



Northumberland County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 16 JULY 2020

Title of Report	Missing, Slavery, Exploitation and Trafficking Report (MSET)
Report of Cabinet Member:	Wayne Daley - Deputy Leader of Northumberland County Council, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Purpose of report

MSET is responsible for coordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people who go missing or are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), and/or trafficking. MSET is not about care planning but does have the added value to reduce risk and provide oversight of patterns and trends.

The MSET arrangement has been in place in Northumberland since the 15th March 2019. It covers both children and those young people in transition to adulthood. The meeting is chaired by Northumbria Police and co-chaired by Senior Management from Children's Social Care. The purpose of this report is to provide assurance of progress made to date and set out any future practice and service developments.

A report was last presented to the cabinet in January 2020. At that time, MSET meetings were taking place on a monthly basis, with a minimum of 8 young people on the agenda at any one time. These meetings were lengthy and there had been an unavoidable lack of consistency in chairing arrangements from Northumbria Police. Children's Social Care were in the early stages of adapting to the MSET process by ensuring that there was appropriate representation and commitment to the meetings.

MSET has been subject to scrutiny in March 2019 when we received a Joint Targeted Area Inspection and in January 2020 when we received the ILAC Inspection by OFSTED. The latter inspection ran concurrently with a formal review of the MSET arrangements by the NSCC Business Manager.

As a result of the above combined scrutiny, we received a number of recommendations. The development of these recommendations is set out in the action plan attached as an appendix to this report.

Recommendations

1. Members note the range of support being delivered.
2. Members to identify any other areas for additional scrutiny if required.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the JTAI Action Plan and to the living, enjoying, connecting and learning priorities included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021.

Key Issues

1. Previous issues
2. Progress to date
3. Moving forward

Background

1.0 Recommendations following the JTAI, ILAC & the MSET review, oversight of MSET has transitioned to the Senior Manager for Northumberland Adolescent Services who acts as co-chair alongside a newly appointed and consistent Northumbria Police Sergeant. This consistency has supported strengthening of our MSET arrangements significantly.

1.1 Governance of the action plan has been overseen by the Exploitation Subcommittee since November 2019 and significant progress has been made since that time. Progress is particularly notable in the below areas:

2.0 MSET Pre-meet

This meeting is held on a monthly basis, one week previous to MSET, It is attended by both chair & co-chair of MSET, the Police missing coordinator, NCC Exploitation Practitioner, Education and Performance. The purpose of the meeting is to consider all MSET's risk assessments and plans received that month. The focus has shifted to enhancing the disruption plans for those young people with a view to managing each identified risk and addressing support needs before they escalate. All cases benefit from the knowledge and resources of each agency in attendance. In cases where all support has been exhausted, young people progress to full MSET. Since we have strengthened the focus on preventative risk management within pre-meet, we have seen a significant reduction in young people progressing to full MSET. In the last calendar year we have held 13 pre-meet's and only 8 full MSET meetings.

3.0 MSET

3.1 The full meeting is held on a monthly basis, where there is a need for it to go ahead. In the last calendar year, 5 MSET meetings have been stood down. This evidences the success and workability of the newly implemented pre-meet procedures detailed above. By focussing on prevention and considering contextual risk, we are working to create safer communities for our young people to live in.

3.2 MSET representation The membership of MSET has been reviewed and now includes the agencies/roles below:

- Northumbria Police Safeguarding Team - Chair
- Children's Social Care NAS Senior Manager - Co-chair
- Northumbria Police Community Team/Harm Reduction Team
- Northumbria Police Missing Coordinator
- Child Sexual Exploitation Practitioner
- Education
- SORTED (Drug and Alcohol Service)
- Children and Young People Service (Formally CAMHS)
- Safeguarding Nurse (Northumbria)
- Northumberland Families First
- LAC Nurse
- CCG Named Nurse for LAC
- Adult Services Transitions Worker
- Sexual Health Lead
- Northumberland Fire and Rescue
- Northumberland Community Safety and licensing
- Probation

Additional members of the young people's care team will be co opted into the group as and when appropriate.

3.3 Mapping exercises are completed in respect of each young person discussed in the MSET meeting. This includes reviewing all information collated in social work records, alongside police intelligence, return home interviews and other key information which currently exist in silos. This information is collated to consider the young person, their peers, known associates, known locations, trends of drugs they are using and any other key risk factors. The map is a visual representation of that young persons contextual environment and allows MSET members to understand the risks posed to them by their environment. The document is shared in the MSET meetings to inform professional decision making and enhance our ability to disrupt any contextual risk. This exercise has been successful in encouraging partners to focus on contextual risk in a move away from conventional child protection procedures which are not successful in situations of exploitation and can feel isolating for parents (PACE, 2018; Dyke, 2018).

3.4 Proactive Disruption Based on information gathered in the mapping process, MSET has identified a number of addresses where young people have been harboured during missing episodes. We have therefore been able to evidence that these addresses are frequented by our top missing children and as such justified the need for Police intervention. In response we have secured resources from police and housing to attend these addresses alongside children's social care to undertake disruption and to educate homeowners as to the repercussions of harbouring.

