



**East Sussex
Safeguarding
Children
Partnership**

Child AA LCSPR Learning Briefing

Introduction:

The East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP) undertook a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) in 2021 regarding Child AA. This was the case of a 17-year-old child who was stabbed, resulting in life threatening injuries, and as a result will require long term medication. The assault took place in the context of Child AA being criminally exploited and being the target of this attack because of his involvement in drug dealing.

The ESSCP agreed to use this case as an opportunity to examine current multi-agency practice, to better understand the risks presented to children in this context, and to identify ways of improving the effectiveness of diverting and protecting children at risk of criminal exploitation. The LCSPR focused on two themes:

1. Robustness of multi-agency activity to disrupt criminal exploitation and [county lines](#)
2. Impact of missing education for children and young people vulnerable and/or at risk of county lines.

Background to case:

Child was representative of many children that become criminally exploited. In their early teens, Child AA received cautions for criminal damage and

What is a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review?

A **Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR)** is a locally conducted multi-agency review in circumstances where a child has been abused or neglected, resulting in serious harm or death, and/or there is cause for concern as to the way in which agencies have worked together to safeguard the child.

The purpose of a review is to establish whether there are lessons to be learned about the way in which local professionals and agencies work together to safeguard children; identify what needs to be changed and, as a consequence, improve inter-agency working to better safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

possession of a blade, and later was a victim of assault. Prior to the stabbing incident, Child AA had been referred to the East Sussex Multi-Agency Child Exploitation group (MACE) as professionals had concerns about criminal exploitation.

Child AA had an unstable education: in their secondary phase they attended four different schools, were electively home educated, and were a 'child missing education' (CME) twice, once in Year 8 and again at the end of Year 10. Child AA's journey through education was familiar to all who attended the Practitioner Learning Event; one where there are

a number of school suspensions culminating in permanent exclusions for dangerous behaviour. Child AA became identified as being at risk of criminal exploitation following their permanent exclusion from school.

Child AA left school with no formal qualifications and as an EHE student had no access to taking their GCSEs through their former school.

Key learning:

The following learning points were identified in the Partnership Review process.

1) Multi-agency activity to disrupt criminal exploitation

Often the most challenging part of any strategy to tackle crime and behaviour is that of prevention and to prevent children becoming exploited in the first place. The disruption of criminal exploitation is complex and requires multi-agency input; requiring a focus on the vulnerable, the exploiters and the environment in which such exploitation can breed. Despite considerable agency involvement, Child AA was at risk of losing their life through involvement in county lines.

The review identified:

- Evidence of significant local improvement in disruption activity, however further work is required.
- Communication challenges between agencies, in particular between the Police and other agencies, in the effective sharing of intelligence information about exploitation.
- The lack of transition support for vulnerable child victims of exploitation for when they approach adulthood.

- Challenges for agencies on timescales, particularly criminal investigation and police use of “Release Under Investigation” for youth matters including serious violence

2) Impact of missing education

A practitioner learning event explored the risk factors and critical moments in Child AA’s education journey, which made him vulnerable to missing education and child exploitation.

The review identified five key learning areas for agencies:

- **Information sharing** between educational establishments, and between schools and other agencies, was not as good as it could have been. Better information sharing would have ensured a more informed approach to interventions put in place for Child AA and in tracking their exposure to criminal exploitation.
- **Poor attendance as a risk factor to criminal exploitation:** significant periods of elective home education and missing education meant that Child AA was away from school and vulnerable to exploitation.
- **Transition between educational establishments for children who are excluded from school:** systems and processes need to be improved to ensure long-term oversight of children who are permanently excluded. Informed plans of support need to be put in place for excluded children to ensure that children are less vulnerable to criminal exploitation and the do not become ‘lost’ in the system.
- **Understanding that behaviour is communication:** using a ‘therapeutic thinking’ approach to address trauma-based

behaviours can be a more effective way of tackling difficult and dangerous behaviours, so that exclusions from school are used as a last resort.

- **Family engagement and environmental factors** had a significant impact on the way Child AA viewed education and his exposure to criminality.

Recommendations:

The LCSPR identified 12 recommendations to strengthen safeguarding practice:

1. Child Exploitation Partnership Intelligence Policy to be piloted in East Sussex with a view to being rolled out County wide.
2. East Sussex MACE Silver Group to review effectiveness of disruption tactics currently used and what legal orders would be most effective in supporting disruption plans.
3. Sussex Police to strengthen communication with MACE partners to ensure effective involvement of partner agencies.
4. ESSCP and East Sussex Safeguarding Adult Board to develop a strategy to ensure there is adequate transition provision to support criminally exploited children as they move to adulthood.
5. ESSCP to review the process of the Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships in East Sussex to ensure consistency to the allocation of Fair Access Placement students across the county.
6. Embed the referral process to MACE with schools.
7. ESCC SLES Safeguarding team to facilitate improved information sharing of safeguarding records between schools and colleges.
8. Develop a robust register of children who are

permanently excluded which is monitored and reviewed to ensure support and a full-time education offer for this vulnerable group.

9. Local Authority to establish a clear pathway for how alternative provision is accessed and the role the PRU has for children who are permanently excluded.
10. Explore schools' use of Single View and identify further training and support required to maximise this resource
11. ESSCP to encourage the use of therapeutic thinking across all secondary schools in East Sussex so that suspensions and permanent exclusions are used as a last resort.
12. Further CPD and Training for schools and services on sharing information on children who are at risk of criminal exploitation.

Action taken since the review:

Since work on the LCSPR as started, the following has been completed:

- ✓ The proportion of MACE cases where disruption measures are recorded has improved from 1 in 5 cases, to over half of all cases (April 2020 to November 2021).
- ✓ A Pan Sussex Intelligence Police is now in place to ensure that intelligence on child criminal exploitation is shared efficiently and effectively between agencies.
- ✓ New guidance, to support and challenge schools on persistent absence, has been written and shared with local schools.
- ✓ A 're-thinking exclusions' action plan has been devised, which includes a clear pathway for how alternative provision is accessed.

Learning for practice:

The ESSCP invite you to discuss the issues raised in this LCSPR in your team meetings or during group supervision. We encourage your responses to be included in your team minutes and forwarded to the safeguarding lead within your organisation.

Points for discussion:

- What are the key indicators of criminal exploitation?
- Do you know what to do once risks of criminal exploitation are recognised and how to escalate concerns as appropriate?
- How do you work with other professionals to safeguard children who are missing education?
- How is this case similar to other children/families that you work with? What learning can you take from this case?
- How have you been involved in the prevention and disruption of child exploitation?
- When was the last time you used the Pan Sussex Child Protection and Procedures Manual?

Useful Links:

Pan Sussex Procedures

When was the last time you used the **Pan Sussex Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures?**

Did you know you can [sign up to alerts](#) for when the manual is updated.

ESSCP Multi-agency Training

Currently all ESSCP training courses are running virtually, and we will update you on the [East Sussex Learning Portal](#) when these courses become available.

Contacting the Single Point of Advice (SPoA)

Details on contacting SPoA can be found here:

[Contacting the Single Point of Advice \(SPoA\) | East Sussex County Council](#)

ESSCP Contact

Details about the Partnership and its work can be found at www.esscp.org.uk. Follow the ESSCP on twitter for the latest safeguarding news in East Sussex [@EastSussexLCSB](#)

The ESSCP can be contacted on ESSCP.Contact@eastsussex.gov.uk or **01273 481544**