

# CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

10 MAY 2022

## GET SAFE AND GET THERE

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### Summary

1. Worcestershire Children First and partnership representatives have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on the developments relating to GET SAFE and GET THERE 2021/22 which is the partnership response and intervention into the Criminal Exploitation of children with a focus on the voice of the child.

### Background

2. GET SAFE is the partnership multi-agency work and response into tackling Criminal Exploitation of children and young people. This form of harm and abuse takes many forms in terms of how it is perpetrated and the ways in which perpetrators target and groom children and young people.

3. Across the UK we see children and young people abused via online, through social media, online gaming, and in person through every day normal activities such as through friendships/ relationships, education and community settings. Our partnership work tells us there is no one type of victim, and no one type of perpetrator.

4. GET SAFE in Worcestershire represents:

- Gangs
- Sexual Exploitation
- Trafficking
- Modern Day Slavery
- Absent or Missing
- Forced Marriage
- Criminal Exploitation

5. In Worcestershire this also includes knife and weapon carrying, County Lines, Female Genital Mutilation, Honour based violence and Radicalisation.

6. In December 2021 the Worcestershire GET SAFE partnership launched GET THERE which is focused on 16 – 25 year olds and the challenges they face in their transition to adulthood and how together partners and agencies can recognise their individual development needs, risks and vulnerabilities and work with them to build safety. The 18 to 25 year-old cohort of GET THERE specifically focuses on our care leavers and SEND young adults recognising our statutory duties. GET THERE was co-designed in collaboration with Worcestershire young people to ensure it is meaningful and purposeful to them.

### Issues for the Panel to Consider

7. The Panel may wish to consider:

- The Worcestershire Partnership response to GET SAFE and the development of GET THERE and the progress made.
- The voice of young people through this work and intervention and the impact and difference it makes to children and young people in preventing and addressing this form of harm and abuse.

### The GET SAFE Partnership

8. The GET SAFE partnership includes West Mercia Police, the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCCs) representative, acute and primary Health, Education, Children's Social Care and Early Help Services, Youth Justice, the Voluntary youth sector, District leads, and specific commissioned services.

9. Within Worcestershire Children First there is also a small, dedicated team of practitioners including social workers, children's missing officers and youth practitioners that work with young people where criminal exploitation has been identified. They work alongside the allocated worker specifically focused on engaging the young person in one-to-one direct work and/or welfare return home interviews following an episode of being missing from home or care.

10. As a partnership there is both a strategic and operational group. The strategic partnership meets quarterly and ensures that the partnership strategic response is well co-ordinated and the annual action plan drives the delivery of the GET SAFE Strategy and works to address issues identified through the problem profile. The Strategic GET SAFE partnership tasks the GET SAFE operational group to deliver actions and progress against the GET SAFE action plan.

11. As a partnership the aim of the work is to be able to identify, intervene, support and protect children at risk of exploitation, including bring perpetrators to justice. The partnership has adopted the police "**4P approach**" that is a recognised model in managing serious and organised crime with the focus on "**Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue**" in order to identify, respond and address the risks to children and young people in our communities.

12. In Worcestershire a "**contextual safeguarding**" approach has been adopted to the identification of risks and vulnerability in the child/young person's world. This approach works well with our practice model of Signs of Safety in that it recognises the relationships between the child and their world outside where exploitation risks and vulnerability can occur. It enables positive conversations with young people about their lives and interactions to help understand how best to work with young people building safety in the environments where harm or risks may be taking place, for example with peer groups, within education, within the community. This means working closely with schools, youth centres and the police including Safer Neighbourhood Teams and the district councils. We value family relationships and the safety that can be achieved through positive work with parents and carers to understand the signs of exploitation. The Worcestershire "**GET SAFE risk assessment**" can be seen in Appendix 1. This risk assessment can be undertaken by any practitioner working with a child or young person and can be referred into Children's social care and/or the GET SAFE portal.