3.5 Where young people are open to MSET or are at risk of exploitation, the police now allocate a Single Point of Contact (SPOC). These officers are based in Neighbourhood teams to link with the allocated social worker and ensure timely and coordinated information sharing, support and disruption. This information is shared with social care on a monthly basis and is recorded on each child's 'case summary'.

3.6 When young people are heard in the MSET meeting, an 'MSET flag' is added to their record on health, police and education systems to advise those who may be supporting them to the associated risks.

3.7 The Exploitation Practitioner role is temporarily based within NAS, this role will work to support the team's understanding of sexual and criminal exploitation. The exploitation practitioner will contribute to and support the formulation of disruption plans with a view to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of these plans.

3.8 Team Managers within Children's Social Care are now supported to review MSET documentation and consider the need for a strategy meeting prior to referral to MSET. Team Managers are supporting social workers to formulate disruption plans alongside the existing care plan to identify and manage risks early. The exploitation practitioner is available to support this process and will regularly attend strategy meetings to ensure plans address the risk of exploitation. Supporting documents have been distributed to support managers' ability to draw from disruptions plans which have been successful.

3.9 In partnership with Northumbria Police, the NSCC are undertaking a regional review of the MSET arrangements across all six Local Authorities. The review is being coordinated by Robin Harper-Coulson, Northumberland County Council NSCC+ Business Manager. The review is being carried out with the aim of creating consistency between all six Local Authorities MSET arrangements.

4.0 Data from June 2019 - June 2020

4.1 65 young people have been discussed at MSET pre-meet. 50.8% of this cohort were male, 49.2% female. The ages of those discussed range from 11-19 with an average age of 15.1. From the 65 discussed, 45 of those young people have not had a repeat referral into MSET. This is evidence that the risk management plans implemented by pre-meet are robust and effective. The main risk factors experienced by the young people considered by MSET were criminal and sexual exploitation, increased or worrying incidents during missing episodes, mental health issues, substance abuse issues and issues surrounding a breakdown of familial/peer relationships.

4.2 We have improved our data capture around all elements of missing, exploitation and trafficking, this enables us to better understand our local issues and make decisions about allocation of resources (training, disruption etc).

4.3 A data exercise has taken place to identify the next wave of young people vulnerable to missing episodes, sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation. Young people identified in this exercise will receive a file audit to consider the need for referrals to specialist servicers.

5.0 Missing from home arrangements for Independent Return Home Interviews (IRHI)

5.1 We recognise that missing episodes are a strong indicator of exploitation. When young people return home from missing episodes they are often at their most vulnerable, having experienced tension at home which has acted as a push factor, or external influence which acts as a pull factor. When young people first return we want to provide them with a platform to discuss their experiences whilst missing, therefore allowing us to better decide how to support them with a view to reducing the risk of further episodes. As such we have strengthened our procedures for IRHI's.

5.2 This has included introduction of a new daily tracking process which ensures responses to each episode are timely, measured and coordinated, offering evidenced risk management strategies such as follow up support and signposting to specialist services. This is further supported by daily senior management oversight to ensure continuous improvement in the delivery and quality of IRHI's.

6.0 Links with the Violence Reduction Unit

6.1 Northumberland County Council were successful in a bid for £15,000 via the Police and Crime Commissioner for the purpose of preventing the next wave of young people likely to be exploited. The Exploitation Practitioner worked with the performance team to identify 15 indicators which would make a child vulnerable to exploitation. There have been 119 children identified in Northumberland. Of the cohort identified, 52 (44%) live in the Blyth or Cramlington locality, 21 (18%) in the Bedlington/Morpeth locality, 18 (15%) in and around the Ashington locality, with 14 (12%) living in the north of the county and 9 (8%) in the west. Six sessions of groupwork were undertaken with the young people identified. The young people presented their learning in the final session through raps, art or spoken presentations. All young people who attended noted an increase in their understanding of online safety, healthy relationships and social skills.

6.2 The VRU, jointly with GetConnected, has undertaken a Locality Review as part of the national serious violence strategy. The project brought together front-line practitioners to gather information, knowledge and perception whilst building a qualitative picture of the key issues and drivers around county lines, gangs and serious youth violence. The report has been delayed due to COVID impact on delivery. On completion it will be considered by MSET members to inform allocation of resources.

6.3 Northumberland County Council, led by the Youth Justice Service have also received funding to focus on reducing criminalisation. This is based around the development of Out of Court panels which will consider the use of alternative options for young people. Alternative options will also be considered where young people have had previous cautions or convictions, using the police Outcome 22 option where appropriate. There have been seven panels to date in Northumberland, 37 young people have been discussed with 19 being offered a lower level intervention than they would have been prior to the panel (17 of those avoiding entering the youth justice system at all).

7.0 Reduce criminalisation of LAC

7.1 The work around the Reduction of the criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers will be considered in relation to each child and young person discussed at MSET. The decriminalisation of Looked after Children and Careleavers action plan which underpins this protocol. That is monitored through the Corporate Parenting Advisory Group , Multi Agency Looked After Partnership and the Youth Justice Management Board.

