

The Local Safeguarding Partnership's response to the Serious Case Review for Child C

26 May 2020

Introduction

The Serious Case Review for Child C is about the murder of a 14-year boy who was Black British of African Caribbean heritage and had been living in Waltham Forest for approximately 9 months before his death in January 2019. One 19-year-old was found guilty of his murder on the 11th December 2019 and has subsequently been sentenced to life imprisonment.

Safeguarding Adolescents in Waltham Forest

In Waltham Forest the Strategic Partnership has been working together on this challenging agenda for over six years and while progress has been made, we recognise there is more to do. The WFSCB recognises both the complexity of safeguarding adolescents and the need to have a dynamic strategic and operational response that is live to the changing landscape and can reflect, review and change as required. (Safeguarding adolescents includes Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB), Child Missing Education, Home or Care (CM/E), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and peer on peer abuse etc.)

The Violence Reduction Partnership, which uses a public health approach to tackling all forms of violence has provided the framework for further development and enables some of the challenging conversations to take place about how we can improve our practice and outcomes for children being exploited and recognising the connected issues of violence against women and girls, serious youth violence, and organised crime groups etc. There are several different working groups that are focused on different but connected areas of work including training and development. This review and the lessons learnt will be used to refresh and bench mark all the work that is being undertaken.

As discussed in the Serious Case Review (SCR) the work around safeguarding children from exploitation by organised crime groups is complex and ever changing. It is imperative that agencies keep up with the changing dynamic. It is 15 months since Child C was tragically murdered and the partnership has already begun new areas of work and made changes to existing work which is being influenced and informed the lessons learnt during the process of this review.

We have an ambitious agenda, which has now been further strengthened by the learning from this review. The action plan which is overseen and monitored by the Adolescents Safeguarding and Resilience Strategic Group had existing actions in relation to:

- Prevention work in primary schools
- Development of a "single view of risk" that uses key data including school attendance and exclusions, youth offending, changes of address to enable practitioners to have a more comprehensive view of the young person and risk factors and context
- Direct work including community mentors and Barnardo's "Night watch" programme
- Provision of specialist practitioners across the partnership, who work directly with practitioners to provide case by case discussion and advice
- Improving relocation by housing, of families in and out of the borough
- Developing a Youth and Family Resilience service, bringing together two key aspects of adolescent risk (offending and missing education)

As a direct response to this report we are undertaking new work and the headlines of this is outlined below. The work falls into two main areas, local partnership working and national policy. The detail of this work has been incorporated into the existing action plan for the strategic group.

Recommendations relating to areas of local partnership working

Recommendation	Changes already in place	Changes planned
<p>Recommendation No. 2 The WFSCB should revise its procedures, guidance and training to embed the concept of 'reachable moments' in the safeguarding of adolescents in Waltham Forest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing pathway from the major trauma centre at the Royal London Hospital (RLH) into MASH has been reviewed and strengthened to provide a reachable moment to children affected by gun and knife crime • New all-age multi-agency Exploitation and Risk Panel has been formed by merging existing panels who had oversight of children suspected of being exploited by organised criminal groups, children missing from education, care or home and children being sexually exploited • New service to provide an urgent response within 24 hours of child being identified through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New section on reachable moments added to practitioner's guidance document • New training material developed for rollout across the partnership in an inter-active resource pack • Rollout of training material through practitioners' network • Video being developed by young people affected by exploitation for practitioners on reachable moments and drug debt bondage • New pathway and service being finalised with Whipps Cross Hospital and the MASH to provide direct support to people presenting at Emergency Dept. affected by violence • Strengthen pathway being developed in Police Custody to ensure all reachable moments are maximised • Adopting the new Contextualised Safeguarding Implementation Toolkit • A dedicated new Youth and Family Resilience practitioner will be placed in the MASH to facilitate information sharing with YOS and provide additional advice and support.
<p>Recommendation No. 3 Waltham Forest Council should review the current arrangements for recovering children from outside of the borough</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly commissioned Rescue and Response service has consolidated the "rescue element" - see recommendation 5 below. MOPAC to re-issue guidance to all highlighting that the 50 miles radius is no longer in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be further explored by the WFSCB BMG to identify further areas that need to be developed

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<p>Recommendation No. 4 The WFSCB should ensure that children who are returned to the borough are brought back by adults with skills relevant to working with children who are being criminally exploited.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jointly commissioned Rescue and Response service has consolidated the “rescue element” - see recommendation 5 below 	
<p>Recommendation No. 7 WFSCB should audit the use made of case discussions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have revised the audit process to ensure appropriate focus on the use of case discussions and have added an additional question regarding multi-agency case discussion meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will add a new section highlighting use of multi-agency case discussions to practitioner’s guidance
<p>Recommendation No. 8 In the light of the outcome of this audit WFSCB should review its current arrangements for multi-agency case discussion in safeguarding cases.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will review the audit findings regarding use of multi-agency case discussions from all agencies in the cross-cutting learning and improving practice forum and ensure that we take appropriate action
<p>Recommendation No. 10 WFSCB should review involvement of Housing Services in case discussions where this is needed.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WFSCB is bringing together senior managers and front-line safeguarding leads in Housing and MASH to review joint working practice and implement changes to address gaps.

