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*Child Exploitation Needs Assessment*

*August 2021*

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## 1. Purpose

This Child Exploitation Needs Assessment was produced by Somerset Public Health as commissioned by the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Safer Somerset Partnership in 2021. The purpose of the document is to outline the current picture of child exploitation in Somerset, identify the number of children potentially at risk of exploitation, and highlight best practice and what works well in tackling this issue. This information will be used to help inform future strategy and partnership activity which will be led by the Somerset Child Exploitation Strategic group.

## 2. Definitions

Whilst there is no one set definition of “**Child Exploitation**”, Save the Children describe it as:

“...the use of children for someone else’s advantage, gratification or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child. These activities are to the detriment of the child’s physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It covers situations of manipulation, misuse, abuse, victimization, oppression or ill-treatment.” (1)

They are commonly thought of as two main forms of child exploitation: Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE); and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE).

**Child Sexual Exploitation** is defined by the UK Government as:

“Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity

(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or

(b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.” (2)

**Child Criminal Exploitation** is defined by the UK Government as:

“Child Criminal Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity

- (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or
- (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or
- (c) through violence or the threat of violence.

The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.” (3)

CCE is most commonly talked about with regards to County Lines but it can go beyond this to include, for example, children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft (4). County Lines is “when individuals or gangs use vulnerable children and adults to transport and sell Class A drugs, primarily from urban areas into market or coastal towns or rural areas to establish new drug markets or take over existing ones. They also use children to transport and hide weapons and to secure dwellings of vulnerable people in the area, so that they can use them as a base from which to sell drugs.

County lines is about modern slavery, human trafficking and exploitation, alongside drug supply and violent crime.” (5)

**County Lines** is defined by the UK Government as:

“County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the

drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.” (4)

Following with the government definitions, for the purposes of this document a **child** is anyone who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (2).

### 3. Policy Context

The UK Government provides statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The most recent edition of this guidance is 2018 and can be found here -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

This guidance outlines the key duties of Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and the Police with regards to safeguarding, as laid out in law. There is a separate document on the above-mentioned webpage that outlines the specific legislation relating to this issue.

Housing is also referred to in the guidance. Landlords, including housing associations may have important information about what is happening in the community from residents who are being impacted by criminal activity in the area. Landlords can and need to act on information where it indicates a breach of the tenancy agreement which may lead to homelessness. This can put them into conflict with the parents who may then exclude them from any voluntary arrangements they have with children's services.

In summary, the Local Authority has a legal duty to (6):

- safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.
- provide services to children in need in their area, regardless of where they are found.
- undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

In this guidance the UK government defines **safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children** as (6):

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care

- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

This legislation means Somerset County Council and its partners have a legal duty to protect children within Somerset. This includes both children who are residents and those who have been moved to the area for the benefit of their perpetrator e.g. through county lines. Safeguarding arrangements across the three statutory partners are set out in a document which can be found here:

<https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Details-of-new-safeguarding-arrangements.pdf> . The duty to safeguarding is discharged by the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership, established in September 2019.

The statutory guidance goes on to recognise that sexual and criminal exploitation can occur from both within the home and from external pressures. Therefore, the guidance stresses the importance of staff in all child-facing sectors being well trained to identify individuals at risk (6).

To aid with this, the UK government also offers two key pieces of guidance for practitioners who work with children:

1. Child sexual exploitation - Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation – February 2017 – which can be accessed here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-sexual-exploitation-definition-and-guide-for-practitioners>
2. Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: County Lines guidance – September 2018 – which can be accessed here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines>

#### 4. Risk factors of Child Exploitation

Whilst there are certain circumstances that increase a child’s risk, it is important to recognise that all children are vulnerable to exploitation (5). It is also unlikely a child will only fall into one of the two categories, with many children who are criminally exploited also being sexually exploited (5).

That being said, the practitioner guidance outlines who is vulnerable to the different forms of exploitation, as shown in Table 1 below. Demographically, those at risk do not vary much between the two forms of exploitation but those at risk of CSE do tend to be slightly younger and are more likely to be female.

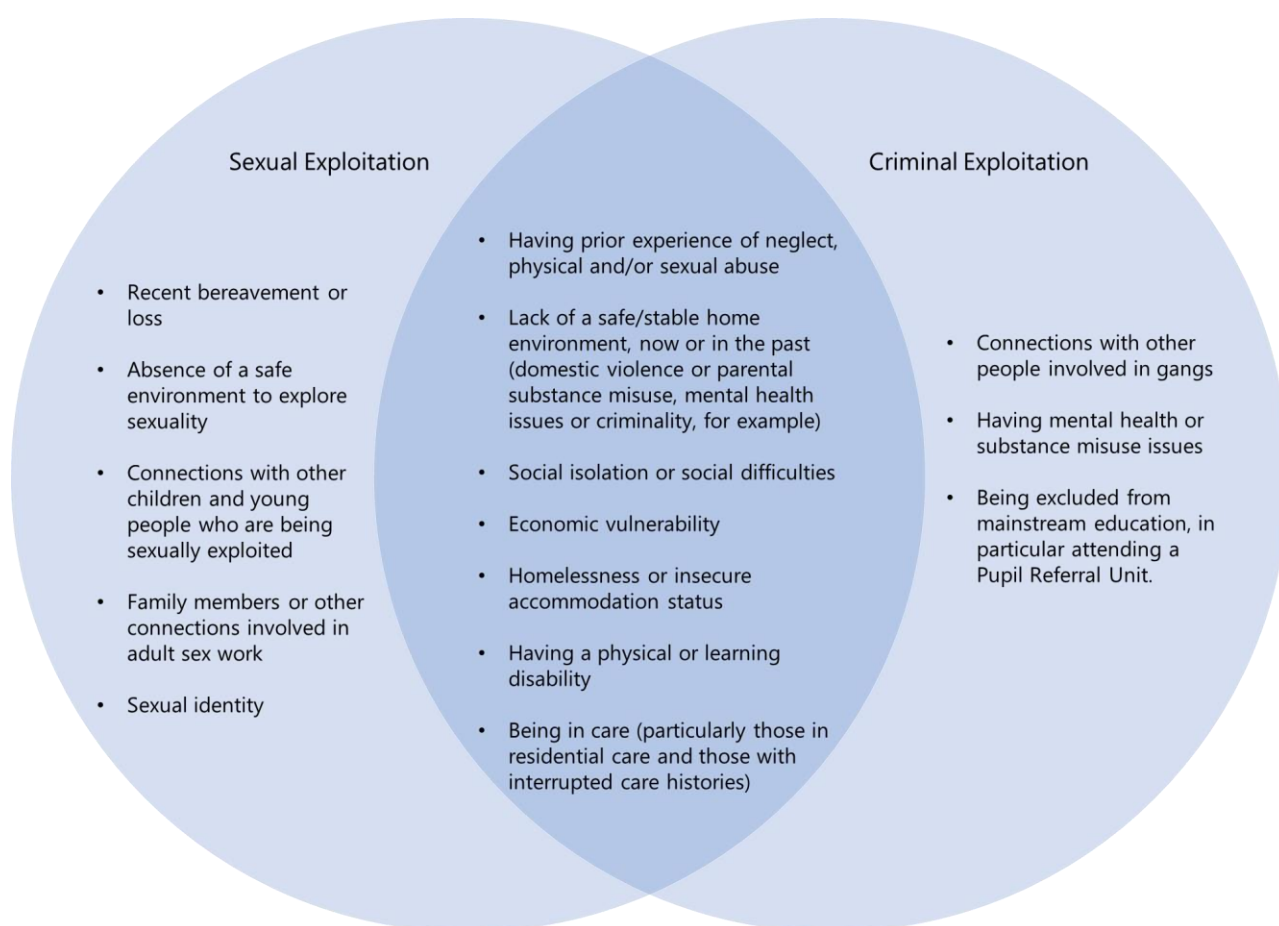
Table 1: Demographic vulnerabilities of Child Sexual Exploitation (2) and Child Criminal Exploitation (4)

