

# **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**24 MAY 2023**

## **UPDATE ON WORCESTERSHIRE'S GET SAFE**

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### **Summary**

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, the Independent Chair of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) and the Director of Early Help, Children in Need and the Family Front Door have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on developments relating to GET SAFE.

### **Background**

2. Criminal exploitation of children and young people is a serious form of harm and abuse that has a lifelong impact on them. It also affects the safety of our communities. As part of identifying, tackling and disrupting this form of harm and abuse we need strong partnership working. This report provides an overview of Worcestershire's partnership approach to GET SAFE and the progress made in the last year.

### **The GET SAFE Partnership Group**

3. GET SAFE is the Worcestershire name for the multi-agency support and protection for children and young people at risk of exploitation. The GET SAFE Partnership Group is a subgroup of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership and is chaired by Superintendent Rebecca Love, South Worcestershire Local Policing Commander (West Mercia Police).
4. The 2020 - 2021 yearly report identified the following areas of focus for the GET SAFE Partnership Group for 2022:
  - i. Our partnership approach to prevention, protection, and pursuit in relation to online exploitation across Worcestershire.
  - ii. Mapping out all diversionary activities available to victims or those that are at risk of exploitation, to ensure that the different agency offers provide efficient and comprehensive support across all age groups.
  - iii. Ensuring all recommendations from the 'Sarah' Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) are embedded in practice. This will include an audit of cases discussed at Missing Intervention or Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) to ensure that where a young person meets the threshold for child protection, the appropriate processes are used.
  - iv. Providing continuous professional development for practitioners around changing and emerging risks, local problem profile findings, the national picture of exploitation and the voice of the child.

- v. Ensuring all identified Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) concerns are shared via the GET SAFE Portal and so contribute to our local understanding of risk and harm.
- vi. Strengthening the influence of children and young people's views on GET SAFE services with a particular focus on commissioning processes.
- vii. Ensuring that the GET SAFE approach is fully supported and embedded within other local partnership groups where their priorities and activities contribute to keeping children and young people safe from exploitation.

## **Progress and Achievements**

5. In relation to the areas of focus for this reporting period, the achievements of the GET SAFE Partnership Group are set out below.

### **Our partnership approach to prevention, protection, and pursuit in relation to online exploitation across Worcestershire.**

6. Via the GET SAFE Partnership Group, Police, Education and Young Solutions have worked together to produce an action plan to strengthen the approach in this area. This includes the development of guidance for staff on what they should know in relation to their role in keeping children safe online, and guidance on messaging to parents, children and young people. The latter is to be supported by consultation with young people via Young Solutions. There is already guidance for parents, carers and young people on staying safe online within both the GET SAFE and GET THERE websites, and schools across Worcestershire provide education and support on this subject through their curriculum content, internal policies and staff training. During the 2022/2023 period the Partnership would like to explore the extent to which children and young people find this information both accessible and useful, and if not, how partners can make the help offered more relevant to their needs.
7. Processes for the sharing of information by Police with Children's Social Care prior to enforcement action, normally the execution of a warrant at a home address, have been reviewed and support systems developed for children and parents after online Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) warrants have been completed. This is to minimise the potential impact on innocent occupants who do not have access to the Criminal Justice care process. Police representatives provided an update to the GET SAFE Partnership Group in July 2022 during which they highlighted that it would be preferable for them to be engaging with social services earlier in the process when taking enforcement action. This has led to Police changing their operating procedures so that strategy discussions are taking place sooner. This has been supported by the development of an information sharing protocol between the Police and Worcestershire Children First (WCF) to cover these specific circumstances.
8. Police have also reported that further challenges identified around online safety are that a significant proportion of all offenders coming to the notice of Police are under the age of eighteen and are linked with watching extreme online content, and that there continues to be an increasing demand generally across all forms of online exploitation and abuse.

9. The need to build confidence in professionals when talking to children and young people about sexual relationships and pornography has also been identified, and the setting up of a Digital Safety Conference that would cover online exploitation/fraud/sexting etc to support this is being explored by Police.

