

Annual Report Complex Safeguarding Hub July 2023 – June 2024



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Foreword

Vision for Children, Young People and Families

- 1.1 The Contextual Approach to Complex Safeguarding Strategy 2024 – 2027 outlines the vision held in Oldham:

“Our vision is that all children, young people, and adults who are vulnerable to exploitation, either criminal or sexual, are provided with a clear targeted response which enables and promotes a targeted multi-agency response to need and risk.

We want all our children, young people, and adults to live in a Borough where they feel safe and protected from the risk of exploitation in all of its forms. To achieve this, we will provide an integrated response to Complex Safeguarding concerns, sharing information efficiently and in a timely manner and within agreed protocols to protect and safeguard our children, young people, and vulnerable adults. The aim is that the three key partners will be joined by a variety of multi-agency partners to ensure a targeted response across need and risk for vulnerable people so they can be supported to live free from exploitation.”

- 1.2 With our vision in mind, we have an agreed set of values and principles within Oldham:

- Treat Children, Young People and Adults at risk with compassion and understanding, be non-judgmental, and treat people with dignity and respect.
- Actively listen to the voice of the child or adult and their lived experiences.
- Foster a culture where professional challenge is acceptable and encouraged.
- Approach each case with an open mind and make objective and ethical decisions.
- Take a holistic approach to support the child or adult, including giving consideration to wider factors.
- Recognise the diversity across the borough and incorporate this into our approach.

- 1.3 The Complex Safeguarding Hub combines the three key partners, Greater Manchester Police, NHS and Children’s Social Care for safeguarding as an integrated service for response, consultation and intervention in relation to exploitation concerns of children and young people.

- 1.3 The Oldham Complex Safeguarding Hub work with any young person up to the age of 18 years (or up to the age of 25 years for any young adult currently open to the After Care Service for Oldham) who are open for assessment, intervention or planning to Children’s Social Care, where there is an identified high risk of, or current experience of exploitation. The team work alongside a number of partner agencies and third sector services to ensure appropriate information sharing and timely signposting to key services inclusive of Probation, Housing, TOG MIND, Early break, Catch 22 and KOGS (Keeping Our Girls Safe).

- 1.4 The Complex Safeguarding Hub do not underestimate the importance of the work they deliver with children, young people and their families across Oldham. We are privileged to work with children at some of the most challenging times in their lives, as a directorate we continually strive to improve our practice and adapt and develop our support to keep children and families at the heart of what we do, supporting connections and relationships.



Natassja Gollcher

Head of Complex Safeguarding, Duty and Advice and EDT.

Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of the Annual Report is to provide an overview of the Complex Safeguarding Hub and the impact of the work undertaken by the Complex Safeguarding Hub.
- 2.2 The report will outline the different strands of the work the Complex Safeguarding Hub undertakes, and the outcomes achieved over the period of July 2023 – June 2024.
- 2.3 The report will also set the priorities for the upcoming 12 months.

Context

- 3.1 In Oldham we have taken on the agreed Greater Manchester definition of Complex Safeguarding:

“Complex Safeguarding is criminal activity (often organised), or behaviour associated with criminality, involving children and young adults (often vulnerable) where there is exploitation and/or a clear or implied safeguarding concern.”

Complex Safeguarding addresses the direct influences on children and young people outside of the family home, specifically where there is risk of sexual and/or criminal exploitation. Oldham aims to ensure we have a solid understanding and response to different forms of exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

- 3.2 The Complex Safeguarding Hub consists of a specialist police team of Detectives and Officers, a children’s social care team, consisting of social workers and a family worker and a specialist exploitation nurse and a psychotherapist. The Challenger Team also work closely with the Complex Safeguarding Hub and continue to respond to Organised Crime.
- 3.3 The current structure in the Complex Safeguarding Hub is:

- 1x Complex Safeguarding Team Manager
- 1x Complex Safeguarding Advanced Practitioner
- 5.5 x Complex Safeguarding Social Workers
- 1 x Operation Sherwood Social Worker
- 1 x APST Social Worker
- 1 x Complex Safeguarding Family Worker
- 1x Missing from Home Co-Ordinator
- 0.5 x Trusted Relationship Psychotherapist
- 1x Specialist Nurse
- 2 x Detective Sergeants
- 6 x Detective Constables/Police Constables
- 1 x Operational Support Officer

- 3.4 The Oldham Complex Safeguarding Hub work with any young person up to the age of 18 years (or up to the age of 25 years for any young adult currently open to the After Care Service for Oldham) who are open for assessment, intervention or planning to Children’s Social Care, where there is an identified high risk of, or current experience of exploitation. The team work alongside a number of partner agencies

and third sector services to ensure appropriate information sharing and timely signposting to key services inclusive of Probation, Housing, TOG MIND, Early break, Catch 22 and KOGS (Keeping Our Girls Safe).