8.0 Training

8.1 In March 2020 NAS commissioned an accredited (Level 3) course 'Undertaking Missing Return Interviews for Children.' The training was offered to all staff who are completing independent return home interviews for young people. This training programme is fully aligned to the Department for Education's Statutory Guidance 2014. The course is designed to provide additional safeguards, early identification and support for vulnerable young people, providing a non judgemental opportunity for the young person to explore the context of the missing episode. A completion rate

of 100% was recorded (19 participants) and feedback was overwhelmingly positive for those who took part.

8.2 PACE Accredited Award in Child Sexual Exploitation training has been completed by the Exploitation Practitioner. This learning will be disseminated via various training programmes supported by this worker.

8.3 Between April 2019 and June 2020 the following training has been offered:

- 2 x training days have been undertaken for statutory and voluntary youth workers focusing on criminal and sexual exploitation. The training was completed by 32 delegates.
- A exploitation element has been added to the foster carer training programme.
- Training for 9 Enquiry Referral Administrators (Children's Services) has been undertaken with a focus on criminal and sexual exploitation.
- 519 professionals have accessed Criminal Exploitation e-learning via Learning Together (this platform is accessible to our multi-agency partners and has been largely utilised by our education colleagues)
- 233 professionals have accessed Sexual Exploitation e-learning
- 6 x classroom based multi agency County Lines courses have been delivered by Edge Consultancy (137 delegates)
- 2 x County Lines presentations have been delivered by Northumbria Police at NSP carousel events (145 delegates)
- 7 x Contextual Safeguarding sessions have been delivered(117 delegates)
- Vulnerability not age training which focuses on exploitation through the lifespan has been delivered to 38 delegates. This is a newly developed programme which has been added to the training catalogue and is open to multi-agency partners.
- 3 x Sexual and Criminal Exploitation sessions have been delivered to our ASYE academy of newly qualified social workers.

9.0 COVID-19

9.1 On 23rd March the government introduced 'lockdown'. Our commitment to supporting the most vulnerable young people in our communities has continued, albeit amended to virtual meetings.

9.2 National figures tell us that during lockdown, young people's screen time has gone up by a massive 200%. For most young people, the need for stimulation and validation is largely met through peers during social interaction, because this need is not being fulfilled at the moment they are at increased risk of online exploitation. Our referral and assessment data is representative of this, showing a notable increase in children's social care intervention as a result of online exploitation.

9.3 We initially experienced a reduction in Looked After Children going missing when lockdown was first imposed. This coincided with an increase in missing reports for young people not previously known to our service, largely due to parents reporting breaches of COVID restrictions to Police and not due to concerns for their children's physical safety. In the last four weeks we have seen our missing figures return to those recorded before lockdown was imposed. From discussion with young people we understand this to be directly related to a need for social stimulation with peers.

9.4 Whilst we have seen an increase in referral and assessments for criminal exploitation, it is unclear whether this is a direct impact of COVID or in fact a result of wider work with professionals to increase understanding of criminal exploitation.

10.0 In Summary

10.1 MSET arrangements have been in place since March 2019. Initial review occurred early into the process and identified a number of recommendations. Since this time, we have worked to address these recommendations and, to date, significant process has been made.

10.2 The number of young people who need to be heard by the MSET meeting has reduced dramatically as a result of newly robust risk management strategies practiced by MSET pre-meet. The percentage of young people re-referred into MSET is 31%. This further evidences the success in strengthened pre-meet procedures.

10.3 We have reviewed our core membership and now benefit from the additional resources and knowledge of multi-agency partners best placed to support disruption of exploitation, missing episodes, slavery and trafficking.

10.3 We continue to identify innovative strategies to identify young people in need of help and support and are working with the performance team to enable us to do this.

10.4 We continue to upskill the workforce to ensure our colleagues feel confident and skilled in their ability to work with child exploitation in all of its forms.

10.5 There continues to be healthy scrutiny, planning, action and review of all processes included in and beneficial to the MSET process.

Policy	Children and Young People Exploitation Strategy Children missing from Home Policy Children missing from Education Policy
Finance and value for money	N/A
Legal	Children Act 1989,2004 Impact on licensing Includes contextual safeguarding GDPR
Procurement	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Property	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Risk Assessment	Additional risk assessments are routinely initiated as a result of the MSET process
Crime & Disorder	Impact in reduction in crime figures for young people Impact in escalation of crime figures for the perpetrators of exploitation/harboursing/trafficking
Customer Consideration	Other residents are given consideration within the MSET process via referrals to adult social care or external agencies. Community disruption works to create safer environments for all residents of Northumberland.
Carbon reduction	Reduction in carbon footprint due to virtual meetings.
Health and Wellbeing	The MSET process is designed to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for young people.
Wards	The MSET has a positive impact on all wards, children and young people from each locality receive this service.

Background papers:

MSET stages 1-4

Stage 1 (referral)

Stage 2&3 (risk matrix and disruption plan)

Stage 4 (review risk matrix)

MSET Action Plan

Anonymised Action Log from Pre-meet

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

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