



'Supporting and Safeguarding
exploited people in the context of
COVID 19 lockdown and beyond'

May 2020

Introduction

During COVID-19 lockdown, we have been working closely with our colleagues across all statutory and voluntary agencies. The soft intelligence and emerging trends and challenges that you each face in your day-to-day work have been collated and shared to ensure they are being considered in strategic and operational developments to manage the threat of exploitation in these unprecedented times.

This sharing of practice in these exceptional times has been crucial. It has also given us the opportunity to share concerns, challenges, and innovative engagement methods with our colleagues in central government to assist in their understanding of the national picture as it has developed.

Many of you have been involved in this gathering and sharing of practice exercise and it has been so encouraging to hear about the innovative methods being used to provide a service to young people and their families during the lockdown. It would be great if we could share your work with others to promote a conversation about effective interventions during lockdown and recovery planning following staged easing of restrictions.

We invited a few areas to contribute in our Zoom event on Friday 22nd May to hear from Dr Warren Larkin – ‘*An overview of adversity and trauma during the lockdown*’ and an outline from our team regarding the key themes that have emerged from the conversations with you all over the last few weeks.

We then facilitated a discussion on the following two key areas:

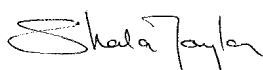
Q. What has been the learning from your responses to the challenges presented in safeguarding exploited young people and their families in the context of COVID- 19?

Q. What identified areas of practice are you aiming to continue using to recover from and reform your services/practices following the lockdown to enhance your responses to young people, families, and staff?

To ensure the key messages and learning are collated and made available to share with our members across our network, we have summarised the conversations.

I'd like to thank everyone who took part and made this event successful, for sharing your journey and in particular Kay and Steve who have worked so hard to stay in touch with you all during these challenging times.

Yours Sincerely



Chief Executive

Warren Larkin

Director of Warren Larkin Associates and Visiting Professor at University of Sunderland

Psychosocial consequences of the pandemic.

Warren spoke of the evidence of the problem looming and how the pandemic has already led to a significant rise in domestic violence and abuse. This is a pattern that has been seen in previous epidemics and crisis situations and many countries have seen rising household conflict and abuse during this pandemic.

Whilst resilience can be built in adverse situations, isolation cuts out those avenues of support young people may seek to assist them to manage the impact. We have heard lower numbers for missing and exploitation incidents have been reported but we must balance that with the lack of opportunities for detection and reporting too during the lockdown.

The impact on the workforce

- Many services were already at capacity before the pandemic
- Thresholds have been seen to increase in some services
- Services will likely face funding pressures in the context of a recession
- Public sector services struggle to recruit and retain enough staff to manage the demand on them (NHS has around 90k vacancies)

More exposure to abuse, neglect, and an environment where mental health is an issue within households will have long-term physical, mental and social impact as world patterns have previously shown. It is forecast there will be victims in situations of being trapped in with an abuser that could lead to long term mental health impacts. It is expected we will see a recession which will impact on everyone going forward. A recession tends to lead to more demand for MH services and reduced provision. Coronavirus has had a greater impact on BAME and poorer communities, which raises questions about why some sections of our society are disproportionately impacted and the contributions of social and economic inequalities upon health outcomes.

It will be important to support schools when pupils return and to place safeguarding as a higher priority than the academic achievement. Children who are highly stressed or traumatised will find it more difficult to learn and the emphasis should be on offering safe and secure relationships for every child and a sense of belonging within the school community.

Schools should focus on connectedness, many children will have issues to deal with, not all associated with abuse or neglect and teaching staff will need support to recognise when a child is struggling emotionally and know how they may be able to help.

Warren spoke of the need to be mindful of **Maslow's hierarchy of needs**, a theory by Abraham Maslow, which puts forward that people are motivated by five basic categories of needs: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. This model is still relevant and could be used as a useful reference point for teachers and other professionals trying to make sense of the reactions and behaviour of those they are caring for.