## Our Multi Agency Approach

13. Successful partnership working between statutory and voluntary agencies through the GET SAFE Strategic and Operational partnership continues to drive forward the GET SAFE agenda locally and has led to earlier identification of children at risk of criminal exploitation and allowed us to intervene early.

14. This has taken shape in many forms including the continued support and partnership working with the PCC in shaping and delivering the Worcestershire GET SAFE multi-agency training throughout 2021/22 to the children and young people's partnership workforce. In this 12-month period **2,681 Worcestershire professionals attended, 106 sessions were delivered, and 69 different organisations/professionals were reached.** Worcestershire had the highest take up across all four West Mercia authorities. This training across all partners and services is critical in giving a consistent message to all partners and children's workforce in how to recognise and respond to the risks and vulnerability for children and young people.

## Working within the community

15. The GET SAFE partnership recognises **the importance of community** in tackling Criminal Exploitation for children and young people and we continually communicate through social media posts raising awareness of the different forms of child criminal exploitation and how to get help and support. There is also a dedicated GET SAFE web page on the Worcestershire County Council website (appendix 5). An annual weeklong GET SAFE campaign takes place in June which is the anniversary of the GET SAFE launch. We also get out in the community meeting children and young people and members of the community to raise awareness of issues and risks and how to get help and support. An example of this was a strong GET SAFE presence during March 2022 at the Knife Angel in Worcester City.

## The weekly GET SAFE meeting

16. At a practice level, multi-agency weekly **GET SAFE meetings** are held, chaired by Worcestershire Children First's GET SAFE Team Manager and attended by partners including Education, Police, Health, Youth Justice etc. The focus of this meeting is to share information and review specific cases and agree the response pathway; ensuring the risks and vulnerabilities are recognised and flagged across the partners so we can all respond in a co-ordinated way to a child / young person (see Appendix 2). In Autumn 2021 this meeting incorporated the development and implementation of **Steer Clear** which is the West Mercia Knife crime prevention and awareness programme and in 2022 steps to engage our young people's drug and alcohol service are taking place.

17. This weekly GET SAFE meeting will review the GET SAFE risk assessment completed by a professional known to the child/ young person and or a welfare return interview. The meeting will look at the risks and vulnerability for the child but also the intelligence around location and connectivity between young people, adults, or patterns and trends emerging.

18. As a result of strong and effective partnership working, we have seen an increase year on year of young people being identified as in need of support to reduce their vulnerability to exploitation. This is positive as it means that young people are supported at the earliest opportunity and support and intervention can be offered by any partner or commissioned service ensuring that the child and their family get the right help and support. As a partnership we have developed robust pathways that the meeting uses to support decision making (**see Appendix 1 GET SAFE Guidance document**).

19. We have recognised the need for specific focused help and support to children and young people and partners have worked with the police to deliver the **Steer Clear offer**, for young people at risk of knife or weapon carrying. We also have the commissioned service "**Climb**" which is an early intervention and diversion through a positive activity project across the county which is funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner and the specialist support from the **Branch project** where there are concerns around sexual exploitation. Having clear pathways of response has help to ensure young people have a timely and consistent response to their need.

20. Members of the GET SAFE weekly meeting also attend the missing Mondays meeting where professionals look at how we work together to prevent children from missing school through exclusions or part time timetables recognising that being in school helps keep them safe and makes it harder for perpetrators to engage or target them. This is often challenging for the child and school and how we work together on a plan is key.

21. We as a partnership want to prevent Worcestershire children from being harmed and abused through criminal exploitation. We want to prevent them from being criminalised through the activities they are forced or harmed into doing by the perpetrators abusing them. We aim to make life difficult and risky for perpetrators and bring them into the criminal justice system.