- 3.5 In addition to Social Workers and Police, the team has the benefit of key professionals who are invaluable in helping to provide the scaffolding of support around young people and their families as well as in bringing the puzzle pieces together.
- 3.6 **Health** – The Specialist nurse is an invaluable asset to the Complex Safeguarding hub and brings a wealth of knowledge, experience, and skills to the team. Our specialist nurse continues to play a vital role in ensuring the health needs of the young people open to the team are met. Links are made with GPs and school nurses. Young people are supported to attend services such as the GP, sexual health, CAMHS and Early Break. Direct work is completed around relationships, sexual health, emotional well-being and drug and alcohol use. The Complex Safeguarding Nurse is also involved in the training offer provided by the team and is the point of contact for health professionals should they wish to seek advice and guidance in respect of exploitation. The Specialist Nurse also provides young people with advocacy and support with their emotional well-being and mental health; and works closely with the Social Workers to offer joint sessions as appropriate.
- 3.7 **Trusted Relationships Therapist** – The Complex Safeguarding hub have access to a Clinical Psychotherapist. The aim of this role is to build on the existing expertise in the Complex Safeguarding Team, adding to skills and confidence using trauma-informed case formulation and models of psychology recovery. The young person and the existing ‘trusted relationship’ is at the heart of the model and aims to enhance recovery by strengthening this relationship. The following is currently included in this work and actively engaged with by the team, it is also an invaluable part of the enable the team to work positively with young people:
- Consultation, in either group or 1:1 format to offer an opportunity to discuss and develop trauma informed case formulations, review and understand difficulties in young person’s relationships, understanding specific issues that a young person may be coping with and how to approach and support them.
 - 1:1 meeting to support emotional resilience.
 - Compassion focused well-being and self-support group.
 - Reflective group sessions.
 - Workshops/Training on subjects such as supporting people to regulate their emotions, supporting people when they are moving into a crisis phase (inclusive of risk to self), fostering young people’s motivation to attend to their mental health issues, understanding formulations, fostering resilience.

This support continues to be welcomed by the team and informs how the work with the young people is delivered, the support allows the team to have a deeper understanding of the young person’s psychological needs. The strengths brought by the psychotherapist have been invaluable to both the workers as well as the young people we work with. The support and training provided has not only strengthened workers skills, helped to increase engagements, and enhanced the support they offer to young people but has also strengthened their emotional resilience in working in an area where they are exposed to intense emotions and real-life trauma.

- 3.8 **Family Support worker** – The Complex Safeguarding Hub currently has one family worker who offers support to parents, alongside the Complex Safeguarding Hub



Social workers. The parenting support includes but is not limited to - advocacy, education (exploitation, grooming, online safety and adolescent development), mediation, crisis support / intervention, safety planning, emotional support, understanding parent's ambitions for their children, and help parents to understand processes and procedures.

- 3.9 **Wider Partnerships** – the partnership working of the Complex Safeguarding Hub extends beyond that of the core agencies within the team. These partnerships include community safety, youth service, trading standards, sexual health, partnership enforcement team, youth justice, Early Break, Education, CAMHS, KOGs and Catch 22. These partners are invited to the monthly MACE (Missing and Child Exploitation Meeting), the meeting is well attended and is an excellent forum for partners to share any arising issue or concerns, themes and trends and collaboration on specific issues.
- 3.10 **Transitional Safeguarding – Transitional Safeguarding** *is a term that has been used by Research in Practice to highlight the need to improve the safeguarding response to older teenagers and young adults in a way that recognises their developmental needs. (Firmin et al 2019).* Transitional safeguarding is recognising that vulnerability does not end when a young person reaches 18. The Complex Safeguarding hub offers support to young people up to the age of 25, this is consent led once an individual turns 18 however there are currently a number of post 18 young people open to the team. The hub recognises the need to continue to offer this support to those who are being exploited or have been the victim of exploitation over the age of 18. Transitional Safeguarding is an ongoing priority for Adult and Children Services with a project currently being implemented to embed this in practice.
- 3.11 **Daily Governance** – The Complex Safeguarding hub hold a daily governance each morning, attended by partner agencies. Daily Governance is a process where intelligence, referrals, missing from home episodes, arrests and crimes related to CSE/CCE/Modern Slavery are shared and discussed, and actions are agreed, recorded and reviewed, with collaborative working between Oldham CSE, CCE and Challenger colleagues as one Oldham Safeguarding Hub, regarding any new agreed referrals through to the Complex Safeguarding Hub or any significant incidents regarding individuals known to the service. The team share their knowledge of associations, offenders and areas / properties of concern to consider the required response. Actions include referrals to MASH for either early intervention or allocation to a Social Worker for assessment, request for strategy meetings, referral to complex safeguarding for CSE/CCE assessment, opening Police Investigations, or proactive response in the community such as undertaking a joint visit with Housing / Trading Standards (Partnership Enforcement Team) to a property / business of concern.
- 3.12 **The Missing and Child Exploitation meeting (MACE) meetings** - are a process whereby partner agencies are able to share information where there are concerns that a child or young person (CYP) is at risk of, is being exploited, or is frequently missing from home or care. Missing episodes are a clear indicator of exploitation risk and a potential indicator of significant harm. The purpose of the MACE meetings is to target multi-agency resource by sharing information on identified children by agreeing/reviewing case actions and sharing local intelligence. The aim is to improve the identification and tracking of actions regarding children which agencies are concerned about and to reduce missing episodes of children and young people.

Key Achievements

- The Complex Safeguarding Hub continue to provide training and advice in respect of Child Exploitation to schools and colleges across the borough.
- The effectiveness of the complex safeguarding hub and response to missing children and young people has recently been highlighted in the Ofsted Inspection in May 2024:

“Children who go missing or are at risk of exploitation are recognised and responded to well. For these children, the multidisciplinary child exploitation team is a valuable resource. Creative and persistent work is undertaken by committed staff to engage highly vulnerable children.”

- There have been 39 arrests in relation to Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Investigations, with the investigations into these crimes ongoing.
- As part of disruption in relation to Exploitation the Complex Safeguarding Police team have issued 36 Child Abduction Warnings.

Below is also some of the feedback that the team have received:

*“Bro it’s been a blast having you guide me in the right direction over the past year gna miss you like family I wish u well in the future n just wna say thank u for your guidance you’ve made me realise there is more to life than fast cars n drugs show any kid u work with this msg because u saved my future and any kids u work with is lucky to have u to help em out a sh*t life” – Young Person*

Please could you pass on our thanks to your team for taking the time to come to school to deliver the session yesterday. The information shared with the children was pitched at a level that was easily accessible to them and the children engaged really well with your team throughout the session. The school staff who were present have all commented about how good they thought the session was for the children, and how well your team delivered such sensitive content.