Demographic	Sexual Exploitation	Criminal Exploitation
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aged 12-15 are most at risk</li> <li>• Victims as young as 8 have been identified</li> <li>• Those aged over 16 can also experience abuse even with the capacity to give consent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aged 15-16 are most at risk</li> <li>• Victims as young as 12 have been identified</li> </ul>
Gender	Most frequently observed in females but males also at risk	Both males and females
Ethnicity	All ethnicities	All ethnicities are at risk but White British children are being targeted as gangs perceive them less likely to be detected by the police

The guidance also identifies several social risk factors that may make a child more vulnerable to exploitation. These can be seen in Figure 1 below. There are some common risks to both forms of exploitation, including lack of stable home and/or homelessness, having a physical or learning difficulty and having prior experience of neglect and/or abuse (2,4).



*Figure 1: Social Risk factors for Child Sexual Exploitation (2) and Child Criminal Exploitation (4)*



In addition to the government guidance, there is a lot of research that has been carried out into the risk factors surrounding child exploitation. Of particular note, are two **systematic reviews** that look across all the research available at the time of writing and summarise their findings:

1. Demographic and Psychosocial Factors Associated With Child Sexual Exploitation by Laird et al (2020) – which can be access here: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2770752>
2. A systematic map and synthesis review of Child Criminal Exploitation by Maxwell et al (2019) – which can be access here: <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/131950/>

The risks identified by these two papers support what was outlined in the government guidance. The key risk factors were as follows (7,8):

- Poverty
- Homelessness/housing insecurity and/or running away from home
- **Adverse childhood experiences** including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
- Poor mental health including PTSD, anxiety, and depression
- Alcohol and drug use
- Behavioural and/or interpersonal difficulties
- School exclusions
- Children looked after
- History of crime, both individually and/or within the family.

Additionally, risky sexual behaviours (e.g. multiple partners, history of STIs) and exposure to violent or child pornography are risk factors for SE (7).

Despite there being recognised risk factors of exploitation, a recent review in to serious cases of criminal exploitation found the only issue that consistently presented itself was exclusions from school (9). Therefore, professionals working with children need to be open-minded to the possibility that any child they are working with could be being exploited.

## 5. Prevalence of Child Exploitation

Given the complexities of this issue, the prevalence section of this needs assessment will be split into those who are known to be victims of or at risk of exploitation and those who are potentially at risk of exploitation.

### a. Those who are known

#### i. The Safer Somerset Partnership Violence Reduction Unit

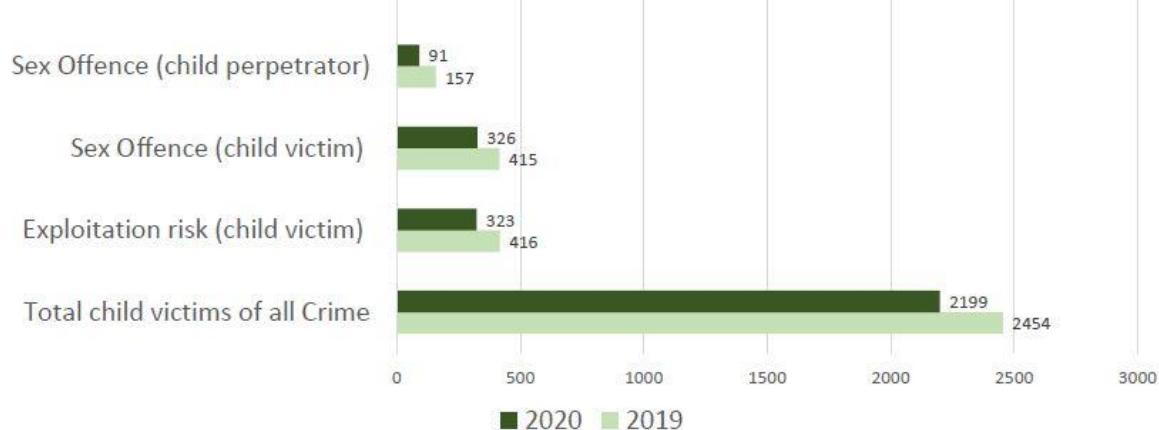
The Safer Somerset Partnership Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) (See Section 7 for more information) monitors data about the number of young people who have been victims of exploitation and the numbers who are at risk of it.

The annual figures for the number of recorded offences in Somerset that were indicators of child exploitation can be seen below in Figure 2. In 2020, there was a total of 323 children who were flagged as having an exploitation risk and 326 children flagged as a child victim of sex offences. The work of the Safer Somerset Partnership has seen a reduction of these recorded child exploitation offences between 2019 and 2020.

Figure 2: Safer Somerset Partnership Number of offences linked to child exploitation indicators

## Child Exploitation Indicators

(recorded offences SOMERSET 2020, compared to same period last year where victim or perpetrator is 10-19 years old)



In addition to the above, between September 2020 and February 2022, there were a total of 254 children flagged as being high risk from sexual and criminal exploitation. The breakdown by district can be seen below in Table 2. Mendip district is considerably lower than the other districts at 29 children compared to between roughly 70-80 for the others.

Table 2: District breakdown of children flagged as being at risk of exploitation by the Safer Somerset Partnership VRU

District	Number of children flagged as being at risk of exploitation
Mendip	29
Sedgemoor	78
South Somerset	79
Taunton	68

ii. Children Services

Children Services routinely use a Child Exploitation Screening Tool to assist practitioners in forming their overall assessment for each young person (See Section 7 for more information). This tool classifies children at one of four risk banners<sup>1</sup> and records any vulnerabilities and risks a child is presenting with. The risk banners are shown below in Figure 3.