## **GET SAFE: Locations**

22. The weekly GET SAFE meeting not only looks at individual children's needs but gathers the intelligence from this information and uses this to carry out operations of disruption and pursuing criminals who perpetrate against children. An example of this was an operation into disrupting emerging county lines gangs in a district area. The work undertaken had identified particular activity increasing in a district area ahead of a school holiday period. This led to a **GET SAFE partnership community operation** that took place. This operation looked at:

- The intelligence,
- How the local area community services worked together,
- The young people's offer in the area
- How as a community they could work differently together

23. The piece of work engaged the schools, local youth group, leisure centre and library to enable a stronger community resilience when concerns of exploitation were emerging. This led to a whole range of different activities being held in the community during the holiday season that was pitched at young people taking them off the streets and into positive activities re-engaging them with the leisure centre, youth clubs and library.

24. When criminal concerns of exploitation have been identified the partnership have worked together to ensure a co-ordinated operation is initiated with all partners engaged. These are strictly confidential as we are safeguarding and protecting children. The most recent one is concerning Child Sexual Exploitation. There have been recent well publicised knife incidents within Worcestershire which involved other Local Authority young people coming into area and these incidents are occurring. Our work with other Local Authority areas in understanding this is ongoing.

### **GET THERE supporting transitions into adulthood for 16-25 year-olds.**

25. In early 2021 we recognised that we needed to look in detail at the needs of young people aged 16 plus. We need to recognise that there is a whole range of new challenges that face our young people, decisions and choices that they need to make but also how vulnerable they can be at this age. We recognised that we need to help guide them transitioning into independent adults and that for many they would cease support from children's social work services at 18 years of age and not meet the criteria for adult social care. We also as a partnership have a statutory duty to our care leavers and SEND young people. This led us to develop a transitions approach to GET SAFE.

26. Throughout 2021/22 we have worked with young people, partner agencies, and voluntary youth groups to develop our GET SAFE response to 16 -25 year-olds who are vulnerable to or experiencing criminal exploitation. This included consultation with children and young people from several local youth centres to develop the name, logo and understand the best way to engage and reach young people online. The 16 -25-year-olds focus is specifically on care leavers and our Special Educational Needs and Disabled young adults. We recognise as a partnership that as young people enter early adulthood the risks do not immediately disappear, and we must continue to raise awareness especially for this vulnerable group and look at how we support them differently to younger children.

27. In November 2021 the GET THERE logo and website was developed by young people and launched on a new website on the county council's web page called **GET THERE** (see appendix 5 for the link). In December 2021 the GET THERE practitioner guidance was signed off and launched and is now on our Worcestershire local procedures.

28. On 17 March 2022, we co-produced with Heart Of Worcestershire College and our young people a live launch to young people of "GET THERE". 152 young people came to this event. HOW college hosted the event and we held three live drama performances involving college students, SEND young people and a third event for NEET young people (Not in Education, Employment or Training). This production aimed to reach as many young people as possible to raise their awareness of Criminal Exploitation, launch the GET THERE website to young people but to also capture their voice on the issues they were concerned about to help focus our GET THERE work across the county (see appendix 3 for the summary report on what young people told us).

29. On 14 April 2022 the same drama production was delivered to young people in Malvern, and we plan to deliver four more events in the remaining districts to young people and capture their voices.

30. In March 2022 in recognition of this work, GET SAFE have received an iESE award from the Public Sector Transformation Awards 2022: ***“Due to the exemplary standard of the work demonstrated by your submission in the difficult climate of the past year, we would like to award Worcestershire Children First and Get Safe and Get There with an iESE Certificate of Excellence 2022”***.

### **The Community GET SAFE worker role**

31. We understand the importance of building strong and resilient communities and the work of the Community GET SAFE link worker over the last 18 months has enabled strong relationships to be built in the community including working with the police through local Police and School panels, attending youth providers and understanding what the young people and staff are worried about in the local area. We have worked with Climb to look locally at how positive activities for groups of children as well as individuals can be delivered including a recent project with Seven Arts and going forward, we are looking at the support available to children in the upcoming summer holidays through the **Half term Activities** and **Food provision (HAF)** to support the delivery of key safety messages to children across the county.