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<p>Recommendation No. 11 The WFSCB should consider including within their programme of planned audits an examination of the specific learning from Child C’s case, to identify if the learning has been embedded</p>	<p>The partnership conversations within our Violence Reduction Partnership have already clearly identified and actioned important innovations that are expressly informed by this learning, for example in relation to drug debt</p>	<p>WFSCB will continually test for embedding through surveys and focus groups with practitioners and feedback from the practitioner’s network and multi-agency training, and respond accordingly</p>

Recommendations relating to areas of national policy

Recommendation	Response
<p>Recommendation No. 1 – complete</p> <p>The WFSCB will be referring this report to the Department for Education, regarding national policy on Elected Home Education</p>	<p>WFSCB has shared this finding and discussed the issue with the DfE and received the following response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Education, in many cases is appropriate, well-delivered and involves the parents in considerable sacrifice. • In recent years, however, there has been a significant increase in the number of children being educated at home and there is considerable evidence that many of these children are not receiving a suitable education. There is also a safeguarding issue around the oversight of home-educated children, though there is no evidence of an increased risk compared to children who attend school. • Nevertheless, a child being educated at home is not necessarily being seen on a regular basis by professionals, such as teachers, and this logically increases the chances that any parents who set out to use home education to avoid independent oversight may be more successful by doing so. • Local authorities have a duty to identify, in so far as possible, children of compulsory school age who may not be receiving a suitable education. They also have safeguarding duties in respect of all children, whether or not they are attending school. The government wishes to support local authorities in these roles and better understand how they can exercise the oversight of children not in school effectively and proportionately. • To that end, the department published strengthened guidance for EHE in April 2019. This updated guidance confirmed the existing statutory duties of local authorities and brought into sharper focus the action that they can, and should, be taking in light of any instance where children are not receiving suitable education. The guidance also set out ways in which local authorities should explore the scope for using agreements with health bodies, general practitioners and other agencies, to increase their knowledge of children who are not attending school. • Further to this, the 2019 government consultation on Children Not in School sought views on four proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a duty on local authorities to keep a register of all children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a state or registered independent school/Non-Maintained Special Schools, showing where they are receiving education, whether at home and/or in some other settings; ○ a duty on parents of children to supply information for such a register; ○ a duty on proprietors of various defined settings to supply information on relevant children; and ○ a duty on local authorities to provide support to home educating families. • We are considering the responses received to the consultation as well as our analysis of these and the government will publish a consultation response in due course. • Our aim is to ensure that home education is suitable and delivered well, but in any instance where this is not the case and children are not receiving suitable education, local authorities are able to identify them more easily and take appropriate action.

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<p>Recommendation No. 5 – complete WFSCB refer this report to London Mayor’s Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) regarding ‘Rescue and Response County Lines’ service.</p>	<p>WFSCB has discussed this finding with MOPAC and St Giles who are commissioned by MOPAC to deliver the “Rescue and Response” service and received the following response from MOPAC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOPAC recognises London’s leading role in tackling county lines and has put in place a comprehensive programme of work to better understand it, target it and respond to it, aiming to reduce levels of exploitation. In 2018 the first pan-London County Lines response service launched - an investment of £3million over 3 years - supporting young people who are vulnerable and caught up in ‘county lines’ drug distribution networks. • Following the findings of the Rescue and Response strategic assessment in September 2019, which lifted the lid on the true scale of county lines activity, the Mayor has increased the funding in 2020/21 by a further £750,000 to allow more young Londoners to receive specialist support from St Giles Trust, Abianda and Safer London and to ensure the continuation of the ‘rescue’ element of the service. • While JM was never referred to Rescue and Response – and the ‘rescue’ part of the service was not yet operational at the time of his arrest in Bournemouth – our hope is that any young person in similar circumstances might be proactively identified by partners, supported by the project, and given the best chance of exiting county lines exploitation. • MOPAC has also commenced a wider piece of research to refresh the evidence base on violence linked to groups and gangs in London. This will inform the development of policy and practice, particularly future commissioning, and ensure the Mayor is well placed to effectively support the MPS, local authorities and the voluntary and community sector in reducing this violence.
<p>Recommendation No. 6 and 9 – complete WFSCB to share report and findings with the Department for Education, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice regarding the absence of a national system for responding to children who are arrested and detained away from their home areas. Additional for the DfE asking if they plan to review the current guidance on multi-agency case discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters sent awaiting response