

Child Exploitation Multi-Agency Audit
December 2024

The audit group met in December 2024 to undertake a multi-agency exploitation audit for the Children's Partnership. The records of five children were reviewed to consider how effectively organisations within South Gloucestershire identify and respond to child exploitation in accordance with the Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Practice Principles. This learning brief outlines the strengths and areas for development plus some themes that were identified. In addition, the actions log tracker which is maintained by this group was updated based on identified areas for development across the Children's Partnership.

Read more about the TCE Practice Principles here

8. Create safer spaces and places for children and young people

- Strengths:**
- GP continuity agreed for a child.
 - Safe space created by Educational Psychologist for a child to share their views and feelings.
 - Child Abduction Warning Notice (CAWN) served on an adult to keep a child safe.
 - Creative approaches towards creating safe spaces for instance, children going out for food with their worker, conversations in the car, access to sports and tapping into a child's interests.
- Areas for development:**
- Child not seen alone with GP.
 - Hard to identify any safe space for one child.

1. Put children and young people first

- Strengths:**
- Evidence of practitioners working in a child centred way and displaying persistence to build relationships with children.
 - Lots of examples of practitioners understanding children's particular communication needs.
 - Assessments were holistic.
 - There was a single point of contact at college to support a child.
- Areas for development:**
- For one child, changes of school placements, permanent exclusion and unidentified learning needs may have increased vulnerability to exploitation.
 - There was an example of multiple changes in workers due to various step ups and step downs in children's services.

2. Recognise and challenge inequalities, exclusion and discrimination

- Strengths:**
- Use of adapted resources suitable for children's individual needs.
 - Evidence of workers advocating for children, especially in schools.
 - Good join up between adults' and children's services evident at point of transition for a young person.
- Areas for development:**
- There were examples of cultural and identity misunderstandings by workers and these had an impact on children's engagement with services.
 - Although there were relevant flags on children's health records, sometimes their backgrounds or circumstances were not taken into account.
 - There were examples of children disaffected by education and increased vulnerability to exploitation.

7. Approach parents and carers as partners, wherever possible

- Strengths:**
- Inclusion of parents within practice and assessments.
 - Valued relationship built with a parent and this helped to reduce risk of harm to their child in the community.
- Areas for development:**
- Gap in working/ engaging with fathers, most references were about mothers.



3. Respect the voice, experience and expertise of children and young people

- Strengths:**
- Executive Skills Questionnaire used with a child, captured their views clearly.
 - Direct quotes by children evident throughout agency records.
 - Working at the child's pace and recording body language as communication evident.
- Areas for development:**
- Missed opportunity to include a child in their safety planning.
 - Police could have made more persistent efforts to build a relationship with a child.

6. Be curious, evidence-informed and knowledgeable

- Strengths:**
- Curiosity about lived experiences of children.
 - Use of various tools to support practice.
 - Gentle curiosity exercised rather than interrogative approach when working with a child.
 - Evidence of use of the National Referral Mechanism where relevant.
- Areas for development:**
- Evidence of some gaps in curiosity and the Exploitation Identification Tool not being used consistently.

5. Recognise and respond to trauma

- Strengths:**
- Clear understanding of how lived experiences have impacted on a child's behaviour and development.
 - Flags on agency records highlighting vulnerability.
- Areas for development:**
- Used of victim blaming language evident on children's files at times.
 - Limited consideration of impact of low level neglect on children's vulnerability to exploitation.

4. Be strengths and relationship-based

- Strengths:**
- Persistence in relationship building with children demonstrated by workers.
 - Flexibility exercised by workers in adapting their practice to child's individual needs.
- Areas for development:**
- When work is time limited, there are examples of workers not being able to build a positive relationship with a child.



Keys Themes & Reminders

Be mindful of about the language and phrases you use when speaking and writing about children who you are working with for instance, instead of describing a child as 'hard to reach' try 'seldom heard'. Use this guide for further ideas:

Use independent interpreters/ translation services when English is not the first language of a child or their family. Do not assume understanding of English.

"Ask me about my life, what is important to me and about my hobbies and interests. These things make up who I am. Consider these when making decisions about my life."



Click for resources to support exploring identity with children

TRAUMA-INFORMED WAYS OF WRITING ABOUT A YOUNG PERSON

- Situate their actions within a wider **CONTEXT**
- Don't assume a **MOTIVE**
- Are you writing with curiosity and **EMPATHY?**
- DESCRIBE** behaviour but don't blame
- Start with their **STRENGTHS** and use language that humanises
- Does your writing express **HOPEFULNESS** for their life?

adults have befriended him and he may remain vulnerable to exploitation whilst he seeks to meet his relational needs

he does not feel able to engage right now and we have not yet identified a way that feels safe for him

her behaviour may indicate that she feels unsafe in her environment

her behaviour could seem challenging for the adults around her until she is settled in her new placement

independence and self-reliance have been important strategies for his safety, so we need to be patient as he learns to trust

the is befriending dangerous adults

she is putting herself at risk

she refuses to engage

her behaviour in new placement is very challenging

they are a risk to themselves

he refuses to trust anyone

their behaviours appear to demonstrate the challenges they face in feeling and acting safe.

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- Tips for developing a trusting, strengths-based relationship with a child:**
- Apply the principles of Consistency, Predictability, and Reliability (CPR).
 - Recognise key anchor points for a child for example, using the same greeting, providing the same food if offered and using the same meeting structure for each session.
 - Use Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy (PACE) to build trusting relationships with children.

Remember to consider and explore how best to engage and work with fathers. Click on this box for further resources to support your work.

Consider how to create safe spaces and places for children and young people using these resources to help:

- Online Safe Spaces
- Belonging Toolkit
- MindJam Benefits of Gaming

Agencies involved in this audit were:
 YJS; Children's Services; Safeguarding Advisor for Education; Police; VRP; CAMHS; BNSSG ICB on behalf of GPs; BACE; Educational Psychology; Probation; Pathways Learning Centre; Unity Sexual Health