Warren also mentioned the 'attachment void' where a child does not have a safe secure relationship with a reliable adult in their life and how that creates vulnerability to exploitation because of the strong human urge to form attachment relationships.

It is likely we will see more mental distress, burnout and trauma-related issues in key workers following the pandemic and we should consider how we manage that potential need and support the workforce through supervision, management support and access to evidence-based psychological support for those who require it.

A collective response will be required once restrictions lift and the need for supportive, trauma-informed practice approach would be a good focus for many types of organisations. A watching brief will be important, to watch and see how young people adjust, to give them time – not to intervene too soon, but to allow them, with support, to process what they have experienced, to express their understandable worries and insecurities while offering more specialist support if they are still struggling to cope or adjust in the coming weeks and months as they return to school and education.

Steve Baguley

NWG Network – Community and Education Lead

Overview of national responses to safeguarding exploited young people and their families in the context of COVID-19

Since the start of the lockdown, the NWG has been in contact with a number of local areas and some voluntary sector organisations from across the country collating and sharing supporting and safeguarding responses to the lockdown. Thank you to all those areas who sent in responses all of which were placed on the NWG website. We are continuing this work and the main focus is now what has been the learning from the lockdown period and plans and implementation for recovery. We have also attended some national meetings which have been helpful in informing this work.

With the announcement of the lockdown, there was a rapid response to service reconfiguration with moves to a number of virtual platforms ZOOM, Teams, Webinex, SKYPE etc. Contact and support to children, young people and families became virtual with limited face-to-face work taking place. Key professional partnership meetings moved onto virtual platforms.

A number of areas RAG rated their exploitation cases to ensure that young people and families received prioritised support through the lockdown. There were also areas who said that there would be no closure of cases during this period as it did not feel safe to do so. Others continued with planned closures in order to build up capacity for the anticipated increase in referrals once the lockdown ends.

The main concerns as the lockdown commenced were with schools and other services only able to offer limited support, was that referrals would drop and that there would be limited intelligence being sent through. There were concerns about the potential increase in domestic violence during the lockdown and the impact that this would have on children and young people both short and long term.

With the lockdown it was anticipated that young people would be online more frequently, presenting more opportunities for perpetrators to groom and exploit and there would be an increase in indecent images. With the easing of the lockdown the grooming could move to contact abuse.

Young people going missing during the lockdown was highlighted and the main issues here were that missing referrals could decline and how would services respond to missing episodes.

As the lockdown period saw a significant movement towards virtual contact with young people and families the issue of digital poverty and inequality was raised and how do we ensure that we can have contact with all those young people and families who may not be able to access the virtual platforms that were being offered. Finally, there was the emotional well-being and mental health impact of the lockdown. The impact was not only on children young people and families but also on staff.

As the lockdown continued there were regional and local variations, but some consistent patterns were evident. There was a decrease in the number of reported missing episodes and a concern that parents were not reporting their children missing due to fear of being fined for breaking the lockdown guidance to stay at home. Referrals through the front door were also down. However, it needs to be noted that as the lockdown progressed numbers being reported missing and referrals have started to increase.

The majority of the referrals that were coming through were mainly for criminal exploitation rather than sexual exploitation. From our visits across the country, this would appear to be a trend before the lockdown.

Regarding young people online - there appears to be an increase in the sharing of indecent images. There was a concern that as the lockdown was eased young people who have been groomed online could potentially arrange to meet perpetrators.

Intelligence reports were also down, and a number of areas reported that known hotspot areas were inactive. There was the potential for exploitation of vulnerable adults as children out on the streets during lockdown were more visible than adults.