**Mapping out all diversionary activities available to victims or those that are at risk of exploitation, to ensure that the different agency offers provide efficient and comprehensive support across all age groups.**

10. This work has been progressed via the GET SAFE Partnership Group action plan. Young Solutions has been commissioned to complete a piece of work which will contribute to this mapping exercise, looking at the services that could be in place in September 2023 under the newly commissioned Youth Offer for Worcestershire (formally the Positive Activities programme). This work is ongoing.
11. On a more tactical level, the GET SAFE Operational Group has developed an easy-to-use guide for practitioners from all agencies which introduces the GET SAFE Team and their contact details and sets out the GET SAFE and GET THERE external services for children and young people across Worcestershire. This is further supported by a breakdown by district of a list of diversionary activities which can be accessed via the GET SAFE website.

**Ensuring all recommendations from the 'Sarah' Child Safeguarding Practice Review are embedded in practice. This will include an audit of cases discussed at MACE to ensure that where a young person meets the threshold for child protection, the appropriate processes are used.**

12. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review 'Sarah', published in August 2021, made a number of recommendations, the majority of which have been followed up within the Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures (QAPP) Group, and further details of that work is provided within the QAPP Group section of this report.
13. It was agreed however that the response to one of the key recommendations would be led by the GET SAFE Partnership Group, this being that the WSCP should seek assurance from relevant partners that child protection procedures are being followed and strategy meetings are convened appropriately, with health, police and children's social care in attendance as a minimum, as well as other agencies who should be included. The use of MACE meetings must not be used in place of child protection procedures.
14. The review made clear that where a child has reached the threshold for statutory intervention then child protection procedures in line with the Children Act 1989 should be used.
15. It was agreed that the effectiveness of the multi-agency response to this recommendation would be assessed through the 'deep dive' auditing of cases. The aim of the audit was to provide reassurance to both the GET SAFE Partnership Group and the wider WSCP that the practice concerns identified in the 'Sarah' case review had been addressed through the development and introduction of the GET SAFE approach, which followed the death of Sarah. An

audit tool was developed and used by representatives of WCF, West Mercia Police and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (HWHCT) to examine whether child protection procedures were being used in cases where child exploitation was the primary concern and the threshold for statutory intervention had been reached. A random selection of ten red (high risk) pathway children were used. The cohort audited had a range of children and young people who were already within the child protection process or categorised as a Child in Need or a Child Looked After. Ages ranged from 11 years to 17 years, and a range of exploitation concerns including child sexual exploitation, multiple missing episodes, county lines, and gang and weapon carrying were included.

**16. The key findings from this audit are set out below:**

- The audit highlighted that child protection strategy discussions and section 47 enquiries were being used across all ten cases as appropriate. There was evidence in one case of information shared in a MACE meeting being escalated up into a review strategy discussion which is good practice.
- For some of these children multiple strategy meetings were held, highlighting that the MACE process was not used instead of a strategy meeting but as well as. It was also noted that strategy meetings feed in well to MACE meetings.
- The audit highlighted consistent partnership engagement, and that information sharing was appropriate and evidenced in all ten strategy discussions and review strategy discussions.
- Good practice was noted in the breadth of partners being invited to strategy discussions. Police, Health and Education were part of all the strategy discussions and additional partners such as Youth Justice, SEND Team and community paediatricians were invited where appropriate.
- The WCF GET SAFE team were also shown to be regularly invited, attending and contributing to the contextual safeguarding information in these cases. This was highlighted as invaluable in terms of information they held about associates of concern and links to other young people at risk of exploitation.
- The cases all had the correct GET SAFE flags attached so identifying the exploitation risk and vulnerability. From a Health perspective, all ten sets of records had the correct exploitation alert attached.
- Cases had MACE meetings and evidence of reviews as appropriate or were too early in the assessment process for MACE to have yet happened, so demonstrating that child protection and GET SAFE procedures are understood and in practice are being run concurrently.
- Children and young people's vulnerabilities were discussed and shared in the strategy discussions, and this ranged from school attendance to health concerns and protective factors. Capacity and consent however were not a focused conversation in the strategy discussion.
- In none of the cases audited was the child found to have been left unsafe, and no immediate remedial actions were needed.

17. As with all detailed reviews of individual cases, areas were identified which can be used to improve our practices. **The following are some examples of learning from this audit.**

- The partnership needs to better identify trafficking as part of harm and abuse and the need to agree in the action plan who will complete/lead on the National Referral Mechanism. The first opportunity to do this may well be within the strategy discussion.
- The interim safety plans were not consistently evidencing partnership actions for all partners. Actions were predominantly Childrens Social Care and section 47 focused in terms of joint or single agency enquiries.
- Consent was not routinely considered or discussed in strategy meetings. This could be due to the risks to the young person overriding the need to gain consent. However, it could possibly have been an identified action from the meeting that the young person would receive feedback as to the decisions taken.
- Mental capacity should be considered in all strategy meetings where there are concerns about exploitation and consent. This also needs to be recorded to evidence professionals have considered it.
- Action Plans need to be SMART with the timescales recorded for all professionals, and all agencies attending should be clear about when the actions they are recommending are to be implemented.

