



Report of the Cabinet Member for Care Services

Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel – 5th December 2023

Update on the Contextual Missing Exploited and Trafficked Team (CMET)

Purpose	To provide an overview of the Contextual Missing Exploited and Trafficked Team (CMET)
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report includes a summary of the recent developments and progress within the Contextual, Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Team. • The report includes an overview of the activity of the CMET team and Operational Panel.
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse the report and its conclusions
Lead Councillor(s)	Cllr Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Care Services, Cllr Hayley Gwilliam, Community support and Cllr Alyson Anthony, Cabinet Member for Wellbeing
Lead Officer(s)	David Howes, Director of Social Services Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services Jane Whitmore, Strategic Lead Commissioner Kelli Richards, Principal Officer
Report Author	Kelli Richards, Principal Officer for Early Help, Single Point of Contact, The Academy, CMET and Emergency Duty Team.
Legal Officer	Lucy Moore
Finance Officer	Chris Davies
Access to Services Officer	Rhian Millar

1. Background

- 1.1 Contextual safeguarding is an approach to understanding and responding to harm that adolescents face beyond their family homes, this type of harm is referred to as extra familial harm (EFH) and can include Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), Youth Violence and peer on peer abuse.
- 1.2 Since 2019 Swansea Children and Family Services have been working with Dr Carlene Firmin and her team at Bedfordshire University to evaluate the capability of our systems in responding to risks outside the family home in Swansea.

Initially one Practice Lead post was created which sat in the Service Quality Unit (SQU) and focussed on individual children and young people who had experienced extra familial harm, were considered to have met the threshold of significant harm and referred for a Child Protection Case Conference.

At this time the responsibility for assessing these individual cases remained with the Social Workers in the Supported Care Planning Team and the focus of the work of the Child Exploitation Practice Lead was to support the Social Workers and Conference Chairs in SQU with developing safety plans for adolescents.

As the contextual safeguarding pilot progressed one locality in Swansea was identified in which to embed a contextual approach to referral, assessment and intervention in relation to contexts and peer groups. In order to do this we moved the Practice Lead post from SQU which sits at level 4 of the Continuum of Need and into the Single Point of Contact where we have the ability to provide information, advice and assistance in respect of extra familial harm right across the Continuum from level 1 up to level 4.

In order to further develop the contextual safeguarding approach, in 2020 we undertook a systems thinking review to help us understand what matters to the children and young people who experience extra familial harm, their parents, carers and the professionals who support them. We also analysed the referrals received in Child and Family Services that related to extra familial harm and our current systems capability to respond.

This resulted in a change of focus for our pilot from applying a contextual safeguarding response in one area to the application of indicators in respect of extra familial harm across the continuum of need throughout Swansea. The development of the Contextual, Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Team, the CMET multi agency

operational panel and the CMET Youth Panel have enabled us to use this approach across Swansea utilising a needs-based approach.

2. Contextual Missing Exploited and Trafficked Team

- 2.1 The CMET team is grant funded through the Children and Communities Grant and the Violence Prevention Unit and is made up of Social Workers and Youth Workers who respond to all forms of extra familial harm using a tiered approach.

Tier 1 relates to how we respond to and increase safety for individual young people and requires practitioners to understand the young person's peer network, where they spend time and how this impacts on their safety. The Social Workers in the team oversee all the initial cases that are referred to Child and Family Services where there are elements of CSE, CCE, missing episodes or worries in relation to trafficking. This includes chairing strategy meetings, creating safety plans and making decisions on next steps for new and existing cases, including children who are looked after by other Local Authorities and placed in Swansea. The Social Workers chair protocol meetings in respect of exploitation and missing children and also support professionals across the continuum of need in understanding and responding to exploitation. This does not replace the safeguarding of individual young people, which remains the responsibility of the allocated social worker in the Supported Care Planning teams but provides an additional layer of safety and support.

Tier 2 relates to how we increase safety within contexts such as peer groups, schools, neighbourhoods or online. The Youth Workers in the team are responsible for undertaking assessments and developing plans for contexts in which young people spend their time and peer groups. The CMET team recognise the important role that communities and partner agencies have in creating safe places and spaces for the children and young people of Swansea to spend time by taking a contextual approach to safeguarding. We have developed partnerships with sectors and individuals who are responsible for the contexts in which extra familial harm occurs and who would not ordinarily be involved. For example, McDonald's staff, those who work in our night time economy and the general public. The CMET team seek to build guardianship in contexts and improve young peoples, experience within the context.

- 2.2 The CMET panel meets on a fortnightly basis and includes representation from Swansea Child and Family Services (including CMET, Evolve, Social Workers, Early help and Youth Justice Service), Education, Housing, South Wales Police, Swansea Bay University Health Board, Barod/Choices, Media Academy Cymru, YMCA and the Independent Child Trafficking Guardians. The panel takes a holistic approach to the prevention and protection of children and young

people who are risk of or have experienced extra familial harm. It uses a solution focussed and strengths-based approach to safeguarding children and young people outside of the family home by making the places and spaces they spend time safer and creating guardianship.

