

Briefing Paper to the Early Support & Lifelong Learning**Wards: All****Overview & Scrutiny Commission (O&SC)****9th December 2019****Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing & Trafficked (VEMT) Children****Briefing Paper of the Assistant Director Safeguarding on behalf of the
Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Family Services****1. Purpose of the Briefing Paper**

This report provides the Commission with an update on the work across the partnership in Hull to support vulnerable, exploited, missing and trafficked children. It will provide an update building on previous information and clarifying any changes that have been made in order to better respond to children and young people at risk.

2. Background

Previous reports to the Commission have described the progress made up to September 2019 and have discussed some of the areas for development in the partnership work that is taking place with children and young people across the city. This report will build on that information and discuss on-going progress.

3. Children who go missing

- 3.1 The discussions with children and young people who go missing have become a key factor in the early identification of other risk factors and ensuring that where additional support is identified as a requirement, this is either provided during the course of the process or appropriate referrals are made to services which can provide this support.
- 3.2 Every child reported missing is offered a return discussion, (return home interview). Only in exceptional circumstances is a return discussion not offered as stated previously.
- 3.3 The recording of missing episodes and return discussion is regularly reviewed to ensure that information is fed into the system as quickly as possible and as much information as possible is available to professionals in order to safeguard a child.

- 3.4 Responses to missing children/young people are offered as quickly as possible but in a way that works best for the individual. Professionals working with young people following a missing episode aim to support them to understand the support available, consider safety planning of their own and ensuring that options for follow up discussions and work are made clear to each young person. Where children and young people decline to talk to a professional following a missing episode, other options are made available through a range of services including schools to ensure that there are other efforts to provide advice and information to the child/young person.
- 3.5 It is noted that the number of reported missing episodes remains high as shown in the table 1 below. However, the number of young people these relate to is usually approximately half the number of episodes recorded each month. There is an increase in first time missing episodes for a range of children, but there remain a number of young people who go missing several times a month, with a small number who go missing several times a week despite the support in place.

Month	Recorded missing episodes	Number of YP reported missing	Return Discussions completed
August 2019	142	69	128
Sept 2019	194	99	137
October 2019	223	95	181

Table 1: Missing Episodes and Return Discussions.

- 3.6 The difference in the number of return discussions that took place and the number of episodes is accounted for by number of episodes declined, multiple episodes in quick succession resulting in only one discussion or where an offer was not considered necessary or appropriate. For example; a very short time as missing or another Local Authority having responsibility and not requesting support from Hull services.
- 3.7 The number of missing reports continues to increase and Hull's level of missing reports is higher than all of the other areas in the Humberside force area. Going missing has become an immediate response for a large number of children experiencing difficulties either at home or school. In addition, children and young people in the Local Authority children's homes are linking in with each other and going missing together and in some cases there have been clear indications that some young people are influencing others to go missing. The Homes Managers have had a meeting to consider ways to address this and the monthly missing panel will be focusing on this issue moving forward with plans for additional support to the homes that can be provided by police and other partners.

- 3.8 For children not open to specialist services, the teams involved in the return discussion process are ensuring follow up work is considered in all cases where appropriate. This includes REFRESH, Youth Service, VEMT missing persons coordinator and Hull Youth Justice Service.
- 3.9 Work to provide successful responses to children and young people who go missing has continued. However there will be ongoing review of the work undertaken to ensure that standards are maintained and continue to improve.
- Regular quality assurance of return discussion forms, as outlined in the last report, has allowed pattern and thematic issues to be identified. Issues highlighted following quality assurance has been directly fed back to the trainers to allow them to cascade this to staff during training sessions. This allows training to be reviewed and updated accordingly.
 - The findings from the Quality Assurance have been shared with team managers of the staff completing the return discussions to enable conversation in supervision, identification of training needs and inclusion in Personal Growth and Development Reviews. The desired outcome is to improve quality, encourage curiosity and additional effort is made to encourage children and young people to have trust in the process with an overarching result of identifying risk as early as possible.
 - Developing how we work with children who go missing and the return discussion offer, every child who has accepted the opportunity to have a discussion is given a follow up call to provide them the opportunity to give feedback on their experience. It is hoped over time this feedback will assist in developing creative ways to meet our statutory duty in ways that work better for children and young people. Attempts to gain feedback have been challenging and the scale of the task has proven difficult but the VEMT Co-ordinator is continuing to focus on these developments.
 - The weekly missing meetings have been reviewed and redeveloped with the first full day monthly missing panel taking place on the 25th November with specific focus on a number of young people who go missing regularly or where risk is increasing as well as those where it is felt that with early intervention we can reduce the likelihood that risk will increase. The meeting will ensure a multi-agency management oversight of the children on the agenda, additional support for children's homes and sharing of ideas for ways that all partners can work together to manage the risks linked with children who go missing.
 - With support from police and other partners, it is hoped that we will offer some specific support for staff and young people in our children's homes around assisting them to understand the processes that are initiated once they are reported missing, the dangers of being missing and the increased risk of exploitation. This is currently under negotiation with the police and will work alongside the review of the missing seminars which have not been successful due to lack of promotion and clarity about responsibility for the task from police. The VEMT Team Manager and Co-ordinator will continue to pursue this development in the new year on the basis that early intervention and awareness raising is key.
 - Briefings have been provided to some of the children's homes with the intention of rolling this out to all of the homes. This has enabled members