Werneth Primary School

I want to thank you for the support you have given me, I don’t think I would be where I am now without this. – Young Person

The Oldham Complex Safeguarding hub have been working on an investigation into a report of human trafficking. The joint approach has focused on building the trust and confidence of the children, resulting in them providing evidential ABE against their father. Following the arrest of the suspect and numerous enquiries carried out by the complex safeguarding hub we have today secured charges on the threshold test for modern slavery. The team have worked tirelessly on this case, using a child-centred approach and working in partnership. What a great result, it’s just what myself and the Chief both highly value!

Deputy Chief Constable GMP

She is really understanding, and listens and honestly one of the best social workers I’ve ever had. She understands you, even when you don’t understand yourself, she does. She’s extremely good at her job in general, she also helped me at the farm by mucking out which was really helpful. She helped with absolutely everything, my mental health, my relationships with people, coping mechanisms, there’s so much more. – Young Person

Prevention

- 4.1 The Complex Safeguarding Team is resourced to a level where it can provide a prevention offer to children and young people within the borough. It is noted that prevention is key, with the team wanting to prevent exploitation wherever possible. We recognise that this is better than responding to and protecting children after the harm has taken place.
- 4.2 As part of the prevention offer there is a wider campaign of increasing awareness, education and training of young people, families, communities, and professionals in a variety of ways but also through our direct one to one case work. Alongside this the complex safeguarding team utilise the prevention support offered via KOGs (Keeping Our Girls Safe), Catch 22 and Youth Justice.
- 4.3 The work of the team and partners across the borough in relation to Child Exploitation is highlighted across different social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. These posts have focused on weeks of action, explaining the role of the complex safeguarding hub and sharing great examples of proactive activity such as the execution of Police warrants. We have promoted the 'It's Not Okay??' national campaign raising awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation, and proudly showcased all convictions secured in relation to Child Exploitation.
- 4.4 The Complex Safeguarding Hub also continue to provide training and advice in respect of Child Exploitation to schools and colleges across the borough. In October 2023 and March 2024 there were two weeks of action, within these weeks the Complex Safeguarding Hub delivered focussed sessions to students in high schools and primary schools across Oldham, alongside delivering focussed sessions to residential providers. These sessions focused on sexual exploitation, online safety, carrying weapons, peer-on-peer abuse and youth violence. These sessions were well received by students, with them actively participating in the sessions.
- In Summary:
- Since July 2023 Training inputs have been delivered to some schools within Oldham with over 5000 students and teachers across high schools and primary settings.
 - Training inputs were delivered to some of the Care Homes within the Oldham Area.
- This training has been well received with the team often being invited back, this training has also enabled the team to develop positive relationships with education settings within the borough.
- 4.5 The Complex Safeguarding Team have also joined up with the Prevention Hub to enable us to co-deliver sessions within schools across the borough in the upcoming academic year. The sessions that will be co-delivered focusing on complex and contextual safeguarding. The Prevention Hub is a police team who are responsible for overseeing the district-based demand reduction and problem solving, the team is made up of school-based police officers, neighbourhood police officers and the missing from home officer. They are co-located within Duty and Advice to enable partnership working.
- 4.6 The Complex Safeguarding Hub have also been involved in the delivery of the wider exploitation training in partnership with the Oldham Safeguarding Children

partnership, this training is available for all partners. The training delivered focuses on the Understanding Exploitation training, developed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. The complex safeguarding hub are also supporting Adult Services in developing a wider exploitation training package, to enable the all age exploitation offer to be further developed.

- 4.7 The Complex Safeguarding Hub continue to attend the Quarterly Provider meeting, which has enabled the Hub to develop links and relationships with Care Providers within the Oldham area. It also enables the Complex Safeguarding hub to disseminate any local trends or areas of concern to the local providers. The attendance at these meetings has been received well by the care providers.

Protection

- 3.13 Since July 2023 there have been 147 referrals into the Complex Safeguarding Hub with 60% of these referrals being accepted into the service to receive support. Those referrals that did not meet the criteria for the Complex Safeguarding Hub were referred on to KOGs, Catch 22, Prevention & Diversion or another identified service or advice and guidance offered to the allocated team.
- 3.14 23% of the referrals received between July 2023 and June 2024 were re-referrals into the service, this is in line with the trend seen across the Greater Manchester Safeguarding Teams. Further exploration in re-referrals is being completed by the Complex Safeguarding hub to enable the team to understand the reasons and trends leading to a young person being re-referred.
- 3.15 Catch 22 continue to offer support in relation to Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines within the Oldham area, and since June 2023 have worked with 47 young people in the Oldham Area. Catch 22 and Complex Safeguarding work closely in relation to any areas of concern identified.
- 3.16 Keeping our Girls Safe have continued to offer support and interventions in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation across the Oldham Borough and continue to work closely with the complex safeguarding hub. Since June 2023, KOGs have offered support to 170 children and 26 adults.
- 3.17 The support for children and young people who have experienced or are experiencing child exploitation has relational and trauma informed and strength based practice at the core: providing education through direct work sessions, using practical approaches to safety planning through role play or scenarios, conversation based learning and reflection, active safeguarding and disruption, emotional support, achieving best evidence, working towards goals and ambitions, being advocates, and applying flexibility and creativity to try what works for each individual young person. Issues important to young people are of key focus – supporting them with what they need. A key component in the approach taken by the Complex Safeguarding team when working with our young people, is the trusted relationship approach. Which is the foundation of relational practice. This continues to be at the centre of the work of the team, across all partner agencies. Building a relationship with the young person through being consistent, building trust, being responsive and enabling them to feel safe in turn allows the young person to be able to share their lived experiences and disclose if they wish to but more importantly feel able to trust the complex safeguarding worker to work with them.

