

**Powys County Council
Scrutiny Report Template**

Committee:	Health and Social Care Scrutiny
Date:	20 th September 2024
Subject:	Child Exploitation Strategy and Implementation Plan

1. Who will be the Lead Officer(s) / Lead Cabinet Member(s) presenting the report?

Name:	Role:
Ruth Cross	Child Exploitation Manager
Holly Gordon	Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Sharon Powell	Head of Children’s Services

2. Why is the Scrutiny Committee being asked to consider the subject?

3. Role of the Committee:

The role of the Committee in considering the subject is to:

4. Key Scrutiny Questions:

What Key areas should the Committee focus on:

5. Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members:

To assist the Committee when scrutinising the topic:

5.1 Impact the matter has on individuals and communities :

5.2 A look at the efficiency & effectiveness of any proposed change – both financially and in terms of quality **[focus on value]**

5.3 A look at any risks **[focus on risk]**

5.4 Looking at plans and proposals from a perspective of:

- Long term
- Prevention
- Integration
- Collaboration
- Involvement

[focus on wellbeing and future generations]

5.5 The potential impacts the decision would have on:

- protected groups under the Equality Act 2010
- those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in their lives (when making strategic decisions)
- opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language [focus on equality and the Welsh language]

[focus on equality and Welsh Language]

Key Feeders (tick all that apply)

Strategic Risk		Cabinet Work Plan	
Director / Head of Service Key Issue		External / Internal Inspection	
Existing Commitment / Annual Report		Performance / Finance Issue	
Suggestion from Public		Referral from Council / Committee	
Corporate Improvement Plan		Impacting Public / other services	
Service Integrated Business Plan			
Suggestion from Members			
Partnerships			

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

Health & Social Care Scrutiny Committee 20th September 2024

Report Author:	County Councillor Sandra Davies Portfolio Holder for Future Generations
Lead Officer:	Ruth Cross, Child Exploitation Manager
Report Title:	Child Exploitation Strategy and Implementation Plan
Report For:	Decision / Discussion / Information

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of what we have achieved within our first child exploitation strategy and implementation plan 2020-2023 and our next steps.

2. Background

- 2.1 In June 2021, we published our first child exploitation strategy and three-year multi-agency implementation plan 2020-2023. The vision being to create communities that were harsher for perpetrators whilst safer and non-blaming for children, and we aimed to achieve this through creating a centre of excellence within Powys that focused upon strong leadership and multi-agency collaboration to prevent, protect and support children and young people's recovery.
- 2.2 The timeliness of the strategy being published was impacted upon by the global pandemic, and the impact is still being seen within our work with more children and young people identifying with complex needs. However, despite these challenges our strategy and plan has still delivered across all three areas.
- 2.3 In 2021, our team was nominated for the Innovation in Children's Services at the National MJ Local Government Achievement Awards in which we reached the final. In early 2022, our strategy was utilised in developing the regional child exploitation strategy 2022-24, and later during May 2022, our team received the CYSUR highly commended award for Innovation and Creativity leading to Improved Safeguarding Practice too.

2.4 Prevent.

- 2.4.1 The team invested in developing cross- partnership working relationships that have been the foundation for change.
- 2.4.2 We have embedded a collaborative learning approach to support practice and development through our multi-agency community of practice. In total, we have facilitated 17 sessions that have been consistently well attended with positive feedback. Our approach has increased the awareness of different forms of exploitation and how they interlink, developing practice such as understanding thresholds, and supporting parents and young people as partners within assessment, interventions and measuring change. The sessions have also supported a greater understanding of disruption tactics to target adults of concern and understanding our professional responsibilities such as, to the Home Office if there is information that a child has been trafficked.