18. In conclusion, the audit demonstrated that child protection procedures are followed, and strategy meetings are convened appropriately, with Health, Police and Children's Social Care representatives in attendance as a minimum, supported by other agencies as required, and that missing intervention or MACE meetings are not being used in place of child protection procedures, but instead are being used to complement those procedures. When the risk to the child from exploitation has reached threshold for child protection then the appropriate processes are being used.

19. Learning from this audit has been passed to the GET SAFE Operational Group to progress, and a short briefing has been produced and circulated to practitioners. It has also been made available on the WSCP website and can be viewed here: [GET SAFE - Using Child Protection Procedures in Child Exploitation Cases \(office.com\)](#)

**Providing continuous professional development for practitioners around changing and emerging risks, local problem profile findings, the national picture of exploitation and the voice of the child.**

20. The Exploitation and Vulnerability training, which continues to be funded by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, is the primary source of multi-agency professional development on child criminal exploitation. The report on this training for 2021/2022 showed that Worcestershire has contributed 41% of all attendees to this training, which is available to all areas across West Mercia. During that period 2681 delegates from Worcestershire representing 69 different organisations attended 106 sessions. Worcestershire's continued positive engagement with this training has been made easier by the excellent working relationships developed between key individuals within the various partner

agencies as well as the many administration officers who have marketed and distributed the training. Learning has also been shared from the work on exploitation and the recommendations of the 'Sarah' child safeguarding practice review as opportunities to develop the content of the course.



### Final Figures for Worcestershire

Number of	Worcester 2021/2022												Year End
	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	
Delegates	429	333	95	28	73	214	259	225	172	310	231	312	2,681
Sessions	9	10	8	4	9	9	14	4	3	17	8	11	106
Organisations	9	9	7	4	3	5	9	3	2	4	7	7	69

**Ensuring all identified Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) concerns are shared via the GET SAFE Portal and so contribute to our local understanding of risk and harm.**

21. The development of the GET SAFE dataset during this reporting year has supported the understanding of the areas in which child criminal exploitation concerns are being identified and by which agencies, and so where best to focus effort. This is an area of work which is also regularly reviewed by the Operational Group. Now the GET SAFE Partnership Group has this overview of reporting both on a district and agency basis, the next step is to understand how effectively that information is being used to match local resources and responses to emerging themes and need. This is an area that the GET SAFE Partnership Group will be exploring in greater detail in the coming reporting period.
22. The multi-agency child exploitation dataset has been further enhanced in this reporting period by the work undertaken by Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust. In support of GET SAFE, this team undertook a review of their systems and processes in place to identify any opportunities to make the identification of children and young people presenting to their services with GET SAFE vulnerabilities more robust. This has led to the development of the WREN report which identifies key words such as 'gun', 'gang', 'weapon', 'knife', 'overdose' etc in the attendance of the child /young person at a Trust facility. (WREN is a reporting system.) This report is then reviewed daily to ensure that all respective safeguarding actions and referrals have been completed for the child /young

person. The aim of this intense review and scoping is to ensure no child or young person attending 'slips through the net'. During 2021/22 over 3000 children on the WREN report were reviewed, and the data and themes identified from this report are shared with GET SAFE Partnership Group on a quarterly basis, so adding an additional dimension to the multi-agency picture.

23. The GET SAFE portal is also being promoted via the Exploitation and Vulnerability training package as highlighted above, and via schools and colleges by the Education Safeguarding Team. Further, within the QAPP Group 'Sarah' CSPR review, single agencies have been asked for and provided details of how they have promoted the use of the GET SAFE risk assessment tool within their own organisation. Details of this and some examples of those responses from partners are provided within the QAPP Group section of this report.

**Strengthening the influence of children and young people's views on GET SAFE services with a particular focus on commissioning processes.**

24. Direct engagement activity with children and young people is covered later in this report. The GET SAFE Partnership Group has not been involved in any commissioning of services during this reporting period.