In 2019/20 there were a total of 606 screening tool forms completed for 474 different young people. Of these 21 were categorised as Risk Aware, 11 as Active, 4 as Pursue, and 8 were part of the TOPAZ cohort. In 2020/21 the total number of young people assessed increased to 493 (with 593 forms) but the number being given a banner was considerably lower with only 4 being classified as Risk Aware, 7 as Active, 0 as Pursue and 3 as part of the TOPAZ cohort.

Figure 3: Child Exploitation Screening Tool Risk Banners.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note, these risk levels are currently (April 2021) under review.

### CE RISK AWARE

This is our first stage where there are predisposing vulnerabilities towards CE, but there is no evidence of active exploitation at this point in time. The children we work with all have some level of additional vulnerability so it is important to consider if these are wider child welfare and safeguarding issues or indicative of risk of CE, and only add a banner to those children where CE is assessed as the potential outcome of these vulnerabilities. *Children held within level 3 services may be flagged as CE Risk Aware.*

### CE ACTIVE

This is our medium risk where we assess there is grooming towards exploitation and the child is receiving something, e.g. accommodation, gifts, etc. Active perpetrator behaviour has been identified but we may not have evidence of the perpetrator identity.

### CE PURSUE

This is our high risk where there is known exploitative activity with some evidence of coercion / exchange which could include sexual or criminal activity. A perpetrator or group of perpetrators has been identified.

***Any of these indicators require immediate referral to child protection and the police***

### TOPAZ Cohort

In Somerset, we work alongside partners within the police led Operation Topaz. Topaz seeks to disrupt the activities of the highest risk targets of CE where sexual exploitation is the perpetrator motivation, whilst also supporting a cohort of high risk victims. Where a child is part of the Topaz cohort, a separate banner exists.

The gender split for the number of forms completed is pretty equal with 229 males vs 242 females in 2019/20 and 251 males vs 241 females in 2020/21. There is no significant breakdown by gender at the different safeguarding risk banners apart from the TOPAZ cohort being made up of only females.

The screening tool is used on young people of all ages from 5-20 however the most common age is 12-16 years old at 343 young people in 2020/21, followed by 17-20 years at 135 young people. The 5-11 age range had the significantly lower total individuals than the other ages at only 15 young people in 2020/21.

The most common vulnerabilities and risk factors match with what is known from the literature.

The top five most common vulnerabilities in 2019/20 were:

- Low self-esteem – 410 responses
- History of local authority care/involvement - 341 responses
- History of abuse/neglect – 304 responses
- Criminal/risky behaviour – 293 responses
- Family history of domestic abuse - 279 responses

The top five most common vulnerabilities in 2020/21 were:

- Low self-esteem – 406 responses
- Family history of mental health difficulties – 287 responses
- History of local authority care/involvement - 285 responses
- Unstable family circumstances – 278 responses
- Family history of domestic abuse - 268 responses

Low self-esteem, history of local authority care/involvement and family history of domestic abuse were in the top five in both years.

The top five most common risk factors were the same in both 2019/20 and 2020/21:

- Exclusion from school/ not engaged in school/ college/ training – 221 responses in 2019/20 and 212 responses in 2020/21
- Staying out late/ being missing on more than one occasion/ reduced contact with family and friends – 204 responses in 2019/20 and 178 responses in 2020/21
- Risky/ inappropriate sexual behaviours/ Lack of awareness/ understanding of being safe – 202 responses in 2019/20 and 184 responses in 2020/21
- Sudden change in behaviour such as self-harm, mood swings, aggression, withdrawal from friends and family – 169 responses in 2019/20 and 167 responses in 2020/21
- Socialising with other young people who at risk of sexual exploitation – 159 responses in 2019/20 and 144 responses in 2020/21

b. Those potentially at risk of exploitation

i. Age

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes annual mid-year population estimates. In 2019 Somerset had an estimated 111,190 children under the age of 18 (0-17) living in the county. 50,492 of these children were aged between 10-17, making them the highest risk for exploitation.

ii. Sex

In 2019 there were slightly more male children than female in Somerset. In that core age group of 10-17 there were an estimated 25,964 males and 24,528 females.

iii. Ethnicity

In the Census 2011, in Somerset, 105,141 (96.5%) children were classified as White and 3,817 (3.5%) children were classified as Not White.

In the Oct 2020 School Census there were 5,426 children (7.7% of the total on roll) for whom English was not their first language demonstrating the increasing diversity of Somerset young people since the last census.

iv. Poverty

The Index of Multiple Deprivation considers several aspects of area such as health, poverty, and crime to give the area an overall score of deprivation. This is often used as proxy measure of need. In 2019, there 3,852 children in Somerset (0-17) living in the 10% most deprived areas in the country. 1,578 of these were aged between 10-17. This is roughly 3% of all children in Somerset.

The Department for Work and Pensions records the number children (under 16) in **absolute low income families**. In Somerset, in 2018/19 11.9% (11,770) of children were in absolute low income families. This is higher than the South West at 11.2% but lower than England at 15.3% (10).



Another proxy measure of poverty is the number children who are eligible for free school meals (FSM). In the Oct 2020 school census, there were 12,051 children on roll who were eligible for FSM. This makes up 16.9% of the total student population.

#### v. Disability

In the Oct 2020 school census, there were 10,508 children (14.7% of the total on roll) identified as having Special Education Needs and Disabilities. This includes learning difficulties, behaviour difficulties and physical disabilities.

#### vi. Safeguarding concerns

When a child is identified as having safeguarding concerns, there several different services or routes that can be taken to get the child help. Any child that is in contact with one of our services is likely to have one or more needs that makes them at risk of exploitation. Figure 4 provides 2019 figures of the most common types of referral used within Somerset.

**Referrals to Children's Social Care** are when any individual has raised concern of the safety and wellbeing of child to children social care. This can be for a wide range of reasons and not all will be for child exploitation, but they do give an indication of how many children of concern are in the county. In 2019 there were a total of 3,592 referrals – a rate of 323 children per 10,000 of those aged 0-17 (ONS population). Nationally in 2019/20<sup>2</sup> the rate of referrals was 508 per 10,000 children aged 0-17 (ONS population) (11). A lower rate in Somerset could indicate fewer children at risk, or it could be the partnership is less successful at identifying our children.

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<sup>2</sup> National data for referrals to Children's Social Care is for 2019/20 whilst local data is for 2019 so these cover slightly different time periods.

Figure 4: Children's safeguarding referrals 2019 (See Glossary for definitions)



vii. Children looked after

**Children looked after** are children in the care of the Local Authority. The Department for Education reports, in 2020, there were 530 children looked after in Somerset. This is a rate of 48 per 10,000 of 0-17 year olds. This is lower than the South West rate of 57 and the England rate of 67 (12).

viii. Exclusions from school

SCC Education records the number of fixed term exclusions in the county. The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) monitors this data. Between September 2020 and February 2021, there was a total of 3477 days where children were not in school due to fixed term exclusions. This does not include reduced timetables as education safeguarding does not get involved for the first 12 weeks. The breakdown by district for this data can be seen below in Table 3. As with the other data the VRU Mendip, Mendip had significantly fewer days than the other districts.

