to disrupt and offer an early intervention strategy around CCE and CSE.

Objective 2: Support to Victims and Survivors

Ensure we review and evaluate the impact of the whole range of services for people affected by Child Exploitation

This will be delivered through:

- A clear comprehensive Multiagency map of all Services available for those at young people at risk of or experiencing Child Exploitation. – CAMHS Trauma Pathway – PCC Regional CCE project
- Contribution to a level of independent check and challenge around the effectiveness of current services in reducing Child Exploitation in Rotherham – Barnardo’s evaluation

and next steps for Trusted relationships – Development of Quality Assurance and oversight of commissioned services

- Ensure service development and the commission of any services is based on an established evidence (intelligence and data set)– including audit outcomes and service user feedback
- A key focus will continue to be around the development of bespoke support for survivors of abuse, recognising the significant long-term impact this trauma can have – CAMHS Trauma Pathway – EVOLVE Service – the role of Early Help Assessment
- Focus on services that strengthen families and their awareness of child Exploitation – in recognition that child’s outcomes are usually best met within their family network – Rotherham Family Approach across the partnership.

Objective 3: Learning & Development

Assurance that the right learning and development offer is in place around all areas of Child Exploitation across Rotherham as a community and the partnership

This will be delivered through:

- Development of a Competency framework around Child Exploitation to support consistency across the training offer across the partnership workforce
- Ensuring the Multiagency Training offer reflects developments in practice and research and supports effective identification, assessment and prevention or safeguarding where needed – to include all single agency training leads in a bi-annual Child Exploitation learning and sharing event to provide a joined up learning offer for all agencies, families, children and communities.
- Effective review of the learning offer and sharing of lessons learned - via multiagency audit
- Working with families and practitioners to improve community resources - especially around the use of technology and Child Exploitation
- A partnership review of the education offer to all young people around CSE and CCE – to ensure that we support the young people of Rotherham to have the best start in understanding healthy relationships and keeping safe on line.

Objective 4: Child Protection and Detection of Crime

To ensure that the processes and practice in place effectively protect children when Child Exploitation is suspected or confirmed, as well as effective working arrangements to ensure that perpetrators are identified and brought to justice

This will be delivered through:

- South Yorkshire Police's ongoing Child Centred policing.
- Ensuring that we are trauma informed through all of our processes; that we do not victim blame especially around how we talk about risk and young people. – review of the EVOLVE risk assessment
- Evidencing that children who are at risk of, or who are experiencing Child Exploitation receive interventions that reduce risk in a timely way. – The further development of the CSE multiagency scorecard to become the Child Exploitation scorecard – single and Multiagency Audit
- Providing evidence of effective prosecution and disruption activity in relation to Child Exploitation related crime in the borough. – Child Exploitation Scorecard and the Local Policing intelligence
- The on-going collection of service user feedback from children and families, considering the impact of practice on children, young people and their families as well as perpetrators of abuse

Objective 5: Operation Stovewood

Having in place the right strategic and operational arrangements to ensure that investigations around large scale historic abuse in the borough connect effectively to processes for current work with children and survivors

This will be delivered through:

- The continued review and refinement of processes and pathways so support effective sharing and recording of information about people who pose a risk, known to Operation Stovewood.
- For the Child Exploitation delivery group to continue to lead on ensuring the systematic learning from experiences of Operation Stovewood are embedded into current / future practice.

- Ensure we continued to engage with service users and communities to consider the wider impact of large scale operations and how we can improve practice.

Objective 6: Complex Abuse

To ensure that where there is concern around complex and/or organised abuse network that this is identified and understood, effectively managed, investigated and resolved

This will be delivered through:

- Through the provision of effective and visible complex abuse processes that all Multi-agency practitioners understand, and recognise the role they will have in this process
- That the Partnership supports effective learning from any complex abuse process

5. Definitions of Exploitation

For the purposes of clarity and understanding these are the key definitions as agreed across the partnership in relation to child exploitation.

Child sexual exploitation; *‘child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if their sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology’* (DfE, 2017⁷).