- 3.18 Prevention of exploitation involves working on both the factors that create and increase vulnerability as well as those that enhance and reinforce resilience and safeguarding, examples of which are included below. The service uses relational practice in the work implemented with our young people to provide education through direct work sessions, using practical approaches to safety planning through role play or scenarios, conversation-based learning and reflection, active safeguarding and disruption, emotional support, achieving best evidence, working towards goals and ambitions, being advocates, and applying flexibility and creativity to try what works for each individual young person. Designated professionals across all agencies within the team, work with young people to ensure that relationships underpin all areas of our practice.
- 3.19 A key focus of ours is working directly with young people deemed as vulnerable to exploitation and/or those young people who have been the victims of exploitation. The support offered to the young people open to the service is bespoke, as it is recognised that each young person is individual with their own individual needs. When planning the support offered to the young people, consideration is given to their age, culture, identity, learning needs, background and level and nature of concerns.
- 3.20 Currently 33% of the young people that the team are currently working with have been deemed to be vulnerable to exploitation, with 48% of the young people currently open to the complex safeguarding hub being suspected to have been the victim of exploitation with the remaining 19% being deemed to have suffered exploitation. Over the last 12 months, those young people being deemed to be vulnerable to exploitation or suspected to have been the victim of exploitation are the larger proportion of the young people worked with by the complex safeguarding team. The team are focussed on becoming involved with young people prior to the harm occurring, and this is more achievable due to the increase in staffing within the Complex Safeguarding hub.
- 3.21 When a young person is assessed as no longer requiring the support from the Complex Safeguarding Hub, it is essential that there is continued support from another identified service. The complex safeguarding hub will ensure young people have continued support from agencies such as KOGs, Catch 22, Early Break, Youth Justice Service or the Youth Service, ensuring that a handover is completed with the young person to ensure continuation of support.
- 3.22 A challenge that continues to present itself is in relation to Criminal Exploitation is the collating of intelligence and the tools available to disrupt criminal exploitation without criminalising young people are limited. It has also been found that young people who are at risk of criminal exploitation or being criminally exploited not wanting to be perceived as “grasses” or indeed being fearful for their own safety, this has meant that greater Manchester police and the team have, and continue, to adapt the way that information and intelligence is gathered.
- 3.23 Due to the risks posed to young people should they make disclosures in respect of Child Criminal Exploitation; the aim of the Police has been to find alternative means of disrupting offenders. Due to the nature of child criminal exploitation the team continues to advocate for young people who are committing crimes due to threat, coercion and control. This includes developing partnerships with Police forces outside of the

Oldham area especially in incidences where young people are exploited through county lines. The team have found that there is a clear need for advocacy and support for young people found and arrested for drug dealing outside of the Oldham area.

- 3.24 This includes the mapping of local organised crime groups, alongside the mapping of young people, utilising PCSOs and the neighbourhood team's knowledge of the local area, ensuring that they are made aware of any concerns in relation to young people. The team also gathers information from other professionals such as youth justice or schools as well as family, friends or connected persons. By ensuring this information is effectively gathered and shared appropriately, this enables the focus of the team to be on safeguarding the young person alongside disrupting the offenders and securing charges and/or convictions where possible. What must be highlighted is that the above actions also occur in cases of Child Sexual Exploitation, which enables the team to monitor offenders, be aware of any emerging concerns in relation to adults and sexual exploitation and also enables the team to take preventative action should concerns be emerging.
- 3.25 The Complex Safeguarding Hub continue to support the Serious and Organised Crime Challenger meeting which is held monthly by Greater Manchester Police. Within this meeting Organised Crime Groups are discussed with a wide variety of agencies present to identify opportunities for disruption and prevention. This meeting has also enabled earlier identification of young people at risk of exploitation.
- 3.26 The Challenger Team remains closely linked with the Complex Safeguarding Hub, which is particularly important in relation to both recognising and responding to Criminal Exploitation and Organised Crime Groups. This positive relationship has enabled the prompt sharing of intelligence and information, the sharing of expertise and knowledge whilst enhancing the safeguarding of victims and disrupting and prosecuting offenders.
- 3.27 Due to the makeup of the multi-agency team the support at the start of involvement with a young person is multi-faceted. The processes and procedures of the team limits the number of times the child has to share their experience with joint visits being undertaken by Police and Complex Safeguarding Social Workers. Information sharing forms a key part of the team's model ensuring that all factors are considered to ensure the young person receives a service specific to them and their circumstances. Relational practice continues to be at the centre of the work of the team, across all agencies.

Prosecution

- 4.1 The success of the Complex Safeguarding police team continues to be seen in the quality of their investigations, evidence collated through analysis of technology and sharing of intelligence within the team. Due to the determination of the police team, and positive multi agency working there are several cases awaiting trial.
- 4.2 The Complex Safeguarding Team currently have over 106 open crimes, investigating both sexual and criminal exploitation of children and young people within the Oldham Area. There have been 39 arrests in relation to Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Investigations, with the investigations into these crimes ongoing. As part of disruption in relation to Exploitation the Complex Safeguarding Police team have issued 36 Child Abduction Warning Notices to adults, 20 in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation

concerns and 16 in relation to Child Criminal Exploitation.