The VRU carried out an extra piece of work in four schools in Taunton. They found that over the Autumn and Spring terms 71 individuals had been excluded three or more times. Only three of these young people were known to the VRU and only one was known to Children’s social care. This shows an opportunity for early intervention.

Table 3: District breakdown of days recorded by the Safer Somerset Partnership VRU where children were not at school due to fixed term exclusions

District	Number of days where children were not at school due to fixed term exclusions
Mendip	323
Sedgemoor	939
South Somerset	1163
Taunton	1052

ix. Missing from home/homelessness

Between September 2020 and February 2021, the VRU recorded a total of 386 children who experienced a total of 1175 episodes of missing from home. The breakdown by district for this indicator can be seen below in Table 4. As with the other VRU indicators, Mendip had significantly fewer children and fewer episodes than the other districts.

Table 4: District breakdown of the number children recorded by the Safer Somerset Partnership VRU who experienced an episode of missing from home

District	Number of children	Number of episodes of missing from home
Mendip	58	144
Sedgemoor	110	380
South Somerset	107	278
Taunton	111	373

The Department for Communities and Local Government recorded a rate of homeless young people (16-24) of 0.4 per 1,000 (95 young people) in 2017/18 in Somerset. This is higher than the South West rate at 0.37 and lower than England rate at 0.52 (13).

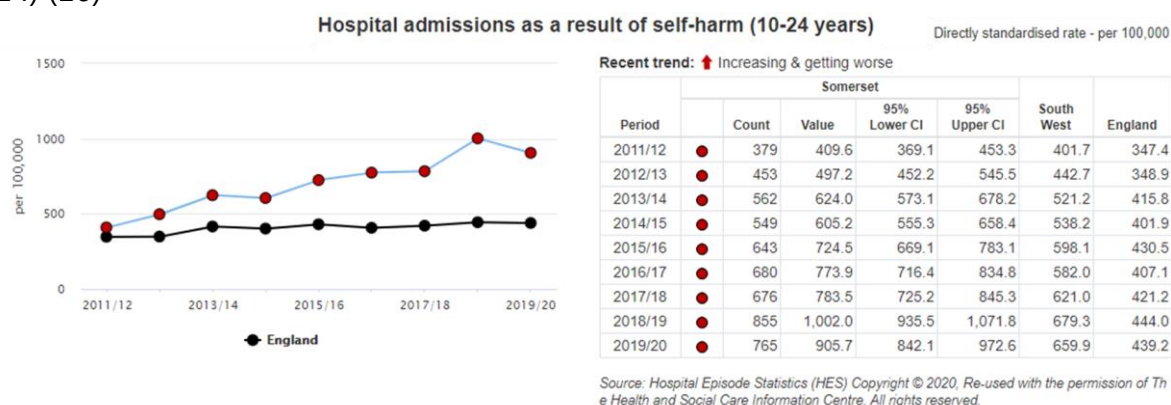
Furthermore, in 2019/20, The Ministry of Housing reported a rate in Somerset of households with dependent children owed a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act of 15.3 per 1,000 households. This rate is higher than the South West at 13.8 and England at 14.9. This works out at a count of 673 separate households which have at least one dependent child (14).

#### x. Mental Health Concerns

In 2019/20, in Somerset there were 155 hospital admissions for mental health conditions for children under 18. This is a rate of 139.4 per 100,000 and is higher than both the South West rate of 114.7 and the England rate of 89.5 (15). In addition to this, hospital admissions as a result of self-harm (10-24) have been increasing

since 2011/12, as can be seen in Figure 5, up to a 2019/20 rate of 905.7 per 100,000 (16); this rate is considerably higher than the South West and England rates.

Figure 5: Somerset Trends in hospital admissions as a result of self-harm (aged 10-24) (16)



## xi. Risk taking behaviours

### 1. Crime

In 2018, Somerset had a rate of first time entrants to the youth justice system of 222.6 per 100,000. This is the rate of juveniles receiving their first conviction, caution or youth caution per 100,000 10-17 year old of the population. The Somerset rate is lower than the South West rate of 241.9 and the England rate of 238.5 (17).

The VRU monitors Avon and Somerset Police data on the number of recorded crimes in an area, the number of violent offences, and the number of children who have been recorded as a victim or offender of violence. The district breakdown for Sept 20 – Feb 21 can be seen below in Table 5. Mendip has the least amount of crime and Taunton has the most.

Table 5: District breakdown of crime recorded by the Safer Somerset Partnership VRU

District	Total number of all recorded crime	Total number of violent offences	Number of children recorded as a victim or offender of violence
Mendip	1604	644	126
Sedgemoor	2514	1064	296
South Somerset	2755	1159	276
Taunton	3634	1515	328

Furthermore, the VRU also monitors the number of young people who are involved in stop and search under the Misuse of Drugs Act. The district breakdowns can be seen below in Table 6. Sedgemoor has a considerably higher number of children identified.

Table 6: District breakdown of the number of young people involved in stop and search under the Misuse of Drug Act recorded by the Safer Somerset Partnership VRU

District	Young people involved in Stop and Search
Mendip	6
Sedgemoor	45
South Somerset	13
Taunton	16

## 2. Alcohol and drug use

As can be seen in Figure 6, hospital admissions due to substance misuse (15-24 years) in Somerset have steadily increased in recent years and are currently at a rate of 141.9 per 100,000 young people. However, over the same time period, admissions for alcohol-specific conditions (Under 18s) have decreased to a rate of 57.2 per 100,000, as shown in Figure 7. The rates for both substance misuse and alcohol admissions are higher in Somerset than for the South West and England.

Figure 6: Somerset trends for Hospital Admissions due to substance misuse (15-24) (18)