### **The GET SAFE Link Worker role**

32. For children where the risk level is increased, and who are identified as being or suspected as being Criminally Exploited we have a strong multi agency response pathway including direct one to one work being undertaken with young people by a **Worcestershire Children First GET SAFE Link worker**. The link worker's role is to build a trusting relationship with the young person to explore the concerns of exploitation and to contribute to the disruption of any exploitation they are facing through multi-agency information sharing and diversionary activities. In appendix 4 a GET SAFE Link Worker has written two brief anonymised case studies to give a brief overview of their work. This role is based on the one trusted adult model where we know children who are experiencing harm through exploitation do need to spend time to build trust with a practitioner to be able to understand what is happening for them and to work together to develop an effective plan of support and intervention.

33. The work with young people absolutely includes us as partners seeking any available legal orders or using our partnership powers to pursue offenders and using disruption tactics to protect the child or young person; the work with the child and their family is critical.

34. Educating, supporting and diverting children and young people away from the possible risks of exploitation remains the key priority of the GET SAFE multi agency Partnership alongside tackling perpetrators. We have a focus on working with young people to improve family relationships, engage in education/ training and to improve their mental health and wellbeing, recognising them as the victims of this form of harm and abuse. This is achieved through direct work undertaken by the GET SAFE link workers and / or children's missing offers who support children if they have had a period missing from home.

35. The voice of children and young people whom we work with is fundamental in ensuring we are meeting and understanding their needs and connecting with them in a meaningful way. We regularly seek the views of children and we have produced this in anonymous ways to share the learning across the partnership. (See appendix 7 and 8 which are two short videos on the voice of the child.) It is critical that we ensure we understand their world and the challenges they face and how they have received our support and input so we can ensure we are as effective and responsive as possible, striving to improve our knowledge skills and co-ordinated practices.

### **Next steps**

- We will continue to look at the local profile of exploitation to identify needs, risks and vulnerabilities but also what opportunities we have to prevent and reduce risk and vulnerability and measure our effectiveness as a partnership.
- We are continuing with our plan to take the drama group out to young people in the remaining four districts and gather their feedback.
- We continue our Steer Clear and prevention work on gangs and knife / weapon carrying as this is a new collaboration with West Mercia Police.
- Continue to review the local offer of diversionary support to young people including ongoing work with local district councils to expand early intervention work.
- Continue to engage our drug and alcohol intervention agency for young people in the weekly GET SAFE meeting
- Continue to hold live events for young people, ensuring their voice and views are at the forefront of intervention and service delivery
- We will continue our workforce training on GET SAFE throughout 2022 as continuous professional development with the Police and Crime Commissioner's support.
- Our week of GET SAFE communication is scheduled for 20 June 2022. All agencies and district leads are asked to support this campaign and share it on their social media sites to ensure we reach across our communities.

## **Purpose of the Meeting**

The Panel is asked to:

- consider and comment on partnership work of GET SAFE and GET THERE
- determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

## **Supporting Information**

### **Documents attached**

Appendix 1 Get Safe Risk Assessment and Guidance

Appendix 2 Get Safe response pathway

Appendix 3 GET THERE voice of the child report

Appendix 4 2 x Case studies from the Get safe Link worker

### **Websites**

Appendix 5 [Get Safe - keeping children and young people safe from criminal exploitation | Worcestershire County Council](#)

Appendix 6 [Get There | Worcestershire County Council](#)

### **Voice of the young person videos**

Appendix 7 Video 1 [The voice of young people who go missing - Get Safe - YouTube](#)

Appendix 8 Video 2 [The voice of young people who go missing - Get Safe - YouTube](#)  
[Get There | Get Safe Worcestershire - YouTube](#)

## **Contact Points**

Emma Brittain, Director of Early Help, Children In Need and the Family Front Door.  
Ammanda Walsh, Group Manager, Worcestershire Children First MASH and co-Chair of the GET SAFE Operational Group

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)