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse; children may believe they are in a loving relationship and do not always realise or understand that they are being abused (NSPCC, 2019⁸)

Child criminal exploitation; *‘Child criminal exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if*

⁷ Department for Education (2017) [‘Child sexual exploitation: Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation’](#).

⁸ NSPCC (2019) [‘Child Sexual Exploitation; what is child sexual exploitation?’](#)

the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology' (Home Office, 2018⁹).

Child Trafficking; child trafficking is defined as the *'recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt'* or a child for the purpose of exploitation (definition from the United Nations Palermo Protocol, ECPAT UK, 2017)¹⁰. Children can be trafficked for child sexual exploitation, benefit fraud, forced marriage, domestic servitude, and forced labour and criminal activity. Many children are trafficked into the UK however trafficking can take place within the UK (NSPCC, 2019)

The **Modern Slavery Act (2015)** categorises offences of slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking.

Whilst exploitation of children can take place in isolation (one-on-one or via the internet), the sexual and/or criminal exploitation and trafficking of children can (and often does) also take place in groups and/or gangs. Children may be victim to multiple types of exploitation, and as outlined throughout this strategy, there are clear links between different types of child exploitation – for example, a young person may be a victim of sexual exploitation, and criminal exploitation (see examples outlined below).

Radicalisation; refers to Home Office refers to Radicalisation as *"the process of adopting an extremist belief system and willingness to use, support or facilitate violence and fear as a method of affecting change in society."*

The Safeguarding and Radicalisation research report from August 2017 reflects that the *'Radicalisation of children and young people is an area of growing concern within the UK. Yet (as with much other harm dealt with by safeguarding and child protection services) the issue is complicated, not least because individuals who become radicalised do not follow a single pathway'*. The report recognises the similarities with CSE, but reflects that a bespoke response still needs to be in place to ensure effective disruption.

Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence; *'a forced marriage is where one of both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities or reduced capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage as they are pressurised, or abuse is used, to force them to do so. It is recognised in the UK as a form of domestic or child abuse or child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights'* (Home Office, 2018)¹¹.

Children who are missing: Missing is defined as *'anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established whatever the circumstances of disappearance and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be a subject of crime or at risk of*

⁹ Home Office (2018) ['Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: County Lines guidance'](#)

¹⁰ ECPAT (2017) ['What is child trafficking?'](#)

¹¹ Home Office (2018) ['Guidance; Forced Marriage. How to protect, advise and support victims of forced marriage – information and practice guidelines for professionals'](#)

harm to themselves or another’ (RLSCB Tri-X, 2018¹²). Further ‘missing children will be categorised as ‘absent’ if they are not at a place where they are supposed to be and there is no apparent risk’

There are identified links between **children and young people who go missing from both home and school** (and also children who are outside of mainstream education system – for example, attending pupil referral units) and child exploitation.

Contextual Safeguarding Over the past 5 years the University of Bedfordshire have been developing the concept of ‘Contextual Safeguarding’. This is defined by the Contextual Safeguarding Network¹³ as ‘*Young peoples’ experiences of significant harm from beyond the family*’ and highlights that a ‘*different safeguarding response is needed*’. This is noted to require the ‘*involvement of engaging with individuals and organisations that have influence around those contexts – community and public spaces, responses to crime and those who make the safeguarding decisions*¹⁴’.

6. Governance

The response to CSE has highlighted a clear need to ensure that there is not just a response from within the local Multi-Agency Arrangements for Safeguarding Children, but that there is a coordinated strategic response and oversight in relation to the role of early identification, prevention and disruption linked to victims, offenders and locations. These are key areas which are of interest to and within the priorities of both the Safer Rotherham Partnership and the Health and Well-being Board. There is also recognition relating to the added vulnerability of transition, from school to work, from childhood to adulthood and a clear acknowledgement that the risks from and impact of exploitation do not change or stop when a child becomes 18yrs of age and therefore, the Safeguarding Adults Board is also a key stakeholder delivering this strategy.

¹² Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board Procedures [‘2.3.1 Safeguarding Children and Young People who are Missing from Home and Care’](#)

¹³ <https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/>

¹⁴ Firmin, C (2017) [‘Contextual Safeguarding: an Overview of the Operational, strategic and conceptual framework’](#)