With children, young people and families having to stay at home a number of areas reported that there were windows of opportunities to work with young people where there had previously been little or no engagement. There have been a number of positive reports that

young people have welcomed the contact and support being offered on virtual platforms and engagement and contacts were up. Areas were looking at how they could use some of the virtual methods to enhance their supporting and safeguarding offers as the lockdown ends. However, it was also noted that because young people were having to stay at home, they may be choosing to engage with workers for something to do. Also, on the virtual platforms, it is difficult to read body language or be sure that there was no one else in the room with the young person. Recently there have been discussions about what a trusted relationship means in the virtual world.

Areas reported that care placements were more difficult to find. Also, there had been a rise in illegal drug prices which could lead to increased drug debts as the lockdown progresses.

The use of the voluntary sector and the role of youth work, especially detached work, had received positive comments from a number of areas.

The views of children, young people and parents need to be captured to gain insights into their experiences of the lockdown and what they thought of the services that were being offered. Areas were also collating the views of staff about their experiences of the lockdown and the use of virtual platforms for meetings and working with young people and parents. This will be an important part of capturing the key learning from the lockdown.

Nigel Jones

CSE, Missing & Trafficking Coordinator, Warwickshire County Council

With the easing of the lockdown and the moves toward the recovery period it was noted that there is anxiety from staff and families around what the new normal will look like. There is also anxiety about what has been happening in households during the lockdown and a surge of safeguarding referrals are anticipated. There is the issue of significant job losses across the country and the impact that this will have on families along with a predicted rise in poverty. A number of areas reported that there were plans being developed or in place for the recovery period.

We initially saw a significant reduction in missing reports in Warwickshire at the start of lockdown restrictions. This has crept back up over the weeks as our complex high-risk cohort of young people in particular have found it more difficult to maintain the restrictions. A small group are repeatedly being reported missing, predominantly from care but also some from home. This also appears to be more local, with less travelling to other towns and across borders in Coventry and Birmingham that we are used to seeing, and in general is more confined to meeting up with closer friends/associates than wider peer groups. The exposure to new exploitation has therefore reduced, though for those ingrained in ongoing exploitation we have seen a varied impact with some where we have not seen a noticeable change and others where exposure to risk has reduced. Interestingly that *seems* to be different across the two areas of exploitation with criminally exploited young people, particularly drug-related, maintaining going missing and migrating to the area they are operating in, and for those sexually exploited we have seen a reduction, maybe an indication of the 'harder' nature of

criminal exploitation? We have certainly been able to make progress on cases where the intervention and support work has started to make a difference and this period has provided the young people with the opportunity to stay away from their exploiters with a legitimate reason.

Consequently, it has been a mixed bag of responses.

As stated, our predominant exploitation profile is to sell drugs in their local area and missing events/intelligence suggests that has continued, though certainly to a lesser extent. This cohort of young people are still going out and running drugs, going missing for long periods of time, and/or being involved in knife/drug incidents.

Our workload has not changed significantly with only a slight drop in demand for new work. We are still getting NRM's coming through, which is encouraging. In effect, it has been business as usual and we continue to respond as such. (As a side note WCC's number of NRM's was 5th highest out of 192 LA's listed in 2019 figures released, which is great)

We expected a rise in online exploitation and early on within RHI's we were being informed about a group of girls in an operation around sexual exploitation sharing indecent images online, though this has somewhat dissipated as they have ventured out more and we haven't had the volume of such concerns that we expected. We have pushed out a lot of advice about online exploitation as you know across our partnership and Something's Not Right campaign websites and social media.

A challenge we've had was to address potential reporting by carers as missing simply for going out and breaching restrictions and we have addressed this by being proactive and engaging carers from the outset to be clear that circumstances to report missing remains the same. This action assisted as Care/Residential Homes have generally been very good and we have not experienced this. We have seen a small number from foster care, though these are minimal numbers and we have linked up with the Police OCC and are addressing through direct advice.

Conversely, and more concerningly, we have noticed a reluctance with some parents (noticeably those receiving support from Social Care) to report missing due to both concerns about how this will be perceived in respect of their parenting and potential consequences from any action taken. This again is being addressed through both advice and support.

