

CYPM11 Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Plant a phobl ifanc sydd ar yr ymylon | Children and Young People on the margins

Ymateb gan Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr | Evidence from Bridgend County Borough Council

Please set out any views on missing children below.

You may wish to consider:

- **Nature and scale of the issue and regional variations.**
- **At risk groups: including the impact of care experience and out of area placements.**
- **Practice: issues such as information sharing and data collection.**
- **Policy: the effectiveness of devolved policy and practice responses, including Welsh Government oversight. Whether there is effective read across to relevant Welsh Government strategies.**
- **Devolved and UK powers: how joined up is the interface between devolved and non-devolved policy such as criminal and youth justice.**

In terms of missing children we follow the missing person protocol process and where there are major concerns will report a child missing immediately where necessary in order that we are compliant with the protocol.

A C1 referral is submitted in all cases where there is a missing person known to YJS and submit intelligence on NICHE through our police team. YJS are included in MISPER strategy meetings and are part of the safety plan where relevant

Please set out any views on children and young people who are victims of criminal exploitation below.

You may wish to consider:

- **Nature and scale across Wales and regional variations (e.g. traditional, drug related, sexual, financial).**
- **At risk groups: including care experience, children experiencing trauma in the home and children not enrolled in mainstream education.**
- **Policy: The effectiveness of devolved policy including Welsh Government oversight. Whether there effective read across to relevant WG strategies such as Child Sexual Exploitation.**
- **Practice: Approaches to prevention, community resilience, early intervention, support provided and exit strategies for victims. Practice issues such as information sharing and data collection.**
- **Devolved and UK powers: How joined up is the interface between devolved and non-devolved policy such as criminal and youth justice? Are there any points of tension between criminal law and safeguarding?**

There have 8 Exploitation Prevention Panel's held from June 2023 to February 2024 in Bridgend.

The Exploitation Prevention Panel has been live for 8/9 months since June 2023. It is evident from this panel that cannabis is rife with our young people, followed by other drugs like MDMA, Ecstasy, Ketamine and Cocaine. Very few are experimenting with alcohol, however this is not to say this is not happening, we have very little evidence that alcohol is being consumed. In terms of drugs, our young people are very open in stating this is what they are using or have experimented with.

In terms of education, it is evidence that most of the young people heard in the Exploitation Prevention Panel are either excluded from mainstream school and/or school refusers from mainstream school, specialist provisions and Bridgend college. Despite Bridgend College offering a junior apprenticeship; 2 young people are at risk of permanent exclusion from this course. With our work with the secondary schools of Bridgend, Education engagement team approximately 15/16 young people are currently excluded from mainstream school; there is approximately an 18month wait for a specialist provision school.

Due to the high risk of some of our young people that are open to Children's Services, the implementation of Exploitation Risk Management Meetings. These generally take place fortnightly until situations calms and then decline to once a month to monitor. This is a professionals meeting involving Exploitation and missing police, YOS, drug and alcohol services, connecting families and education and any professional service working with the family. This is an opportunity to share intelligence, update cases and consider the VOLT from the screening tool – Victim, Offender, Location, Themes as well as any disruption and safety planning.

We believe that ongoing work needs to continue to • Work with schools to develop a toolbox to manage behaviour and prevent school exclusion. We acknowledge that when young people are excluded from school without another option / provision that they are further at risk of exploitation.

- Safe places, safe spaces within the wider community. Work with the wider community to provide a safe place if a young person feels scared, anxious and needs time out. Aagin a toolbox of skills to be developed to support local business.
 - NRM process and training to be evaluated and rolled out to the teams. Record of NRM to be implemented on WCCIS in the format of a form.
 - Missing – this needs to be evaluated, process and policy to be implemented and a form on WCCIS to be developed.
 - RHI to be recorded correctly, at present these are not completed in a timely manner and are not through, therefore consideration for this coming in-house.
 - Involvement of YOS, Emotional Youth Wellbeing team to be involved with cases in the borough.
 - Disruption plans to be designed and implemented alongside safety plans
 - Exploitation to be rolled out to all professionals with amendments for foster carers and kinship carers.
 - Parents have asked for a coffee morning with education in order to learn about exploitation and provide support to each other.
 - Exploitation Risk Management Meetings to continue and become part of young people's plans with the borough.
 - Monitoring of CAWNS
 - Continuation of soft intel meetings with missing and exploitation police.
 - Continuation of intelligence meetings with South Wales Police and British Transport Police.
 - Development of contextual CP plans, CASP plans, LAC plans, Strategy discussion forms and S47 forms. Contextual assessment plans also. This need to be addressed within the WCCIS user group.
 - The ultimate aim is to safeguard and disrupt exploitation. A small team would be of benefit to the Bridgend borough with the above actions implemented. A small team that would be able to work alongside Exploitation and Missing police, they would be in a better position to gather information of clusters of young people, new young people being recruited, the recruiters themselves and would be able to mapp cases within their own team. By being placed with police, joint visits can be
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undertaken, intel shared easily when time is of the essence and information shared from one agency to another.

- A small team that would take the case from the front door to finish to help build those positive relationships without the switch of social worker.
- A social work assistant to work with parents, do ad-hoc work with young people, co-ordinate other referrals and services in order to prepare for the exploitation risk management meetings. To be the face of exploitation to education, health and police and all partner agencies. Return home interviews could also be completed in a timely manner by someone that they know like a social work assistant.
- To implement early prevention in schools starting in Year 6 as a rolling program. An exploitation service to schools, to implement rolling program for secondary schools around exploitation and to support teachers in managing trauma associated with exploitation.

The issue has certainly increased over the last 3 years or it could be because we have more legislation and processes in place that help to identify those issues through NRM processes and safeguarding sub-groups that focus on exploitation.

Certainly those identified who are at risk of offending are more likely to be involved in exploitative situations particularly those who use substances and begin to assist others in the dealing of substances, those with specific social media offences, those at risk of terrorism, those involved in offences or behaviours where family are a known influence, those who are being groomed to attain money because they are financially unstable.

YJS carries out mapping and shares with exploitation team and schools where relevant, has a close relationship with exploitation team and shares relevant police tracker exploitation information, is represented on the exploitation panel and is a keyworker in terms of NRM referrals although we currently do this in accordance with the exploitation processes and social worker. The YJS is responsible for submitting intelligence on the police system NICHE and tracking those subject to NRM. The YJS is involved in the creation and monitoring of the safety plan for the child and Welsh government strategy guidance and procedure has been shared via the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Exploitation strategy group and processes are being across the 3 areas in line with government strategies.

The devolved policy is shared through the exploitation strategy group and youth justice is a member of that group and the sub task group which sits underneath. Decisions are made in the strategy group and Youth Justice is part of that decision making process.

I have been made aware that cases at risk of exploitation, the exploitation team have an exploitation risk management meeting which sits underneath the panel

We also hold Risk and Vulnerability multi agency meetings for anyone high risk under our 3 categories of risk (offending, harm to others or safety and wellbeing. We try to combine where there are meetings that will cover our remit we have 15 children known to us on the police system flagged as NRM. Out of those 11 have already had positive reasonable grounds to believe they are victim of exploitation. Three are awaiting decision and only one has come back as negative grounds so that just tells you the extent of the issue however I think we are better at identification now.

Please set out any views on other groups of children on the margins.

You may wish to identify other groups of children “on the margins”. These would be groups of children in circumstances that require a specific response from children’s services or other statutory providers and for which there are concerns about the current policy or practice.

If you have anything else you wish to share with us, please do so below.