- 4.3 The Complex Safeguarding Police team also have eight ongoing police operations, 5 in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation, 4 of these 5 operations are in relation to non-recent child sexual exploitation. One of these operations has recently been presented to the Crown Prosecution Service for progression to court proceedings. One of these operations is predominantly focused upon online child sexual exploitation. It is hoped that upon conclusion, there will be several successful prosecutions.
- 4.4 The partnership working in the team is vital in assisting Police to identify offenders, obtain evidence (including statements from young people and their parents) in order to progress with charges and eventual prosecution. Each member of the team has a role to play. The Complex Safeguarding Police team also work closely with the complex safeguarding social work team, health, licensing, and community safety to complete disruption in areas of concern.
- 4.5 Alongside the Challenger Team, the Complex Safeguarding Hub Police Team continue to focus on a proactive response to the criminal exploitation of children. Active safeguarding of these children and young people involved continues to take place, whilst any investigation against these Organised Crime Gangs are progressed constantly to review the level of threat, risk and harm.
- 4.6 There is also Operation Sherwood which commenced as a result of the report into historic child sexual exploitation within the Oldham area. There are two strands to this Operation, victim, and perpetrator. The Victim Cohort of Operation Sherwood is led by a dedicated team of police officers at Nexus House and is supported currently by a dedicated social worker within the Complex Safeguarding Hub. This strand of the investigation involves the police team working with the survivors to further understand their experiences and to identify the perpetrators of these heinous crimes. The dedicated social worker supports the investigation through completing specialised research alongside joint visits with the police to survivors. Within the last 12 months there has successfully been one arrest of a perpetrator of historic Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 4.7 The Perpetrator strand of the investigation is held within the Oldham Complex Safeguarding hub and is supported by both Complex Safeguarding Police and the Complex Social Work team. Each potential perpetrator is then graded within the cohort meetings, with each grade setting the timescale for the review of information to be completed. Following these cohort meetings, referrals may need to be made to Children's Social Care, further information may have been requested from Children's and Adult Social Care and markers are added to each individual file.
- 4.8 The below examples demonstrate the team's ability to work together to respond immediately to safeguard children, disrupt exploitation, and ensure active support to meet a child / young person's overall needs. Whilst each agency fulfils their specific functions; the team uses a flexible working approach, using the skills and knowledge of each individual worker to provide a co-ordinated timely response in the best interests of each young person.

Case Examples

A 7-year-old female child had been in communication with a young adult where indecent images were sent, the child was supported by the police team and social work team from Complex Safeguarding. Digital forensic evidence was completed and evidence recovered from the victim's phone and complex enquiries identified the male adult. He was arrested, charged and convicted of possessing indecent child images, sexual communication and causing a child u13 to engage in sexual activity (Penetrative and non-Penetrative). He pleaded guilty at Woolwich Crown Court and sentenced to 9 years, added to the sex offenders register for life and handed a 10-year Sexual Harm prevention Order.

A 16-year-old female looked after child, was taken by force to the Avon and Somerset area by an unidentified Albanian male and raped on several occasions. The team was able to obtain an ABE and secure forensic evidence, with support from the social work team. Digital telecoms evidence and analysis of data assisted in identifying a suspect. Working in partnership with Avon and Somerset Police, the male was located, arrested and later charged with 5 rapes, abduction, trafficking, fraud, being concerned in the supply of Class A and Possession of Class A. He was subsequently sentenced to 4.5 years for the drug related matters and an application has been made for a Sexual Harm Prevention Order.

Operation Affix – a complex Child Criminal Exploitation investigation where several young males from Oldham have been transported to Stoke-on-Trent to 'run' a drugs line. Working closely with Staffordshire Police, multiple arrests have been made to disrupt their activity, and in partnership with Oldham's Children's Social Care have worked hard to protect these vulnerable young males from further exploitation.

Operation Armageddon is an operation into a drugs line that has been operating in Oldham, the line has been identified and has been using vulnerable children to run drugs. On 25.07.24 warrants were conducted at 8 different addresses and 8 suspects were arrested. 2 of the suspects were identified as being children and were released on bail as possible victims. Drugs were recovered as well as the main phone for the drugs line. 6 adults were charged with varying offences in relation to this offence, altogether there were 14 charges including concerned in supply of class A drugs and human trafficking offences. The investigation continues.

Two sisters, who are also looked after children who were reported Missing From Home (1x 17-year-old, 1x 13-year-old). Detailed and painstaking telecoms analysis identified they had been in contact with an older adult male. The complex safeguarding police team attended an Oldham address and found both children. An adult male was arrested for child abduction after he had previously received a Child Abduction Warning Notice. The 13-year-old disclosed being raped by numerous men whilst Missing from Home. Detectives worked tirelessly with officers in Lancashire and Nottinghamshire to gather ABE's, forensic evidence and telecoms evidence. The male denied the offences but admitted to having intercourse with the 13-year-old on a separate occasion when she was then 12. Threshold charges were sought and authorised by CPS for rape of a female under 13 and Child abduction. The male plead guilty to the offences he was sentenced to 5 years, received a 10vrs Sexual Harm Prevention Order and placed on the sex offenders register for life.

Missing From Home

- 5.1 The effectiveness of our response to missing children and young people has recently been highlighted within the Ofsted Inspection in May 2024:

“Children who go missing or are at risk of exploitation are recognised and responded to well. For these children, the multidisciplinary child exploitation team is a valuable resource. Creative and persistent work is undertaken by committed staff to engage highly vulnerable children. The missing coordinator completes trigger plans which have been successfully used to locate children missing from home or care.”

- 5.2 The Missing From Home Co-Ordinator became embedded within the Complex Safeguarding Hub and Duty and Advice in August 2023. The Missing From Home Co-Ordinator works closely with the Greater Manchester Police Missing From Police Officer, who is co-located within the MASH area.