**Ensuring that the GET SAFE approach is fully supported and embedded within other local partnership groups where their priorities and activities contribute to keeping children and young people safe from exploitation.**

25. The three safeguarding partners wrote to the Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Chairs to seek assurance on how both the North and South Worcestershire CSPs were considering the need to safeguard children and young people within their current priorities and any future priority setting. The following assurance was provided.

**South Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (SWCSP)**

26. Protection and safeguarding of children, young people and adults features in a number of the key priorities within the South Worcestershire Community Action Plan 2021-2024.
27. In relation to modern slavery, exploitation and child exploitation the SWCSP support the delivery of the Serious and Organised Crime Joint Action Group (SOCJAG) through increased understanding of structures, objectives and providing a support provision against these. We consider actions and outcomes from SOCJAG and Serious and Organised Crime focus groups to identify and provide support when appropriate from SWCSP. All partners and front-line staff receive a basic level of training and awareness.
28. SWCSP actively contributes to multi agency tasking and enforcement activity. This is measured by the number of positive enforcement actions taken. SWCSP is also supporting, promoting and delivering SCWSP funded GET SAFE and adult exploitation projects and representatives attend and contribute to GET SAFE strategic and operational meetings.

29. The SWCSP also provides youth mentoring and intervention in schools and out in the community with the aim of prevention, or to divert and raise awareness to ensure children and young people are safe and are given the right information to make their own informed choices. We work with and for young people and provide intelligence on local concerns for a number of issues including vulnerability and possible safeguarding concerns.

### **North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP)**

30. The protection and safeguarding of children and young people features in a number of the key priorities in the NWCSP Plan 2021-2024.
31. NWCSP has identified Reducing Violence and Abuse as a priority with specific reference to reducing sexual violence against women and girls and child sexual exploitation. Further, within this priority the Community Safety Partnership has a commitment to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour and nuisance particularly focusing on work with young people on the street in local neighbourhoods who are at risk of being victims of crime or drawn into criminality.
32. NWCSP has also identified Protecting Vulnerable Communities as a priority, which includes a focus on reducing child criminal exploitation, county lines and modern slavery. As part of this priority the Partnership also has a focus on preventing violent extremism and the radicalisation of young people and vulnerable adults.
33. To support actions around these priorities NWCSP has allocated between £60 - £70,000 per year to projects and initiatives to protect children and young people from harm and deter them from being drawn into crime. These initiatives include commissioning outreach and detached youth work, delivering group work with at risk young people, providing therapeutic 1-2-1 mentoring, working in schools, delivering awareness raising assemblies and targeted youth club sessions.
34. NWCSP is represented on the GET SAFE Strategic and Operational groups and is also represented at the North Worcestershire Serious and Organised Crime Joint Action Group (SOCJAG) Focus Group and the Worcestershire Channel Panel.
35. The District Council safeguarding leads are also members of NWCSP and ensure partnership co-ordination and co-operation across all safeguarding forums and multi-agency groups across the county.

### **Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board**

36. Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) has recently introduced a Complex Adult Risk Management (CARM) process which provides a framework to facilitate effective working with adults where certain criteria apply, for example where they are at risk of harm due to their complex needs, but where the risks cannot effectively be managed via other processes or interventions, such as a section 9 care and support assessment or a section 42 safeguarding enquiry under the Care Act 2014. Further information on the CARM process can be found here: <https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/documents/carm-final-v2-aug-2022-2/>



37. It is known that exploitation does not end when people reach 18, and some young adults will continue to experience exploitation or have vulnerabilities and need ongoing support from professionals post-18 years and longer term. Further, previous national learning has shown that the transition point for young people who are at risk of, or suffering, exploitation from child safeguarding processes to adult services can leave that young person at increased risk. Members of the GET SAFE Partnership Group are currently working with representatives from the WSAB to ensure that the GET THERE and GET SAFE processes are harmonised with the CARM framework to ensure there is a smooth transition of the management of risk between child and adult safeguarding services.
38. There is a new practice “**Get Safe and Get There and CARM process**” which was completed in December 2022 and outlines the transition process from a child, young person and adult multi agency plan. Details are included as Appendix 1.

### **Further child sexual exploitation partnership development**

39. WCF have led on a development with West Mercia Online Child Sexual Exploitation team (OCSET) intelligence team in tackling online sexual exploitation of children. This piece of work looked at how police and children’s services can work together dynamically on intelligence and identification of perpetrators of online child sexual exploitation. This new protocol will build on good practice and support the effectiveness of both agencies in tackling this form of harm and abuse and protecting children. West Mercia police are wanting to now take this forward with the other three West Mercia children’s services which will further strengthen protection for children.

