Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Meeting

Terms of Reference

THE MID AND WEST WALES SAFEGUARDING BOARD

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V1		Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board	15/04/2021	

1   Introduction

The Mid and West Wales regional safeguarding board is committed to ensuring appropriate responses to tackle child exploitation through improved strategic and operational co-ordination of multi-agency efforts. This involves the continuation and regular review of the delivery of Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings. A MACE meeting occurs in each of the Mid and West Wales regions at a Local Authority level. Whilst there are differences to how each Local Authority administer meetings, the terms of reference describe the framework, which all MACE meetings occur within.

Child Exploitation is an umbrella term used to describe child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, child trafficking, forced servitude and forced marriage. Like any other form of child abuse, child exploitation can have long-lasting consequences that can impact on every part of a child's life and their future outcomes. This magnifies the need for a coordinated multi-agency approach to ensure that children are 'children first', and that we deliver a trauma informed response to support which promotes their safety and future wellbeing. In the absence of effective safeguarding responses, children and young people can be criminalised or abused further (Jay, 2014).

In recent years, high profile enquiries have highlighted the failings of agencies to protect children subjected to child sexual exploitation. They identified the derogatory way in which children's lived experiences of this form of abuse were commonly represented in the media, in policy, and through the criminal justice system which compounded a situation where child sexual exploitation was poorly understood, and children were often seen as offenders or children 'making choices'. Since this time, there has been a magnified focus within all Regional Safeguarding Boards in Wales to understand the complexities of child sexual exploitation and embed safe and proportionate multi-agency responses, which place the child at the heart of our multi-agency safeguarding practice.

Child criminal exploitation is a form of child abuse; however, it is a form of abuse that has only recently gained a national definition within the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019). There is limited research and data to support an understanding of this form of abuse, and most of our current knowledge stems from a 'County Lines' perpetrator approach to child criminal exploitation. A systematic map and synthesis review carried out by Cardiff University in 2019 identified continued concerns that children were being responded to as offenders, and 'making choices', rather than children who are being abused and in need of a safeguarding response. We must strive to understand child criminal exploitation in the way in which we now understand child sexual exploitation to enable us to effectively work together to safeguard children who are at heightened risk or are being criminally exploited. A world of increasing technology and sophisticated online social media platforms create an additional complicating factor in trying to safeguard children from exploitation. This is mainly due to the ability of perpetrators to groom children without any physical contact, thus impacting upon the ability of families/carer(s), partner agencies and communities to identify safeguarding concerns in a timely and preventative way.

2   Purpose and aims

MACE meetings are intended to provide a framework to respond to child exploitation in a multi-agency arena. Fundamentally, they seek to create harsher environments for perpetrators and ensure that the individual Local Authority area works together to plan responses to tackle exploitation. Child exploitation is a complex social problem and therefore requires interventions at a national, regional and local level. In recent years there has been increased recognition that traditional child protection systems which developed in response to familial harm, have struggled to address harm occurring within an extra familial context. Therefore, Local Authority areas should consider responses across a spectrum of prevention, protection and support / recovery interventions. These responses can be monitored and evaluated through MACE meetings. MACE meetings ensure that a collective overview of child exploitation in the Local Authority area is gained. Meetings can have a focus on either operational or strategic aspects. Some MACE meetings will combine both elements. MACE meetings will aim to:

- Monitor the implementation of a Child Exploitation strategy or MACE action plan, which identifies areas of service development and drives improvements in response to child exploitation.

- Facilitate information sharing and monitoring of hot spots and review of data collection on key measures, which support the identification of the scale of exploitation and disruption efforts.

- Monitor the effectiveness of responses across a range of prevention, protection and support interventions in the Local Authority area and ensure services are delivered to the highest standard and evidence based.

- Some Local Authority areas will continue monitor and review the effectiveness of individual child's plans and disruption techniques as part of an operational elements to MACE meetings.

The frequency of MACE meetings may vary accordingly to need. A typical frequency for a strategic MACE meeting is quarterly. They will provide information and regular updates to the Local Operational Groups, which report directly to the Mid and West Wales regional safeguarding board.

3   Wider forms of child exploitation

MACE meeting will include wider forms of child exploitation. Whilst the previous focus has been on child sexual exploitation (previously known as MACSE meetings), understandings of the interconnection between forms of harm are now better recognised. Child exploitation requires interventions, which engage with social conditions and contexts beyond the family environment. This requires responses across a range of services such as education and community safety to work together in a co-ordinated manner to move beyond siloed responses and towards an integrated strategic approach to safeguarding. Forms of exploitation should not be addressed in isolation as forms of child exploitation can interlink. Some children and young people are subjected to more than

one form of exploitation. They may be sexually exploited and criminally exploited whilst being trafficked by perpetrators.