- 2.4.3 We have made ourselves visible across the County to parents and community members, facilitating twelve awareness raising stalls with differing multi-agency support such as, the Powys youth service, PCSO teams, NPT Newtown College, Licencing and the Barnardo's Countertrafficking service. In addition, we have participated in eight multi-agency outreach sessions that focused upon reducing risk in spaces and places. Examples includes, attending spaces in the North and South of the County with local youth workers where we communicated with 71 children, provided over 50 child exploitation wristbands to children and the youth service provided free bicycle lights. Another example being the Royal Welsh Show, where we worked as part of the nighttime safety group and engaged with over 200 children and young adults, including one young person being diverted from attending the river 'for a walk' whilst highly intoxicated.
- 2.4.4 We have created videos for children and parents/carers. For example, we worked with the Powys Open Access Youth Services to create a video which young people helped to film, it was shared on the Powys County Council Facebook Page and gained 2.4K views and 19 shares. The video was also shared on the Powys Open Access Youth Service Facebook Page, where it gained a further 1.3k views and 19 shares. We have re-utilised the videos to support awareness raising at various times, such as child exploitation awareness week and safeguarding week.
- 2.4.5 We worked collaboratively to secure funding for a children's production by Arad Goch Production 'Crossing the Lines' across all high school sites. The drama production sparked communication within peer groups, raising awareness that rural areas are also targeted by offenders for their own financial and criminal gains.
- 2.4.6 In 2022, we introduced online and in person parent and community learning sessions that focused upon digital resilience and child sexual exploitation. We utilised Ystradgynlais school for the in-person session where school staff also stayed to support the evening sessions, and our online sessions took place in the North of the County. The feedback identified that a blended approach supported attendance in what are often challenging areas to raise awareness about. We have taken this learning and developed next steps to continue to support these sessions within our new strategy.
- 2.4.7 We cannot protect children and young people if we do not understand their perceptions of their experiences and what their safety looks like. This has been a focus within all of our prevent strands and in 2023, we attended a pan-Powys sixth form pupils voice group, where 28 sixth form students considered our proposed child ambassador programme and provided their feedback. The programme has since been piloted at a school and a plan is being developed with school leads for roll out across all high school sites.

2.5 **Protect**

- 2.5.1 We have embedded an exploitation strategy meeting process on specific days each week. Whilst this cannot always be achieved, our organised approach has been well received by partners and contributed to consistently well attended meetings.
- 2.5.2 Traditional child protection systems created in response to familial harm, do not always effectively address harm occurring within an extra familial context when the parent/carer is not the adult of concern and parents have shared feeling blamed. Therefore, we piloted an offer to three parents to attend their children's strategy meeting and one parent attended five of their child's meetings. The evaluation identified professional challenges, such as greater planning to how we map connections and share intelligence which are critical as children often do not disclose exploitation, however the overarching parental feedback being that it supported them to not only have a voice but reduced fear in working honestly

with partners who were there to support first and not criminalise their child.

- 2.5.3 We have created a consistently well attended strategic MACE that now facilitates information sharing and has implemented cross partnership data collection. This has been crucial in creating a partnership that more confidently understands the scale and nature of exploitation in Powys whilst also monitoring the effectiveness of responses for children and young people. For example, our data set across 22/23 identified that 75 new children at risk of heightened exploitation, 37 of which closed and 31 had safer outcome. This has enabled us to think about the remaining 16% of children in which risk did not reduce and we subsequently developed a thematic audit tool to support change.
- 2.5.4 Within MACE we have developed an awareness of contextual safeguarding through spaces and places data. This has been an important part of our collaborative development to avoid solely focusing on children's harm in silo when a space remains harmful for other children. We have then being able to utilise the contextual neighbourhood assessment toolkit within a space where we were identifying varying levels of repeated harm to children to support safer change.

2.6 Support

- 2.6.1 Child exploitation intervention workers undertake direct interventions with children, young people, parents and carers. Their roles are unique to the circumstances and directed by the level of need and voice of those they are supporting, for example some children receive multiple intervention sessions per week along with further support to attend meetings and a sperate session with a parent or carer. Other intervention plans could be less frequent as to 'not overwhelm' as this can also impact upon building trusting connections.
- 2.6.2 The team have continued to build upon their trauma informed and strength-based approach through monthly consultations with Rob Painter, In House Psychologist. The sessions have been consistently well received by the team and examples include, developing children's formulations, developing confidence in utilising CBT approaches, mindfulness, emotional wellbeing and positive affirmation resources, and drafting therapeutic ending letters that value endings being just as important as beginnings.
- 2.6.3 The team have engaged with the Barnardo's Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship Service; to gain a greater understanding of support mechanisms such as the National Referral Mechanism so we can then disseminate our learning and support individual practitioners as required.
- 2.6.4 We have mapped post 18 support services to aid transition being a process and not an event for young people and invite post 18 colleagues to meets to support transitional planning. However, transitional safeguarding remains a focus and this need has been evidenced within our MACE data. In 2023, it was data that contributed to the Exiting Prostitution Toolkit being commissioned and taken forward in Powys. The report has recently been shared to support us collectively considering how to take forward the recommendations in line with the principles of the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015 and the local VAWDASV Strategy where prostitution is seen as a form of sexual exploitation.