We have signed up to a joint protocol with the Police about engaging with young people breaching restrictions and an escalation process where they are concerned that carers (foster/residential) are not taking sufficient action to assist in preventing breaches.

Social Care is also seeing more requests for accommodation of young people from parents due to situations in households escalating, very much like the rise in domestic abuse. I think we all fully understand the reasons for this due to the lockdown with no school etc to provide 'respite'. We have therefore had a rise in the need to initiate family support, conducted both virtually and in our 'red' cases (COVID risk assessment) through direct work.

We are continuing to get new cases referred through (confirming business as usual) and what is apparent here is a difficulty to engage those young people virtually and therefore start to develop a relationship. Where this is adding to the concern though (and therefore pushing a case to 'red') some direct work face to face is being done.

We have adapted our direct communication with young people. More is being done by telephone/video chat than face to face, though we are very careful about ensuring where face to face is necessary (via our risk assessment) it is done, with appropriate safeguards of course. Initial contact is certainly better that way.

Those where we have more developed relationships are actually receiving more regular 'support' via phone/video chat with less travel/distractions with office working etc. More frequent check-ins and direct work is being conducted with young people as part of their safety plans. Workers report that some young people have engaged well in that and in some cases better! We have previously shared the type of tools we are using with them. Again, very much case by case, but overall, we have been surprised how effective it can be and will definitely continue some work in this way. I think as a result we understand the need for face-to-face with the initial contact, but much more additional contact can be done remotely. This reduces time demand on staff and increases productivity that will benefit more of our young people.

We have also seen greater success in making contact and engaging young people in this way. RHI's have continued to be done though more on phone/video chat (subject to risk assessment whether face to face is crucial) and our RHI performance (within 72 hours) though sound has actually significantly improved to levels we have never seen.

Remote working has increased staff productivity to the benefit of our young people. This is because of reasons given, less travelling and fewer distractions in and away from the office. There is a case for many more strategy meetings etc being held remotely and this is very likely to be a positive impact out of this period. Again, we have done a lot of work around suitable platforms to make this work better and that will continue.

We are holding weekly CE & Missing multi-agency team video meetings to review the picture and discuss the impact, progress, changes to the process required etc and are starting to think about a lockdown exit strategy. We feel we have maintained a good oversight of exploitation and missing and a 'business as usual' response as best as possible. We are not expecting therefore to face a situation such as a significant flood of new referrals or information about unaddressed risk within our young people being supported, though contingencies are being put in place internally should this be the case.

We have linked up with our third sector providers in Warwickshire who we have close links with and will be 'corralling' support to enhance resilience of service support capacity should it be required. They equally have not seen significant change and have been supporting efforts to maintain a 'business as usual' service to our 'vulnerability to exploitation' cohort that it has remained crucial we offer early help support to in order to prevent escalation. I don't have an update unfortunately about whether this has been as successful as our direct work within the team to the exploited cohort, though I expect again it will depend upon how

developed the relationship is and there may be increased vulnerability there to be addressed in due course

There will be many approaches employed during lockdown that we will continue to operate due to apparent success and those that we feel will have a positive consequence. We will maintain the Escalation process referred to above to assist with our frequent missing cohort where it is felt carers could be doing more as per expectations within our Joint Missing Protocol. We will be making considerably more use of social media and video contact with our young people and for link up with professionals now that the technology framework has become (almost forced so) better established.

We will be utilising resources that we have specifically developed such as the below and others nationally (e.g. the Missing People information leaflets) as they will assist with our focus on utilising a strengths-based approach with parents/carers/families, using them as tools in the intervention rather than a stick to beat. We will continue to use the virtual direct work tools with young people as previously sent to you. We have been looking to set up a 'daily online/phone surgery' for young people/carers/professionals to assist in these challenging periods and though it hasn't got off the ground yet I'm keen to implement it even if it only comes to fruition after. We will be using all the learning and resources about loneliness/isolation that we have pulled together in our future training and resources with young people

Alex Bridge

Service Manager – Adolescent Intervention and Prevention Team, Early Help, Family Support & Youth Offending Service – Southend on Sea Borough Council

Our response to COVID-19 has been very similar to other LA's. I will concentrate on our working parameters of our adolescent/exploitation team.