- 5.3 It is recognised that children and young people who are missing from home or care are at increased risk of harm, including child exploitation. In recognition of this, Greater Manchester Police implemented the Prevention Hub within the Oldham district. This resource has been invaluable in targeting repeat missing episodes. Within this team also sits the missing from home police officers who are focused on responding to children who are missing, and problem solving to reduce them going missing. Since August 2023 the Missing from Home Co-Ordinator has been in post, working alongside the prevention hub in relation to children and young people who are missing from home or care. This post has enabled a greater oversight of the missing children and young people within the Oldham Area.

- 5.4 Below is a breakdown per quarter of missing episodes and return home interviews:

Quarter 1 01/07/2023 – 01/10/2023

- There was 405 missing episodes reported between July 2023 and October 2023
- 263 RHI's were accepted by the young person.
- 130 RHI's were declined by the young person.
- 12 RHI's were deemed not appropriate/not offered by positive steps.

Quarter 2 01/10/2023 – 01/01/2024

- There was 392 missing episodes reported between October 2023 and January 2024.
- 236 RHI's were accepted by the young person.
- 116 young people declined the return home interview.
- 40 RHI's were deemed not appropriate/not offered by positive steps.

Quarter 3 01/01/2024 – 01/04/2024

- There were 333 missing episodes reported between January 2024 and April 2024.
- 193 RHI's were accepted by the young person.
- 77 young people declined the return home interview.
- 63 RHI's were deemed not appropriate/not offered by positive steps.

Quarter 4 01/04/2024 – 01/07/2024

- There were 417 missing episodes reported between April 2024 and July 2024.
- 290 RHI's were accepted by the young person.
- 81 young people declined the return home interview.
- 46 RHI's were deemed not appropriate/not offered by positive steps.

5.5 Overall, the data for return home interviews between 01/04/2023 and 01/04/2024 shows the following –

- **An increase in YP accepting interviews** - Positive steps try and provide a consistent worker to complete RHI's where they can. However, when looking on MOSAIC some RHI's have been recorded as accepted but the YP has refused to engage with the worker/not been willing to talk about the missing episode.
- **An increase in return home interviews being deemed inappropriate/positive steps not offering a return home interview to the young person.** Positive steps work with the MFH coordinator to ensure RHI's are appropriate, if both parties feel a RHI is not appropriate it is not offered. An example being that a young person has made a disclosure to police, CSC/GMP have already interviewed the YP thus, it wouldn't be in the best interest of the child that they would have to recall events with another professional.
- **An increase in young people declining return home interviews in quarter 2,3 and 4.** Examples of why YP in the top 10 declined return interviews are:
 - "It was too early".
 - They didn't want to speak to another professional, they have already had a safe and well with police and spoken with social worker.
 - The YP didn't believe they was missing they was "just out with friends and have a curfew that's too early".

5.6 Whilst the response to missing children and young people was highlighted as a positive within the recent Ofsted Inspection. Return Interviews we highlighted as needing to be more detailed:

"Return home interviews are offered to all children who have been reported missing, but they do not consistently capture the push-and-pull factors to reduce future risk."

"When children go missing, return home interviews are completed promptly by a commissioned service. The quality of these interviews, and their impact on reducing episodes of children going missing is, however, inconsistent."

There continues to be improvement work undertaken in respect of return home interviews, with this being completed jointly by Complex Safeguarding and Positive Steps. It is to be noted that since the above inspection there has been slight improvements in Return Home Interviews, however further improvement is required.

5.7 The top ten children (between July 2023 – July 2024) with multiple missing from home episodes are Children who are looked after. Looked-after-children in local authority care are going missing at a very high rate. Significantly, a much higher rate

than that of the general population of children: 1 in 10 looked-after-children go missing from care, versus the 1 in 200 who are not in care (Missingpeople.org, 2020).

- 5.8 All ten children identified in the top 10 were open to complex safeguarding. Every “child missing episode” should trigger proper attention from professionals involved with the child and information gathered during return home interviews should be analysed to inform planning for the child. It should be noted that there are strong links between child missing episodes and child exploitation (criminal and sexual) as seen with the top 10 missing’s during the time period in this report (01/07/2023 – 01/07/2024).
- 5.9 For any child who goes missing there is a range of safeguarding risks depending upon their age and stage of development. Such children must be considered as vulnerable, and there is a duty to ensure that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken. Young People who have missing episodes are at a higher risk of CCE/CSE. When a Young Person has a missing episode, they are outside the periphery of parental supervision, support and guidance.
- 5.10 Right Care, Right Person is a national approach to deal with calls to police from people with issues where policing is not always the best agency to respond. Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) aims for police forces to work with partners including local authorities, NHS trusts and mental health agencies to improve care pathways to ensure that people receive the right support by the right organisation, at the earliest opportunity (GMP, 2023).
- 5.11 RCRP came into force in Oldham on September 30 2024, however prior to this go live date there has been a noted push back from semi-independent care providers in respect of their role and expectations when children do not return home at their curfew time. Currently, a large proportion of care providers are reporting children missing when not returning home within 30 minutes of their curfew.
- 5.12 GMP will not accept MFH’s when care providers have not completed appropriate checks for example family and friends, this is also in line with the Greater Manchester Missing from Home/Care Protocol. Care providers are expected to check known family and friends address’/phone call– if they then do not locate the young person GMP will then accept the missing as the young person’s whereabouts are unknown.
- 5.13 GMP will not accept MFH’s if a child has provided an address for example if a child provides an address care providers are expected to check the child is there either by visiting the location or speaking to a parent. If the care provider has been to the address and the young person is not there GMP will then accept the missing as the child’s whereabouts are unknown.
- 5.14 It is evident all care providers need clarification on their role/expectations, with them in turn also raising concerns around care providers going to address’ provided by the young person and the ‘unknown’ of turning up to these address’. The Prevention Hub and the local authority are aiming to provide placements who have regular missing young people with a trigger plan that has a list of address’ approved by GMP/local authority for the care providers to attend, however, this does not eliminate ‘risks’ as there will still be unknowns.