Children affected by criminal exploitation are often exposed to multiple forms of sexual and physical abuse as part of their experience for example, The National Crime Agency reported that one in four police forces reported that children involved in 'county lines' were experiencing sexual abuse (The Childrens Society, 2018). Whilst it is recognised that every young person's experience is unique, it is recognised that different forms of child exploitation have many commonalities. Commonalities include the following:

- The abuse can occur within the family environment; however, it often occurs within extra familial contexts such as schools, publics spaces and online platforms
- Can be shaped by peer group norms
- Is affected by social and economic factors including gender
- Can include young people simultaneously being subjected to harm and causing harm to others
- Can be misunderstood as a young person making a choice based on free will without considering the constrained nature of that 'choice' and underlying unmet need
- Frequently involves grooming, fear tactics, exchange and gain
- Can lead to relocation as services struggle to make the environment safer for the young person
- Largely occurs when young people are in an adolescent developmental stage which involves increased freedom and a strong desire for autonomy

Exploitation is often characterised by power, exchange and (the restriction or absence of) consent (RIP, 2019). The commonalities present in exploitation in relation to causes, characteristics, behavioural responses and methods can present challenges for preventative efforts, identification and professional responses. By expanding MACE meetings to include wider forms of exploitation, it is hoped that a more coherent framework will ensure that other forms of exploitation are not minimised at the expense of others and silo responses are avoided.

4   MACE Membership

Strategic leads / operational leads will attend, dependent on the Local Authority focus. Membership will be monitored by the Chair. Core members will include:

- Dyfed Powys police: including community policing team / CSE co-ordinator,
- Education – schools service / colleges
- Health – Safeguarding representative
- Sexual Health Services representative
- YJS
- Youth intervention service
- Housing
- Early help
- Llamau missing children intervention team
- Youth Service

- Community Safety Partnership
- ICTG (Independent Child Trafficking Guardians) service
- New pathways
- Probation
- CAIS / Kaleidoscope
- Youth homelessness
- CAMHS
- Licensing

Each member will be required to have the appropriate skill base required to effectively engage with the Child exploitation Strategy implementation plan. Members will take responsibility for attending meetings, fully contributing by bringing expertise to the task and informing their respective agencies of issues and developments. Other members will be co-opted into the group as appropriate. All members will be responsible for linking to their senior management teams in their agencies and disseminating information to their service area. There is also an expectation that they will take on pieces of work as appropriate to their role on behalf of the Group.

5   MACE Standing agenda

- Review of previous minutes
- Data collection and analysis
- CE service delivery update
- Police operations, police data, missing support,
- Hot spots
- Community awareness raising
- Workforce development needs
- Sexual health support services
- CE strategy review / CE action plan update
- National / regional updates (CSA action plan)
- AOB

6   Data analysis and profiling

The Regional Safeguarding Board recognises that there is currently no systematic data collection for exploitation concerns. This is due to the lack of a criminal offence directly relating to exploitation. This is a significant gap where local and regional partnership activity can add real value (Godar, 2020). Child exploitation interlinks with several forms of harm and offences including the child being exposed to and/or victim of physical violence, emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, modern day slavery and human trafficking, domestic abuse and missing episodes. Regional partners have considered how MACE meetings can use data about perpetrators of exploitation, victim / survivors and disruption efforts to inform strategic decision-making by local partnerships in terms of resources and activities required to effectively tackle exploitation.

A standardised regional data template will be used by local agencies and shared at MACE meetings. The data sets will be incorporated into regional quarterly data sets. The data set is outlined below:

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quarterly data set (broken down by month)	Agency to provide data
The number of National Referral Mechanism referrals submitted and outcome	• Police
Number of cases where a section 45 Modern Day Slavery defence is used by children and young people	• Police: need to liaise with Offender Management Unit DS for data.
Crimes (arrests, cautions, warning, and prosecutions) which relate to child exploitation and any known outcomes (if investigation has concluded). This includes sexual communication with a child.	• Police: these crimes can be broken down into separate categories.
Number of active CHILD ABDUCTION WARNING NOTICES (CAWN's). s2 Child Abduction Act 1984 CAWNs are issued by the police to disrupt contact between an adult and a child, where the child is aged under 16 years or aged under 18 years if they are in the care of the local authority.	• Police: police CCE officer will have details of these.
Number of missing episodes / numbers of Return Home Interviews conducted.	• Police: Children missing stats – this can include multiple mispers and how many times they have gone missing. • Llamau: Missing person debriefs conducted by Llamau workers.
SLAVERY AND TRAFFICKING RISK ORDERS (STROs) Section 23 Modern Slavery Act 2015 A Slavery and Trafficking Risk Order (STRO) may be made if there is a risk that the defendant will commit a slavery or human trafficking offence, and that the Order is necessary to protect against the risk of harm from the defendant committing the offence.	• Police
SLAVERY AND TRAFFICKING PREVENTION ORDERS (STPOs)	• Police

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STPOs can be made in respect of individuals who have been convicted of (or cautioned for) slavery or human trafficking offences or equivalent offences abroad.	