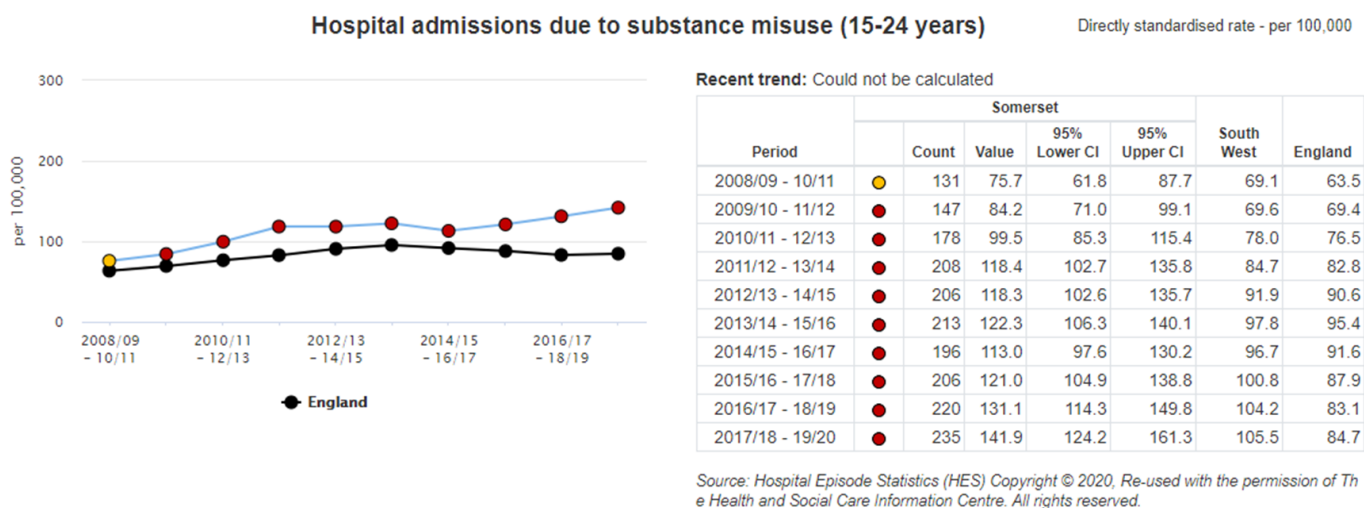
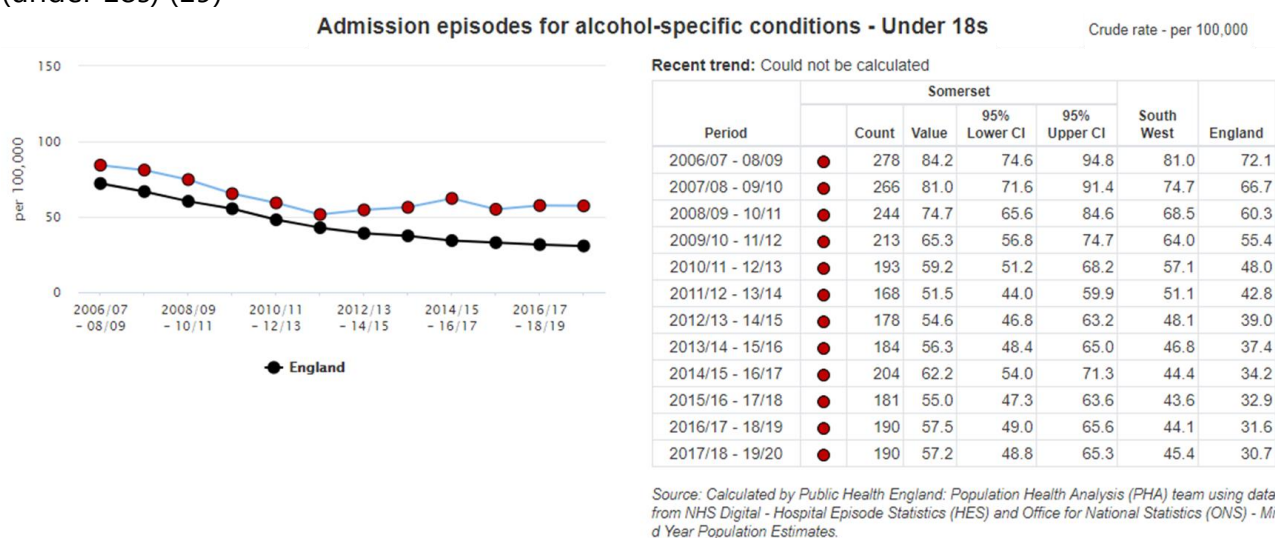


Figure 7: Somerset trends for admission episodes for alcohol-specific conditions (under 18s) (19)



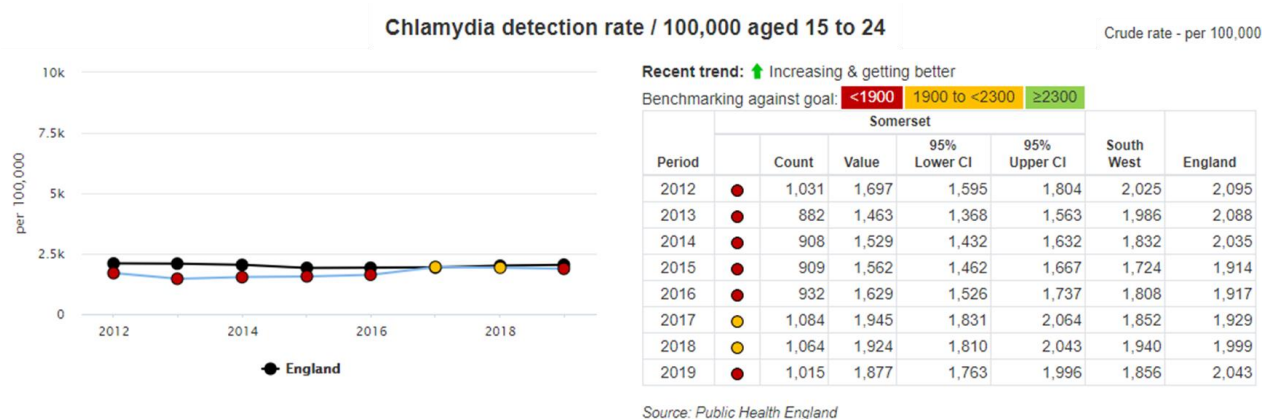
### 3. Sexual behaviour

Under 18 conceptions have steadily decreased from 38.8 per 1,000 in 1998 to 12.4 per 1,000 (110 conceptions) in 2018. This is a lower rate than the South West at 13.3 and England at 16.7 (20). Similarly, the under 16 conception rate per 1,000 has decreased from 6.7 in 2009 to 2.4 (22 conceptions) in 2018 (21) and the proportion

of births to teenage mothers (aged 12-17) has decreased from 1.6% in 2010/11 to 0.5% (25 births) in 2019/20 (22).

Early identification of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) would allow for possible safeguarding/exploitation concerns to be raised and the child given help. However, the Chlamydia detection rate per 100,000 (aged 15-24) has only marginally increased in recent years, as can be seen in Figure 8 below, with the rate being 1,877 in 2018 (23). The detection rate is much higher in females at 2,646 (24) compared to 1,175 in males (25) in 2019.

Figure 8: Somerset trends in Chlamydia detection rate per 100,000 (aged 15-24) (23)



## xii. History of Abuse

The VRU records the number of domestic abuse offences in an area. The district breakdown for this can be seen below in Table 7. Mendip has the least number of offences recorded and Taunton has the most.

Table 7: District breakdown of domestic abuse offences recorded by the Safer Somerset Partnership VRU

District	Domestic abuse offences
Mendip	336
Sedgemoor	548
South Somerset	584
Taunton	740



### xiii. Transitions

The Department for Education reports the number of 16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) or whose activity is not known. These individuals are potentially at risk of exploitation. In 2019 there were 870 16-17's in Somerset who fell into this group which makes up 7.8% of our 16-17 population (26).