Building Professional and Public Confidence

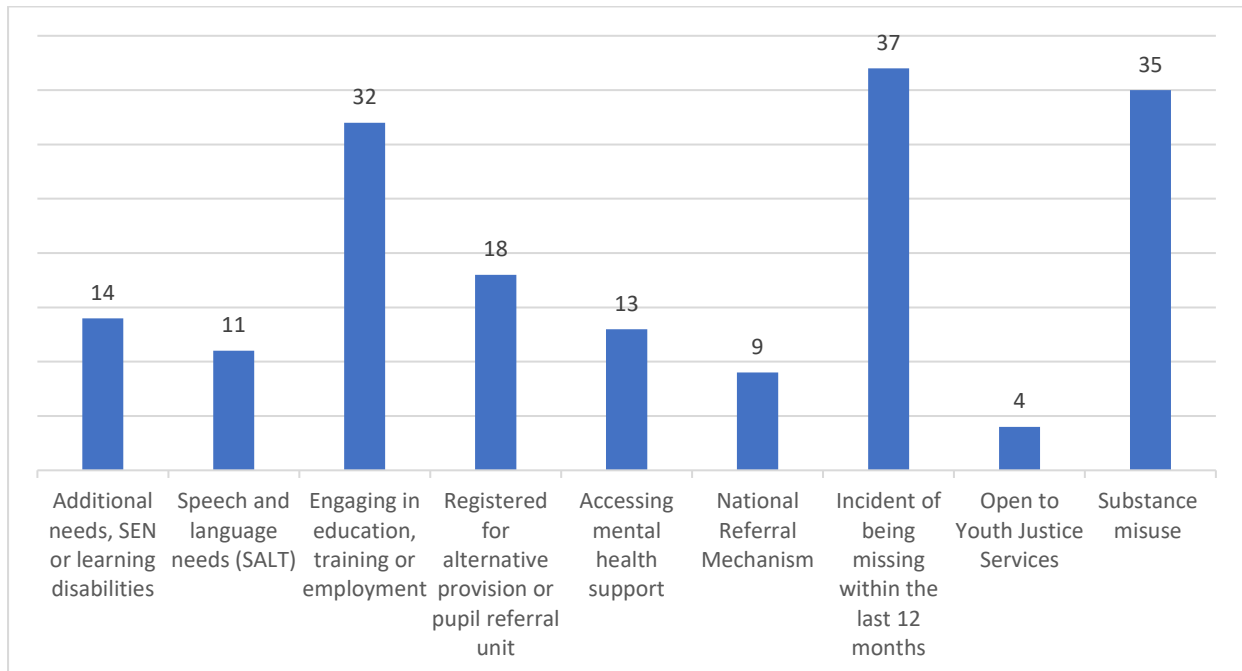
- 6.1 Since the publication of the Review of Historic Child Sexual Exploitation in June 2022, the partners within the hub have been working towards improving the public's confidence in relation to the response to Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 6.2 There continues to be wider publication of the successful work into tackling CSE within the Oldham Borough. As mentioned earlier in the report, the Complex Safeguarding Hub are involved in the ongoing police operation into the historic CSE, the social care team are involved in both the victim's operation and the perpetrator strand of the investigation. The team have also offered support, and continue to offer support, to the identified historic CSE survivors.
- 6.3 As evidenced throughout this report there is a strong partnership both within the Complex Safeguarding Team and across services from strategic partners to grass root level practitioners. The team actively contributes to the Greater Manchester Complex Safeguarding delivery plan on a strategic and operational level – being a regular attendee at steering groups, practitioner forums, and contributing to surveys and areas of research.