We are undertaking coronavirus risk assessments and recording these on every file, all cases are also RAG rated on level of risk and concern and these will be reviewed weekly, noting the level of contact with each child/family.

Most of the cases are adolescents whose risk are contextual and not in the home, so visits in the home will only be undertaken when there is a need to see home conditions or there are concerns, we have a small supply of PPE to undertake these where required, however, the team are undertaking increasing numbers of doorstep/garden visits with young people who benefit from it and have undertaken some activities such as bike rides whilst keeping to social distancing and self-isolating guidelines.

Virtual and video contacts are the main form of contact/communication and we are undertaking these as a minimum on a weekly basis; however, for some children, they are receiving daily contact dependent on risk and this is being reviewed on a case by case basis.

One week we undertook around 500 contacts with our children/families by a range of different engagement styles.

We have a baseline for all practice in that if a child has not been spoken to in any 7 day period then this is raised with management; this will result in other agencies being contacted or a doorstep visit being undertaken to locate and have “eyes on” every child within a rolling 7 day period. Like many other LA’s, getting children to attend their educational provision has been a challenge and we are working alongside our schools and families to facilitate this where it is appropriate, a significant number of the children are accessing the curriculum whether remotely or by some other means; however we are trying to work differently and some staff have cycled with children to school in the mornings (using their 1 hour of exercise) to encourage attendance.

Service Manager is undertaking a morning video call with Team Managers and working through a set agenda of staffing, casework, and practice items and this is being used to form the plan of each day’s work. The exploitation intelligence is being reviewed daily and there are actions between AIP Team and Police for intelligence requiring immediate actions. Currently having two to four staff based in the office each day.

Return to Home interviews – these are being undertaken “virtually” however are assessed on a case by case basis and door-step visits will be undertaken where required. Return to Home interviews continue to be completed within timescales in most cases (72 hours of the child returning home). We are receiving fewer reports of missing children however have noticed that those going missing are missing for longer periods.

Children Missing Education (CME) – we hold the statutory responsibility for CME and continue to receive CME notifications however there is a concern that if schools are not taking new children on roll then this caseload will increase during the current period as they are only removed from the case list once a school place is allocated.

Street Engagement Patrols – continue to take place daily alongside Police/Community Safety and BID Rangers to hotspot areas of exploitation or based on Police intelligence. However, despite daily patrols including evenings, there are very few children seen.

At present a number of county lines are not operating, this is supported by 6 months’ worth of class A drug users signed up to the script within the first two weeks of the lockdown; suggesting drugs were hard to come by.

However, we are aware that lines are now operating using different operating models and as a partnership we are trying to wise up to this. We suspect that drug deals and lines operate more from addresses, especially from high rise buildings and it is far less community based.

However, over the last two weeks, we have seen an increase in the number of young people out and about, it appears they are almost back to their old normal, there is a change to their behaviours, drug dealers have created new approaches and in the virtual world you don’t know who is listening.

In discussion it was highlighted that virtual engagements with young people may not allow them the freedom to speak openly. In the NWG health report 'Shine A Light' 2013 by Dr PR Kirtley spoke with frontline sexual health clinic staff who reported that

"Some perpetrators insist that their victim carry their mobiles switched on and connected so that they can listen to what is said in the clinic"

'Shine a Light' research document can be accessed from NWG resources here: <https://www.nwgnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Shine-A-Light-Report.pdf>

Helen Matthews

CEO Street Teams Walsall

Helen explained they were addressing the need of the young people they are seeing. By providing food for them and the family, by responding and addressing to their basic needs has helped to build a relationship with them and their family.