of the VEMT team to ensure that all homes staff, including new staff, are aware of processes, responses to missing, how information should be recorded, which tasks various teams or individuals are responsible for and allowed an opportunity for staff to ask questions and clarify uncertainties to ensure our processes are more streamlined. This has had an excellent response so far and has led to a review of the forms used for various tasks associated with missing children and the training that is provided.

4. Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Activity – CSE & CCE

4.1 The updated MACE process is working well although the CCE lead has recently changed and the last MACE cycle did not include any police representation for the CCE element of the discussion. This has since been addressed and a new lead has been identified and will be available for the next cycle. As child sexual exploitation is dealt with by the police CSE team, it is important to have the right police personnel to consider the CCE risks and any overlap with the ongoing work within the force around OCG, county lines, local drug dealing and other criminal activity where children or young people are potentially being exploited.

4.2 Between 1st August 2019 and 31st October 2019, 31 young people were discussed at MACE: 12 females, in all cases the main risk was considered to be CSE; 19 males, in all cases the main risk was considered to be CCE. Information about 23 suspects or 'adults of concern' was shared by Humberside Police, not all of the adults were suspects linked to young people in Hull but were linked to abuse in the East Riding – this information is important for cross border purposes as the potential to enter Hull is an issue and services need to be aware of the information for monitoring purposes. The information about suspects enables discussions about the range of civil and criminal disruption tactics available to the partnership. Two adults were female. It is noted that a number of these suspects are linked to operation Marksman, an ongoing investigation into the historical sexual exploitation of females in Hull and a number of the identified victims are from the East Riding of Yorkshire and some are now young adults. One confirmed victim resides in Hull and one possible victim who hasn't yet disclosed any crimes. A number of arrests have been made as a result of this investigation and enquiries continue.

4.3 There has been a continued increase in the number of children being identified as at risk of CCE and this reflects the work (briefings and updates) completed on raising awareness of 'county lines' and criminal exploitation. This has also accounted for the increase of boys referred to MACE. Work to understand the CCE problem in Hull is continuing. Professionals are also reminded to consider the cross over from CCE to CSE and vice versa and this should also be considered when looking at the level of risk for each child. Hull's VEMT team continue to be invited to attend a range of OCG (Organised Crime Group) meetings along with a range of other partner agencies to ensure more consistent information sharing and monitoring of

what is happening for young people at risk of criminal exploitation. This process continues to evolve and the East Riding Exploitation Coordinator has since joined these meetings. Local Police Teams and PCSO Teams have also been undertaking visits to speak with parents of young people involved in criminality and anti-social behaviour to ensure they understand the potential CCE risks.

- 4.4 Identifying suspects of CCE has been problematic and work to address this gap is progressing. There are currently 3 named suspects/persons of interest on the MACE agenda for CCE. Work in this area is continuing.
- 4.5 The VEMT Team Manager and the East Riding Exploitation Co-ordinator work together once a week at Clough Road Police Station to ensure that communication around at risk and missing children is very timely given the close links to Hull for a number of young people living in the East Riding.
- 4.6 West Park Week of Action took place in October 2019. This focused work successfully allowed a range of services to engage with young people using the park, gather intelligence, offer advice and gain views on how the park could be made safer for the young people using it as a place to congregate and (in their words) 'hang out and chill'. The work was well received by the majority of young people we engaged with over the week. A brief report of the impact and some recommendations will be provided once all of the services have had an opportunity to give their input. Following the action week, Tommy Coyle's Box Clever Bus has started a six week programme in the park this month to offer young people an opportunity to access some diversionary activity building on the sessions they offered during the week of action. The Parks Manager updated at the November 2019 MACE meeting that there had been some reduction in anti-social and problematic behaviour in the park since the week of action, although it should be noted that the weather is worsening. A meeting of services and teams that took part in the action week is planned to look at how we can offer multi agency outreach work more frequently and reaching a range of locations across the city, including the parks. In addition it is planned that focused weeks of action can be planned 2-3 times per year at various locations.

5. Next Steps & Recommendations

- 5.1 That the O&SC notes the report
- 5.2 That the O&SC continues to receive updates on progress in tackling these contextual safeguarding issues.

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Background Documents: None

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