Performance

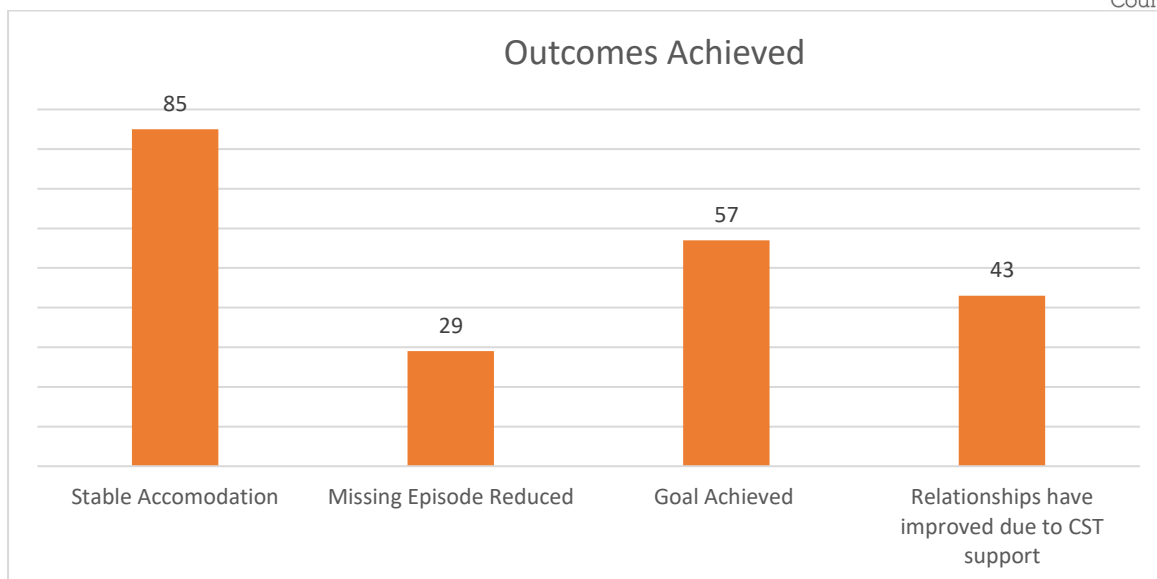
- 7.1 Performance data is provided on a quarterly basis into the GM Complex Safeguarding Hub. This provides analysis of both the local and Greater Manchester trends, this also includes wider demographics, such as victims, offenders, trends, and themes. This data contributes to decision making, by the GM Complex Safeguarding Hub, in relation to the wider strategy and service deliver.
- 7.2 Over the period of June 2023 – July 2024 within Oldham, there have been 147 referrals to the Complex Safeguarding Hub, 87 of these referrals have been accepted within the Complex Safeguarding Hub, and the remaining referrals have been offered advice and guidance and/or signposted to other services available.
- 7.3 Of the 147 referrals into the Complex Safeguarding Hub, 54% of these were in relation to Child Criminal Exploitation, 29% were in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation and the remaining referrals were in relation to dual exploitation, 17%.
- 7.4 Since April 2022 the caseload held within Complex Safeguarding have remained at a level that is in line with the GM's recommended 12 young people per worker, at this time there are 44 young people open to the team. These figures do not consider the 92 young people closed to the team, between June 2023 and July 2024.
- 7.5 The data that is gathered within the Complex Safeguarding Hub, and subsequently provided to Greater Manchester, enables a greater understanding of issues affecting young people we work with, alongside providing a greater understanding of indicators of risk. The graph below provides a summary of the main issues currently affecting the young people open to the Complex Safeguarding Hub.
- 7.6 As can be seen from the graph, 64% of the young people currently open to the team are affected by substance misuse issues alongside missing from home/care clearly being a significant risk factor, with over 67% of the young people open to the team



having had at least one reported incident of being missing from home/care within the last 12 months. What is to be noted is that in comparison to the previous twelve months there has been a significant improvement in education, employment and training, with 58% of the young people open to the team currently engaging in education, employment or training.



- 7.7 There has also been a focus on the outcomes achieved for young people at the end of our involvement, examples of which are indicated below. 92 young people were closed to the team between July 2023 – June 2024.
- 7.8 Upon closure 62 % of the young people had achieved a positive goal/aspiration that they themselves had set upon opening to the team, this could be securing employment, returning to education or engaging in a positive activity. 93% of young people, upon closure to Complex Safeguarding, were within stable accommodation, this is a key safety factor in reducing the risks around exploitation.
- 7.9 The graph below demonstrates the outcomes achieved which relate to the issues above thereby providing an overview of the impact of the team in supporting young people with these key areas.



Key Priorities for 2024 - 2025

- 7.1 As a multi-agency team, we recognise that complex and contextual safeguarding is an ever changing, rapidly increasing area of extra familial harm for children and young people. As a team we need to be able to respond and adapt to the harm that young people face outside of their families from those that want to exploit them for their own means. It is envisioned that through the delivery of our key priorities for the coming year, this will enable us to prioritise the safeguarding of our young people by focusing on the context of harm and improving disruption thereof; whilst continuing to bring criminals to justice.
- 7.2 The Key Priorities for 2024 – 2025 are outlined on the below plan on a page, this is supported by the service improvement plan.

Complex Safeguarding Hub Key Priorities 2024-2025

Our Vision:

Children and young people are at the centre of everything we do to develop their strengths and resilience, ensuring all children have a stable life and reach their full potential.

Our Practice Approach

A key component in the approach taken by the Complex Safeguarding hub when working with our young people, is the trusted relationship approach. Which is the foundation of relational practice. The service uses relational practice in the work implemented with our young people.

Child-centred - child's lived experience, wishes and feelings and their journey through our service

Outcome-focussed - the difference we have made to the lives of children and young people with a focus on impact and safety

Reflective - Promoting reflective practice and shared learning

Evidence of Success

Children, young people and their families:

- Children and young people will receive a targeted, wrap-around intervention that provides a rapid response to prevent escalation of risk.
- The assessments completed will be holistic, analytical and clearly identify risk and mitigating factors. The quality of assessments will be 'good' or 'outstanding'.

Our workforce:

- We will have a suitably skilled, permanent workforce.
- Staff will receive regular, and improved supervision and management oversight to ensure they feel valued and supported.

Measurables:

- Case reviews will identify majority of cases to be 'good' or 'outstanding'.
- Improved safety and stability for children and young people supported by Complex Safeguarding.
- The prevention and protection will be visible via not only Children's Social Care interventions but GMP actions.

Key Priorities

Continue to take robust and early action to share intelligence and challenge the operations of perpetrators of exploitation ensuring we maximise the use of all agencies and the legal powers available to us to disrupt the behaviours.

To support the development of more in-depth analysis of local trends and themes to continue to inform and drive targeted service delivery.

To support the implementation of the adolescent safeguarding framework.

•Implementation of a contextual safeguarding approach – this will include an audit of processes, procedures, and forms to ensure that context is robustly considered and rooted in our practice; as well as practically implementing the approach.

Strengthen the prevention offer for CSE, CCE and serious youth violence across the partnership.

Complex and contextual safeguarding to continue to be offered within the OSCB training offer, alongside training continuing to be offered within schools, colleges, faith sector, residential homes and wider partners.

Quality of return home interviews to be improved, with the implementation of a quality assurance framework around these.