The CMET panel draws together existing standalone review structures such as missing, child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation, trafficking, radicalisation, peer abuse, serious youth violence and teenage relationship abuse. The panel focussed on the contexts around these concerns with the view of increasing safety within the places, spaces and peer networks in which this harm occurs.

The panel supports, develops and oversees interventions to address harm/risks outside of the family home to increase welfare and protection to children and young people and goes beyond just discussing concerns. Through the review process the panel identifies, monitors and challenges the effectiveness of activities undertaken with children and young people, who are subject to harm/risk outside the family home across the Local Authority area of Swansea. The panel collates themes and trends ensuring there is an effective multi-agency strategic and operational response to extra familial harm across Swansea.

Some of the contextual cases supported through the CMET panel process include assessments, plans and interventions in response to:

- An incident of serious youth violence at Swansea beachfront which was described in the media as a 'mass brawl' involving young people.
- The involvement of young people in the large scale disturbance in Mayhill, referred to as the 'Mayhill riot'.
- The serious knife wounding of a young person in Swansea involving groups of young people who had travelled across the city due to a dispute.
- The tragic drowning of a young person in open water at a place known to attract large numbers of young people in warm weather.
- A large scale disturbance at a local cemetery involving groups of people from across Wales which resulted in the serious injury of a young person.
- The disruption of exploitation at business premises including barber shops, Shisha bars and establishments selling vapes.
- The high rate of missing episodes reported for children and young people placed by other Local Authorities in independent care homes in Swansea.

2.3 The CMET Youth Panel is made up of Young People who have real life experience of extra familial harm in and around Swansea. They meet on a monthly basis and have been involved in a number of pieces of important work that raises awareness of extra familial harm and could

influence decisions made locally and nationally on matters that affect young people.

The work of the CMET Youth Panel includes

- The development of a language guide for professionals that they have presented to officers in Child and Family and Education, Local Councillors, Cabinet Members and the Childrens Commissioner for Wales.
- Co-production of two videos with the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE) at Cardiff University in relation to indicators and the impact of criminal exploitation.
- Test purchasing of alcohol and vapes across Swansea with Trading Standards which has resulted in the seizure of thousands of illegal vapes.
- Representing the view of young people as part of the anti-social behaviour enquiry undertaken by Swansea Council.

2.4 This year Child and Family Services is one of only two Local Authorities in Wales to have been successful in an application to the Youth Endowment Fund for their Safer Homes project. Children and young people vulnerable to - or experiencing - harm outside the home often have complex needs that require support from different professional services, from mental health to youth justice services. Yet there is very little evidence on what an effective multi-agency approach looks like, or the services they should provide. Overlapping professionals often operate in a fragmented and difficult to navigate process of referrals and assessments, with barriers to service access and engagement for families. Children, young people, and their families often report that they don't feel listened to, and children and young people report feeling less safe in places with less adult supervision, including parks and on the streets. All too often, no-one has the full picture of the child's life, is trusted, or has the time or resources to do anything about it, meaning they and their family don't get the support they need when they need it. This can be exacerbated by children, young people and their families feeling stigmatised when involved in services.

The aim of the funding is to break down some of the structural barriers which prevent children, young people and their families from accessing timely, welcome support – including children in need of additional support and those on the edge of care. It will bring promising practice and guidance together with the principles and practice recommendations set out in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care for England. This round will complement the Department for Education's (DfE) plans to deliver and evaluate a pathfinder programme to support and prepare for implementation of the Review's recommendations.

Our pilot project will operate in two areas of Swansea which have been identified as those where we receive the highest rate of referrals in relation to extra familial harm using the CMET activity report. These areas are Penderry and East and the pilot teams, which our CMET Youth Panel have named CMET United, will be co-produced and delivered by Social Workers and Youth Workers in partnership with Education, Youth Justice Service, South Wales Police, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Substance Misuse Services and third partner agencies who specialise in addressing serious youth violence and barriers experienced by young people in our ethnic minority communities.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 Traditional child protection processes would have considered the impact of the major events highlighted on individual children and young people in isolation and would not have allowed us to consider the wider context and create safety in the spaces and places that children and young people spend time when outside of the family home.
- 3.2 By understanding what matters to children and young people and working with them in their peer groups, multi-agency professionals have been able to develop plans and interventions that consider the environment and guardianship in the spaces and places that children and young people spend time in order to make these safer and prevent recurrence of the harm that has been experienced.
- 3.3 Contextual responses include area safety plans, youth work intervention, physical environment changes such as lighting and educational work with young people in settings such as youth clubs and schools but also in the spaces and places that they spend time like parks, shopping centres and fast-food restaurants.
- 3.4 The CMET Youth Panel have ensured that the voices of children and young people have been heard in matters that relate, such as the recent enquiry into Anti-Social Behaviour in Swansea, and will be considered in planning for future service delivery and resources

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 None

5. Finance Implications

- 5.1 None

6. Integrated Assessment Implications

6.1 None

Glossary of terms:

CCE - Child Criminal Exploitation

CSE - Child Sexual Exploitation

CMET - Contextual Missing Exploited and Trafficked Team

EFH - Extra Familial Harm

SQU - Service Quality Unit

Background papers: *None*

Appendices: Appendix 1 – CMET Activity Report