Our Pathways to Independence (P2i) service works with young people, aged 16-25, who are at risk of homelessness (See Section 7 for more). The service can support approximately 175 placements across Somerset at any one time. An analysis of service users, conducted in March 2020, can be seen in Figure 9 (age breakdown) and Figure 10 (identified needs). At this time, the majority of service users were between 18 and 21 years old. The most common needs were a history of Mental Health problems (66% of service users) and Substance Misuse (59% of service users). In addition to this, 24% were at risk of or had experience sexual abuse or exploitation.

Figure 9: Age breakdown of service users in the P2i service at March 2020

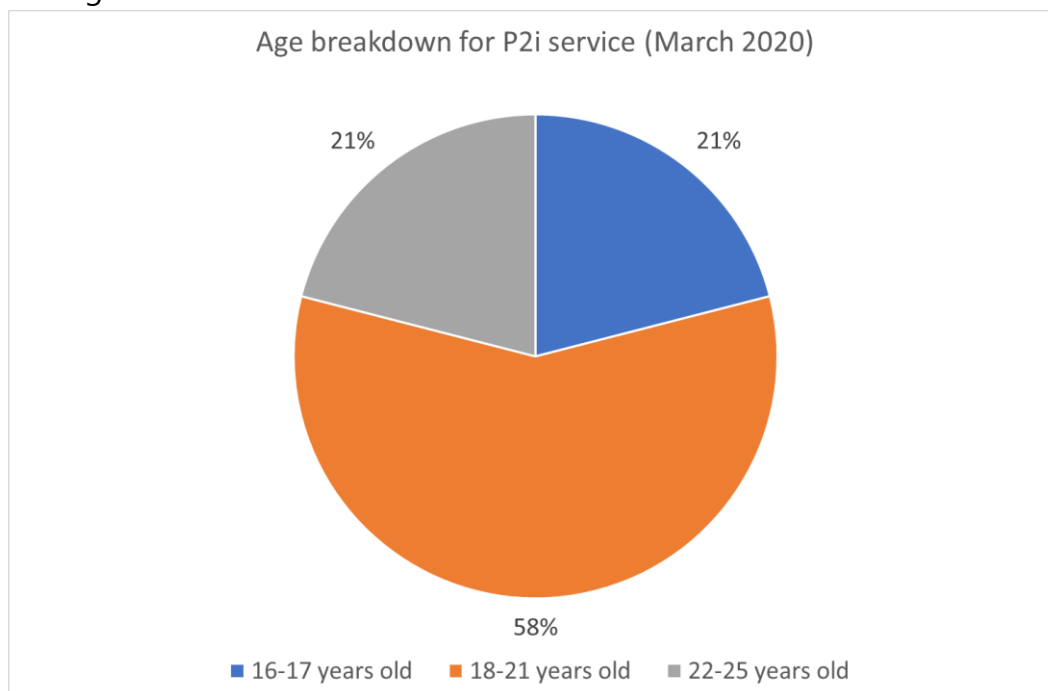
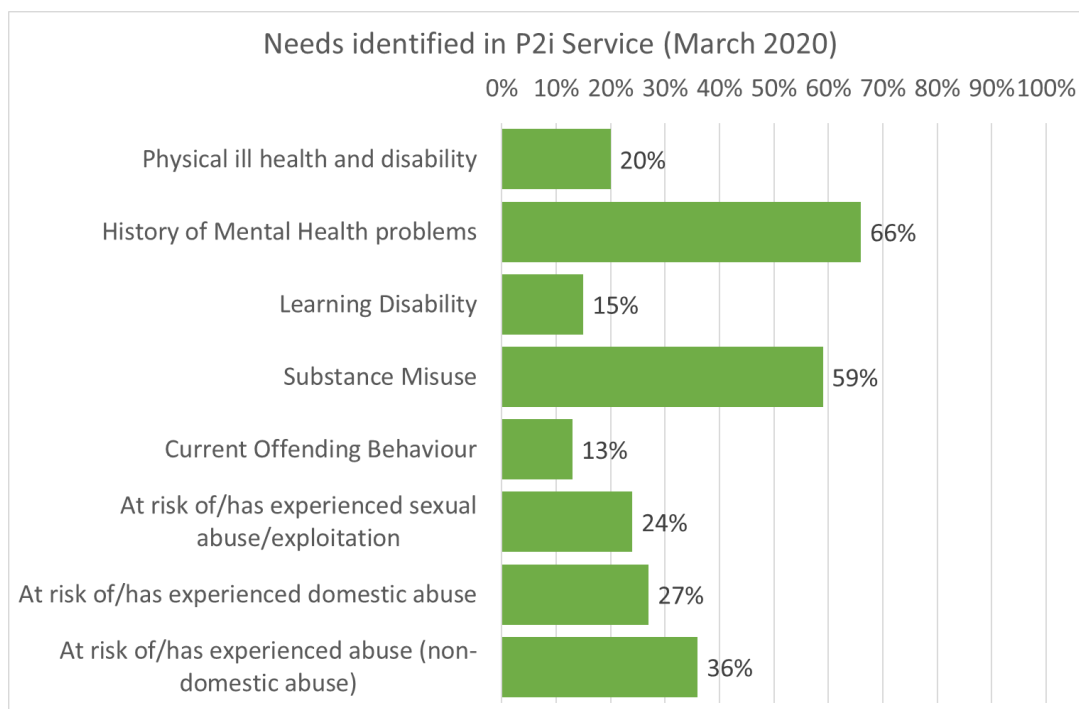


Figure 10: Needs identified in services users of the P2i service at March 2020



#### 5.2.14 County lines

Local Police data (2018) suggests that the number of 10 to 17 year olds arrested for intent to supply drugs, which is a significant indicator of County Lines trafficking, has gone up by 49% outside London. The Children's Society highlight how young people are being pressured into violence to prove loyalty to County Lines gangs and potentially being used to distract the police focus from other disruption activity (e.g. drug, weapons movement).

There are concerns that gangs operating County Lines are exploiting vulnerable young people who may be leaving the care system to criminally or sexually exploit into dealing or storing drugs for them. These young people may be sent out of the area into cities like Cardiff to deal drugs for a Somerset based group which raises particular concerns about their safety and wellbeing.

"County Lines is a job centre for underachieving young people"  
(Speech at London academy of social justice, 2016, CREST)

Qualitative evidence from focus groups conducted with youths in Somerset's Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) suggests young people perceive an increased risk of violent crime when County Lines is present:

"Do you think you are at risk of being a victim of violent crime?"