Being creative with families and young people online through crafts and activities has bridged some of the gaps with workers.

Helen talked of the need to address ACE's in infancy to prevent exploitation in later years. A piece of work they are currently undertaking. They are currently not receiving many referrals.

After lockdown they will be developing group work, for example working on an allotment to give a sense of purpose, a connectedness by working on a project together.

We will also be incorporating the ACE's work within our practice.

Alan Rees-Cooper

NPCC Lead for Missing People

Alan explained there was a 37% decrease in missing incidents across the UK. One reason for this reduction is that many children in care are complying with the direction to stay at home and so less are being reported as missing.

The number of people reported missing from hospital has also significantly reduced. This is being attributed to the reduction in attendance at A&E for reasons other than COVID-19 and those people with COVID-19 are often too ill to go missing.

The NPCC has been working with Ofsted, DfE and ADCS to encourage appropriate reporting of missing incidents, for example not reporting people who are simply breaching the direction to stay at home or those who were just late home as missing people.

However, there has been increased concern over online activity. There has been an increase in children speaking to strangers online, an increase in young people viewing porn and an increase in the sharing of indecent photographs by young people.

Alan was pleased to report that the majority of forces have good working relationships with their partners and that partnerships were working well under the current pressures.

Rhiannon Sawyer

Deputy Head, National Policing Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP)

Explained that the force is looking at the concerns around DV, missing, child abuse and county lines in more depth. They were collating the data from services and asking partners to share their issues. The force is amassing huge amounts of data and insights to gather learning from.

They have created a set of resources looking at the 'Hidden Harm' for key workers and professionals coming into contact with children, young people and their families.

https://www.nwgnetwork.org/post_typ/posters-leaflets/

Sarah Parker

Research and Development Officer and Volunteer Coordinator, Catch 22

Sarah explained her role in research & development during the COVID crisis was to try to work out what this meant for our services now and in the future. The pandemic could be seen as a massive social experiment which we did not set up and have limited ways of evaluating.

There has been a huge success in engagement with young people virtually, but it is important to consider that the options have been limited. The young people have understood that there has not been a choice. Digital platforms have enabled workers to have more frequent engagements with young people, with some young people feeling it is safer to engage this way and feeling more able to speak freely, especially victims of CCE.

However, Sarah was unsure that there would be the same 'buy-in' to digital support in future. If in the 'new world' post-COVID, engagement continued in this way, it could be perceived by young people that you could have met face-to-face but chose not to as this method is quicker and easier. What message does that give them?

There is a risk that we read too much into the current success of technological solutions and fail to understand the human need for genuine interaction. This could also be seen as a way to save costs whereas choices about the way we connect with children should always be about their needs, not our convenience.

Sarah, along with others felt concerned about the drop in CSE referrals. It seems that the main referrers such as schools are not there on the ground to spot the signs at the moment.

In their services, they have been delivering pamper packs, wellbeing packs and activity packs, which give an opportunity to see a young person at their home and check how they are feeling. They are also delivering hand-written postcards and encouraging young people to join in games and activities online, including the family where appropriate.

Once again, the recognition that working together with families is important, a collective activity they can all work on. Catch22's work is about the 3 Ps: People, Place and Purpose. We need to help develop a sense of belonging for young people, to create virtual and physical safe spaces for young people and to build resilience through empowering them to take control of their own lives.

They use youth participation as a means of giving this sense of purpose. They have a young people's forum that is meeting fortnightly currently at young people's request, instead of once every school holiday under normal circumstances.

The subject of using PPE gear was touched on too- utilising face masks that hide the expressions when talking to young people. What message does that give a child when we have quite literally a barrier between us and them? In discussion, this was likened to deaf people not understanding what is being said to them as there are only the eyes that relay the expression. However, the importance of safeguarding staff must also be acknowledged.