### **Evidence of Impact**

40. During this reporting period, through the work of the GET SAFE partners, systems have been developed to minimise the potential impact on children and their carers who do not have access to the Criminal Justice care process after online Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) warrants have been completed.
41. The understanding of the profile of child criminal exploitation across Worcestershire has also been developed through the introduction of a multi-agency GET SAFE dataset to the Partnership Group.
42. The GET SAFE Partnership Group has also secured assurance that when a child criminal exploitation risk reaches the appropriate threshold, then that child/young person’s safety will be managed through the appropriate child protection procedures. This is evidence of significant progress in the development of the approach to child exploitation involving the risk of significant harm to that child or young person, which in turn reflects very positively on the collective effort and response made by partners since the GET SAFE approach was introduced in 2019.
43. In addition to the direct engagement with children, young people and families which takes place within the Child Protection and MACE processes, there have been a number of different initiatives organised during this reporting period

designed to engage with young people on GET SAFE and GET THERE. In March 2022 there was a successful event run at the Malvern Theatre in support of the GET THERE programme. Over 100 children and young people attended, and opportunities were provided for these young people to speak directly to staff members and discuss the issues highlighted.

44. A production was also arranged at the Swan Theatre in Worcester by the GET SAFE Team working with Ready Steady Worcestershire, who provide activities over the school summer holiday period. This production used the story of a young girl being groomed for sexual exploitation and the young people in the audience provided feedback both before and after as a means of highlighting how their understanding of the risks had changed. Further events are currently being planned for the Summer holiday period across Worcestershire.
45. Engagement has also been more targeted. Following the tragic stabbing incident outside Asda, Redditch in March 2022, outreach workers were deployed to engage with youth groups in the area to provide reassurance and an opportunity for any concerns to be raised and discussed.
46. The Steer Clear initiative has been launched across Worcestershire by West Mercia Police and this has been supported by the GET SAFE Operational Group. This initiative delivers engaging workshops to young people and their families about the dangers of carrying knives. The Knife Angel, which is the National Monument Against Violence and Aggression, has been on tour in towns and cities across the UK since 2018. Worcester City Council and the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion arranged for it to be displayed in the city in support of the Steer Clear message. To further support the Steer Clear programme, inputs to over six thousand Year 9 and Year 10 pupils are being planned. This will include a lived experience talker attending schools to talk to pupils in assembly. The aim is to be delivering these inputs throughout the 2022-2023 reporting period.



47. The GET SAFE Team have also been taking part in the Anti-Violence Bee tour of Worcestershire, which is an initiative aimed at educating and engaging with young people about the dangers of carrying weapons. The Anti-Violence Bee visited areas across the county throughout November 2022.



### Areas for Future Focus

48. During the forthcoming reporting period the GET SAFE Partnership Group will be:

- Working to understand how effectively the information received from individual agencies via the GET SAFE portal, crime recording, and other single agency systems is used to influence local multi-agency responses to emerging themes and need.
- Working with WSAB to ensure that the GET THERE and GET SAFE processes are harmonised with the CARM framework to ensure there is a smooth transition of the management of risk between child and adult safeguarding services.
- Exploring the extent to which children and young people find information in relation to online safety both useful and accessible, and where needed how partners can make the help offered more relevant to their needs.
- Ensuring that any learning from the recommendations within the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Telford (published July 2022) has been captured where relevant to Worcestershire.

49. This is GET SAFE's fourth year and the annual partnership campaign week starts 19 June 2022. The GET SAFE operational group is planning a weeklong awareness raising campaign with different themes each day including social media posts raising the public's awareness of the different forms of Criminal exploitation. Both Worcestershire County Council and Worcestershire Children First website will have these campaigns.

### Purpose of the meeting

50. The Panel is asked to:

- consider and comment on the content of the assurance report
- agree any comments to highlight to the Cabinet Member
- determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

## **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 - GET SAFE and GET THERE CARM support and disruption process.

Full information on the GET SAFE and GET THERE programmes can be found via the following links:

<https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/getsafe>  
[Get There | Worcestershire County Council](#)

## **Contact Points**

Specific Contact Points for this report

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) the following are background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

[Agenda for Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel on Tuesday, 10th May, 2022](#)

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