"Yes, everyone is, especially if there is County Lines in the town"  
(Somerset VRU 2019)

#### Vulnerable Adults and Exploitation

County Lines can involve vulnerable adults as both victims and perpetrators. Cuckooing is likely to involve vulnerable adults who may be targeted due to their vulnerabilities such as class A drug addictions, old age, mental and or physical health impairments. Specific groups can also be vulnerable such as female sex workers and single mothers. County Lines groups pursue vulnerable individuals attending recovery groups, dependency units, and areas associated with those experiencing problems.

## 6. What works best?

Child exploitation is a widespread issue with devastating consequences which every child is at risk of experiencing. To be able to tackle it we need to develop an in-depth understanding of what works well to protect children and prevent exploitation from continuing once identified.

To aid our understanding, Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAs) have been carried out to investigate best practice and shortcomings in current practice:

- The findings of five JTAs focussed on Child Sexual Exploitation were outlined in 'Time to listen' – a joined up response to child sexual exploitation and missing children.
- The findings of three JTAs focussed on Child Criminal Exploitation were outlined in Protecting children from criminal exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery: an addendum

Both reports can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-inspections-of-child-sexual-exploitation-and-missing-children>

These reports have identified some key elements that are needed for an effective response to child exploitation.

### a. A 'Whole-System' approach and Raising Awareness

Taking a 'Whole-System' approach to child exploitation involves engaging all departments of the council, local businesses, and the wider community to "build confidence in recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns" (27). An effective whole system approach will both protect & support children and prevent exploitation through raised awareness & disrupting criminal activity (5). For a 'whole-system' approach to be successful, commitment is needed across agencies listed in Figure 11 (5).

As part of this, there needs to be political commitment to tackling child exploitation. This includes elected council members receiving training and those with lead responsibility for children actively using their roles to inform others and advocate for improving services (27).

Figure 11: Agencies that need to be engaged for a 'whole-system' approach to child exploitation (5)

- The Whole Council
- Children's and Adults' Social Care
- Police
- Probation Services
- Youth Offending Teams
- Health
- Education
- Housing
- Transport
- Community Safety
- The Local Safeguarding Partners
- Local Businesses

This way of working involves raising awareness with the whole community, including parents and children, so they are able to recognise the signs of grooming and exploitation (5). Awareness raising is most effective when local knowledge and understanding is utilised to inform prevention work and provide insight into how perpetrators are operating in the local area (27).

Furthermore, community engagement was effective when carried out with disruption activities. This is particularly important when a victim does not wish to engage with the police. One method of disruption, identified by the JTAIs, is the use of surveillance so that, if a criminal act was observed, they could arrest the alleged perpetrator to prevent further exploitation from taking place (27).

#### b. Multi-agency working

Responses to child exploitation had the most impact when agencies worked together with a shared responsibility for protecting children.

Due to their complex needs, the children most at risk of exploitation are likely to come into contact with a wide range of services. These services need to be coordinated and easily accessible for children seeking help. This means being well informed about exploitation and recognising their responsibility in helping to identify

children at risk (5,27). Staff within these services need to have high quality training about the risk factors for exploitation, how to recognise a child that is either at risk or is currently being exploited, and the appropriate course of action following identification, to ensure the child gets the support they need (5,27).

Agencies need to have good data sharing agreements in place to ensure any professional working with a child has access to all relevant information about said child (5,27). This data sharing needs to be wider than just in-county agencies and data should be shared with colleagues from other counties where appropriate. This is especially important when tackling county lines as often children are trafficked to sell drugs elsewhere in the country (5). Effective data sharing enables professionals in their area to understand the local picture of crime such as hot-spots and gangs which means responses can be tailored to the local needs (5).

c. Child focussed

Any response needs to be tailored to the individual child. Children and their families may not recognise they are being exploited so professionals need to be patient and persistent when building effective, trusting relationships with a new young person (5,27). Professionals need to have the appropriate training around adolescent development, child exploitation and the complexities of abuse to ensure their response is appropriate to the needs of the child (5,27). They should take the time to understand the wider context of young person's life, including any trauma, as well as any individuals the child has contact with, such as friendship groups, and places they frequently attend where they may be at risk of exploitation (5,27). Alongside the multi-agency working mentioned above, professionals should work with all who were caring for the child including families, foster carers and residential staff (27). When working with a child, professionals need to be sensitive, understanding and use language that does not place any blame on the child (5,27). The most effective relationships were formed when the child felt listened to and respected and they had some control over their support by being involved in any decisions made (5,27).

In the statutory guidance around safeguarding children, children themselves have outlined what they need from professionals to form good relationships. These can be seen in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12: What children say they need from practitioners working in child safeguarding (6)

### Children have said that they need

- vigilance: to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- understanding and action: to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- stability: to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- respect: to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
- information and engagement: to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
- explanation: to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
- support: to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
- advocacy: to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views
- protection: to be protected against all forms of abuse and discrimination and the right to special protection and help if a refugee.

#### d. Legislation

In addition to the above ways of working, there are several pieces of legislation that can be used to disrupt child exploitation. The Home Office has put together a Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit which outlines the different legislation and when it can be used. The toolkit splits the disruption activities into six sections: Abducting and Trafficking; Sexual Offences; Victim Care; Behaviour; Location; Other Options (28). The toolkit can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-exploitation-disruption-toolkit>

#### e. Teachable Moments

There are 3 main 'teachable moments' available when a child or young person is either at significant risk of or actively being exploited. These 'moments in time' can be catalysts for change and improved, meaningful engagement and can be the beginnings of a move to a safer position for the child. The 3 moments are:

- Risk of expulsion (fixed term or permanent) for education or training
- Their own victimisation / received harm so presentations in A and E or other acute health services
- Entry into the formal criminal justice system

Research suggests that relevant agencies should work together to take advantage of 'reachable and teachable moments' and identify which interventions are most effective and how they can be implemented. (38)

## 7. Somerset's response to Child Exploitation

### a. Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership

Three organisations – the Somerset County Council, Avon and Somerset Constabulary, and Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group – now have joint and equal responsibility to safeguard children and young people, under the name of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP). The strategic aims of partnership are to ensure that effective systems are in place to promote the well-being of children and young people and safeguard them from harm.

Child exploitation is one of four key priorities of the SSCP. As such, it has a dedicated strategic work stream conducted by the SSCP Child Exploitation subgroup, and capacity for operational 'task and finish' activity as required. Both groups draw on a wide range of membership across the partnership, and also include the elected member with the lead for children and families, and a community (lay member).

The SSCP has been supported by Research in Practice since March 2020 to revise its approach to child exploitation, based on this needs assessment which will inform a refresh of the multi-agency child exploitation strategy (2021-2022).



In addition, in 2021-2022, the SSCP will consult children, young people and partners on a range of priorities, including child exploitation, to inform the next Somerset Plan for Children and Young People which will take effect from April 2022.

#### b. Children's Social Care

Children's Services have a broad-based approach to children and young people at risk of exploitation, be this sexual or criminal. Social Care, Family Intervention Service and the YOS all contribute to multi service planning and intervention where a Child or Young Person (CYP) is at risk or being actively exploited, and this includes through the Lead Social Worker for Exploitation role. Practice guidance in relation to complex strategies has recently been updated to support more effective multi-agency responses to contextual and location issues.