Lisa Robinson

Exploitation Project Lead, Bedfordshire's Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit

Lisa thought they were experiencing very similar issues to the other areas. All CSE/Exploitation Bedfordshire virtual meetings have continued to be held and were positive and working well.

They had seen an increase in 14 to 17year olds going missing, many not adhering to the lockdown.

They had developed a Bedfordshire social media campaign aimed at this age group which was working well. Although there was a recognition at this stage that in rural communities or poor broadband signal areas this may miss some young people.

The VERU has seen an increase in young women engage with the unit but overall a reduction in new CSE cases; possibly due to generally fewer referrals coming into support services due to the COVID-19 situation. They had yet to fully understand what sexual violence looks like for young women in gangs and county lines.

Bedfordshire was moving to develop an exit strategy, but that was early days and they were scoping what the expected changes might be and the anticipated surge in referrals as the lockdown eases. We are aware that once lockdown is lifted, we may see a spike in what is

reported regarding Exploitation. Across Bedfordshire we will have clear exit strategies in place to deal with the increase if/when it arises, each individual partner will have their own safeguarding strategy and we will continue to share communications across Bedfordshire as we have done while the lockdown is in place; we already have clear partnership arrangements in place across Bedfordshire and this will continue in much the same way.

Lisa Allenby

Protect Team Manager, Targeted Services for Young People

Protect Team have not seen a reduction in referrals, they are still discussing 10 to 12 cases per week, although they were seeing an increase in CSE online referrals.

County lines are still operating within established networks and OCG's have become more sophisticated and they are still seeing cases of trafficking associate with this area of work.

Those that are going missing are particularly serious and the team have increased concerns about.

On the increase is

- Poverty
- Family violence
- Parental substance misuse
- Increase in domestic violence

Return interviews are being held virtually and each one is having a greater number of engagements than the usual face-to-face interview. Lisa reflected on the comment made by Sarah, that young people are engaging in that method, but there is not really any other choice at the moment and the need to be mindful of that going forward.

Many are not attending the educational hubs, with parents worried about the spread of the virus, but they expect a high number of referrals once the lockdown is eased.

Emma Phillips

Policy and Development Officer, Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Lead, North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (NYSP)

North Yorkshire has developed a web page of COVID resources for parents and young people <https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/coronavirus/>

The restrictions have massively reduced travelling time. Emma reflected the partnership worked well during lockdown as there were strong relationships face-to-face engagement

previously. Virtually meeting has meant that meetings have been quicker, and decisions have been reached quicker.

Emma explained how the restrictions have enabled them to reflect on how strong their partnerships have been.

North Yorkshires have experienced a relatively quiet picture during COVID, although they are now beginning to see young people going out more in the last 2 weeks.

There is a concern at the number of young people who may be accessing concerning material online, certainly this week has seen a case come to attention regarding accessing extreme pornography online during the lockdown.

They have been worried about the impact of grooming and are concerned that this will turn into face-to-face meetings that will be exploitative. However, Emma did say some young people have fed back that they found it easier to contact workers.

Overall, the use of technology has been positive, however, there are worries across North Yorkshire around social isolation and digital poverty, especially in our more isolated rural areas.

The next steps will incorporate the opportunity to hold more meetings virtually but to also maintain face-to-face where necessary and/or possible.

How useful has today been?

Conversation

Totally agree re CSE cases, this is a pattern over the last 18 months, and CSE is not being seen presently, a real worry.

We've had a few families say they are scared to report their children missing due to fear they may be fined for their children being out.

Feedback Comments

How generous organisations have been in sharing resources and knowledge, I hope this can keep going.

It's been really informative and beneficial, thanks to Kay and Steve for keeping in touch and also for the session today.

Great, reassured and made it feel less lonely. It's good to be part of a larger national group

It's good to know you're heading in the right direction; we've learnt a lot from each other today. There is good learning coming out and just sharing is great.

It's been a really useful event

Thank you, I've learnt a huge amount today, it's reassuring to know you are all connected