2.7 Our next steps.

- 2.7.1 Our outcomes re-enforce that no one agency can create safe change in isolation and therefore, strong leadership and multi-agency collaboration are the continued drivers within our new implementation plan 2024-2027. The implementation plan sets out our detailed approach to the next steps and fully aligns with the ongoing Regional Child Exploitation

Strategy 2022-2024.

- 2.7.2 We will continue to build upon what has worked well in Powys whilst also responding to new national research and publications to support children and young people across the three keys areas; prevent, protect and support.
- 2.7.3 Exploitation can have a far reaching and devastating impact especially when it is misunderstood. Awareness raising ultimately aids safeguarding, however it also promotes an approach that moves away from victim and family blaming and toward greater co-production to manage risk, meet need and reduce the risk of family breakdown. To achieve this we will, continue to build upon collaborative awareness raising across communities and with parents, carers, children and young people and strengthen the interface between prevention and protection to promote early help at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.7.4 We will continue to drive forward our Ambassador Programme because we understand that children and young people are heavily influenced by their peer groups and therefore, we need to support a positive and 'together stronger' approach to healthy relationship building and safety.
- 2.7.5 Our Community of Practices are consistently well attended, and we will continue to build upon this by creating additional communication methods to support a fluid understanding of the forever changing landscape of exploitation and how to readily access support for assessment, intervention, planning and measuring outcomes.
- 2.7.6 The development of our cross-partnership data set has been critical in understanding what is working well and areas of risk in Powys, and our data will continue to be the springboard for development such as audit and training along with consideration to how we continue to implement the resources that we collectively have across the partnership.
- 2.7.7 We will continue to develop areas that are working well such as the well-embedded strategy meeting process and support to ensure our responsibilities to the National referral mechanism are well understood. Further targeted areas in our new implementation plan will include,
- Strengthening responses to missing children with the introduction of the Philomena protocol.
 - How we identify and respond to unaccompanied children.
 - Developing practice guidance to support peer on peer harm that we have seen increase across Powys, driving a child first approach if there are concerns that a young person is committing offences in the context of their own exploitation or harming others to avoid being harmed themselves.
 - Developing a parents-as-partners approach within strategy meetings when they are not the identified person of harm, further supporting co-production to improve children and young people's outcomes.
- 2.7.8 We will continue to build upon strength based and trauma informed approaches to supporting children, young people and their family's recovery, creating safer spaces for children and young people to enjoy being together in our communities and ensuring specific needs for example, sexual and/or more mental health needs are fully considered and supported.
- 2.7.9 Young people are no less vulnerable on day 365 when they have their 18th birthday, and we therefore will continue to support a collaborative approach to transitional safeguarding that is a process and not an event. We will build upon what has already been achieved whilst

listening to young people about what they feel has worked well and their complicating factors to continue to promote safer outcomes post 18.

2.7.10 The Regional Child Exploitation Strategy 2022-2024.

<https://cysur.wales/media/a4lberr4/child-exploitation-strategy-document.pdf>

2.7.11 Our Implementation plan 2024-2027

[https://powyscc.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/CEimplementationplan/Shared%20Documents/General/MA%20Child%20Exploitation%20Implementation%20Plan%20May%202024%20v2%20Consultation%20Phase%20\(meeting%20two\).docx?d=wf9beecb39077469883066a978566d1e3&csf=1&web=1&e=xVRRKw](https://powyscc.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/CEimplementationplan/Shared%20Documents/General/MA%20Child%20Exploitation%20Implementation%20Plan%20May%202024%20v2%20Consultation%20Phase%20(meeting%20two).docx?d=wf9beecb39077469883066a978566d1e3&csf=1&web=1&e=xVRRKw)

3 Advice

(Include officer advice on the issue and set out what is being proposed for Cabinet to agree/approve)

3.1

4. Resource Implications

(State here any resource implications of the Cabinet / Council approving the recommendation. This should include financial (ie budget); workforce (ie staff); digital (ie ICT/customer service) and physical (ie property). Confirm that the report has been approved by the Section 151 Officer)

4.1

5. Legal implications

(State here any legal implications and confirmation that the report has been approved by the Monitoring Officer)

5.1

6. Data Protection

(State here if the proposal involves the processing of personal data and if it does insert the comments of the Data Protection Officer)

6.1

7. Comment from local member(s)

(insert here any comments received from local Members on the subject matter and impact assessment)

7.1

8. Impact Assessment

(Please include the Overall Summary from the Impact Assessment here and attach the full Impact Assessment as an appendix, or explain why an assessment is not required)

8.1

9. Recommendation

(Clearly state what you are recommending – be specific)

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