Data collected for children / young people identified as being subjected to exploitation or at heightened risk of exploitation e.g. where strategy meetings are being held.	• Children's Services
	
	  • Type(s) of exploitation identified (including: CSE, CCE, County lines, online abuse and peer on peer exploitation)
	  • Sex/gender
	  • LA status (CAS/CP/CLA/CLA from other areas)
	  • Perpetrator/person of concern profile:
	  • Adult/peer, age, sex/gender, not known, group/gang/OCG

Number of strategy meetings relating to child exploitation held per month	• Children's Services

The development of a consistent data set supports the evaluation of multi-agency responses to tackling child exploitation. Local areas can interrogate data within MACE meetings to guide strategic decision making through collaboration with agencies. It is envisaged that a consistent local data set can support service design, workforce development needs and resource allocation providing information of patterns and trends across time and local areas.

The data set does not solely focus on victim/survivors of exploitation, as this is restrictive and locates the risks and vulnerability in the children or young person (CSA Centre, 2018). MACE meetings should be mindful that gaps in data collection are inevitable and only include known cases with many cases not being reported due to the hidden nature of harm and difficulties with disclosure. Opportunities for improving child exploitation data sets will be regularly reviewed.

7   Hot spots

Multi-agency working between police, social services, community safety, youth services and businesses is key to increasing the safety of children and young people. MACE provides an opportunity to develop a multi-agency wide understanding of contextual risks within the Local Authority area. Hot spots are places and spaces of concern in the community. They can include for example: parks, bus terminals, shopping centres, abandoned buildings, residential settings and online spaces. Locations of concern should be shared and discussed at MACE meetings. This will support MACE members to have

a shared understanding of these areas and offers a multi-agency space to consider how partners can intervene to increase public safety and engage in disruption and awareness raising efforts.

The focus on places and spaces of concern has become embedded into tackling exploitation efforts and is underpinned by knowledge of contextual safeguarding. Contextual safeguarding is an approach which responds to extra familial harm (see Contextual Safeguarding Network for more information: www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk) and considers the social settings and the spaces this occurs in, or the contexts of exploitation. This approach reduces the occurrence of a victim vacuum, whereby services intervene to safeguard the individual child, but the space the abuse occurred in remains a risk to other children and young people. Identifying hot spots and sharing at MACE meetings can allow for resources and intervention planning to occur. Agencies such as licencing and community safety partnership staff can support efforts at a community level and can assist police and social services efforts to disrupt exploitation.

8   Role of the Chair

The Chair's role is to ensure the MACE meeting can fulfil the meetings purpose and aims with all members being afforded the opportunity to contribute. The Chair must be a senior lead in childrens services or the police (please note that for operational meetings childrens services will be required to chair). The chair will follow the standardised agenda and monitor the implementation of the Child exploitation Strategy. Membership and attendance will be monitored by the Chair. MACE meetings may wish to appoint a vice chair to cover absences.

The chair will ensure the meetings are productive, offering an effective mechanism for tackling child exploitation locally. The role will ensure that data collection is prompt and is used effectively. The chair will ensure that Local Operational Groups are updated on MACE activities. The chair will liaise with business support to ensure that the agenda and minutes are sent to attendee's in a timely manner.

9   Business support

Business support will be provided by Childrens services. This will include:

- Recording minutes and actions for meetings
- Submitting minutes and actions for approval of the Chair
- Dissemination of invites / agenda / minutes

If an operational element of MACE is occurring additional duties may include:

- Receiving and disseminating all MACE referrals/nominations
- Preparing the agenda for monthly meetings (to be distributed four days prior to the meeting taking place)
- Constructing a timetable for cases to be discussed during meetings
- To maintain a log of actions for reference/review at subsequent panel meetings.
- To update a spreadsheet record of all cases due for review

10   Reporting and Governance Arrangements

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The Chair will ensure that the LOG is regularly updated on MACE meetings. The LOG will be responsible for relaying appropriate information to the Executive Board including through LOG reports that can contribute to the regional Safeguarding Boards annual report.

11   Review of TOR

The regional board will review the Terms of Reference every 3 years unless this is required prior. Updates regarding data collection will be periodically updated when required.

12   Reference list

(The   Childrens   Society,   2018).   Ref   -
file:///C:/Users/hollyg/Documents/Exploitation/MACE/TOR/Exploitation%20Toolkit.pdf

Godar,   R   (2020)   Perpetrators   of   exploitation   (Part   7   of   7):
https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/perpetrators-of-exploitation-part-7-of-7/

CSA Centre (2018) Child sexual exploitation perpetrator research programme briefing. London: CSA Centre. https://www.csacentre.org.uk/documents/perpetrators-briefing/