All services offer a relationship based programme of intervention, which can be flexible to the needs of the CYP (and their family network) meaning we work to 'get alongside' the CYP and co-develop diversionary opportunities which help to keep the individual safe.

Children's Services have expanded capacity to support a more effective response to children and young people who go missing and this team is linked to the Lead Social Worker for Exploitation as often missing episodes are linked with children and young people who are vulnerable to exploitation.

A Child Exploitation Virtual Day was organised and hosted by Children's Services on 22nd April and was attended by over 200 people across the partnership.

Children's Services management are a core member of the CE Subgroup of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership and work with other partners to ensure that our services are reflective and reflexive to the changing face of exploitation and that appropriate resources are deployed to ensure safeguarding needs are met.

The Participation & Engagement Team (to work) across services and partners to facilitate hearing and learning from the exploited child. This includes using Mind of My Own app; Return from Missing Interviews, contract monitoring arrangements, practice reviews, focus groups, questionnaires and surveys, research projects and other means of engagement that allow the young people to safely express their views on the quality of support received and the early intervention needed.

### c. TOPAZ

Topaz is Avon and Somerset Constabulary's proactive approach to Child Sexual Exploitation. Topaz is revealing what is often otherwise "hidden" abuse and exploitation. Since the introduction of Topaz and bespoke information and intelligence sharing arrangements with partner agencies, CSE tagged intelligence submissions have increased significantly. This is supported by the outreach work of the Topaz Prevention & Coordination Officer, who through building trust and relationships has helped to identify victims and helped equip other professionals to identify victims.

The use of a CSE model which draws upon over 32 datasets from different organisations, including police data, identifies each month a cohort of children at heightened risk of CSE, some of whom are tagged on Niche and form a continually risk-assessed sub-cohort of children known as the "Topaz victim list".

The Topaz Engagement Officers build trust and relationships with victims who do not want to speak to the police, and there are examples of this resulting in victims going on to provide full disclosures and evidential accounts and also identifying other "hidden" victims.

The Topaz disruption officers identify other methods of disruption for perpetrators when a normal reactive investigation is not possible. They will look to see if there any other offences that can be investigated and explore the use of civil orders or child abductions warning notices for example. This is a shift away from the conventional reactive policing model to a proactive approach, which has increased recognition of children at risk and children being exploited. This model is soon to be expanded to also cover child criminal exploitation.

Topaz encourage professionals to report information about child exploitation to the police and this can be done easily via the reporting portal:

[www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/cse](http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/cse) This is not for reporting immediate risk or safeguarding concerns but for information which can help build the picture around a child and can be used for children at risk of any kind of exploitation.

### d. Violence Reduction Unit

In a response to the national Serious Violence Strategy, since 2019/20, Somerset was allocated funding to establish a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). As part of a broader Avon and Somerset Strategic VRU, the local Somerset arm’s function is to take a multi-agency ‘public health’ approach, using available evidence to:

- Target our most complex vulnerable adults, young people and families who are at risk of exploitation and/or involvement in serious violence
- Tackle the root causes of violence to prevent young people from getting involved in crime in the first place.
- Focus on early intervention, education, and awareness
- Drive systems improvement through advocacy and influence
- Engage communities effectively

The Somerset Violence Reduction Unit has conducted its own Needs Assessment in 2020/21 which has been refreshed for 2021/2022 and, despite clear impact of COVID-19, the priorities for the Unit remain unchanged; see Figure 13 below.

Figure 13: Priorities of the Violence Reduction Unit 2021/22

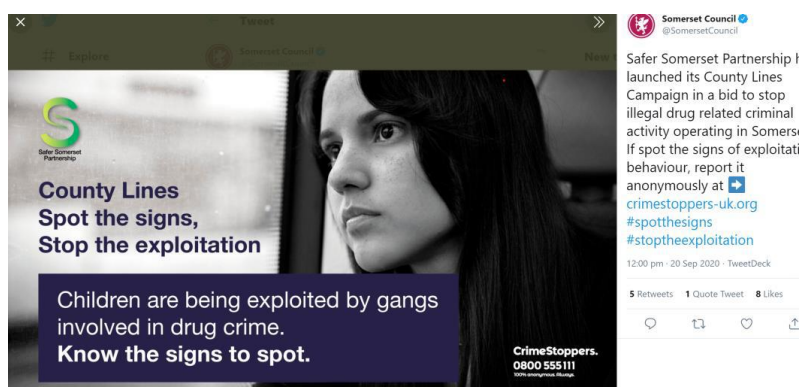


Unit has undertaken a range of activities in the past 12 months to assist in the prevention, identification, and support to young people at risk or are victims of child exploitation, this includes:

- Commissioned Lifebeat residential placements for 70 young people targeted due to their risk to violence and vulnerability.

- Early intervention work with young people with Somerset Sports and Activity Partnership (SASP) to offer activities for young people who were identified in the community.
- Commissioned Turning Point, our local Substance Misuse service to run Admit, in Taunton, were young people attending hospital would receive additional support
- The Unit carried out a County Lines campaign (see Figure 14) with the objective to raise awareness in the community and enable reporting which had excellent outcomes including 38,784 Impressions on Facebook

Figure 14: An example of the VRU County Lines Campaign



As well as direct interventions, the Unit leads a VRU Data group, working across local agencies to help make use of available data to better identify young people at risk of exploitation and violence, and work in partnership to establish ways to help support young people.

e. Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit, Avon & Somerset Constabulary

The Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit (LSU) is responsible for delivery of victim care and safeguarding services for Avon & Somerset Constabulary in Somerset. The Team arrange access to specialist support services for victims, as defined in the Victim's Code of Practice, and manage all prosecution witnesses through Criminal Justice process.

The LSU also oversees Constabulary involvement in multi-agency processes relating to incidents of child protection and adults at risk for cases where there is not an

investigation underway. The remit of the Unit covers those experiencing abuse both within and outside of the Home and involves representation at strategy and MASH discussions, MARAC meetings, Professional's meetings and CP Case Conferences.

The scope of work managed by the LSU is broad, but involves close work with partner agencies and other teams within the Constabulary to identify concerns relating to CE and to contribute to plans to mitigate any subsequent risk. The LSU has a dedicated Missing Person Coordinator who contributes the development of trigger plans and engages in multi-agency safeguarding discussions for repeat Missing People. Where criminal investigation or disruptive tactics are required the LSU will liaise with the relevant Investigative teams within the Constabulary to instigate the appropriate Police response.

f. Commissioned services

i. BASE

SCC Children's Social Care commission and work very closely with the Barnardos against sexual exploitation (**BASE**) service. This is currently a regional model across Somerset, North Somerset, Bristol, BANES and South Gloucestershire) and supports children and young people up to the age of 18.

The Somerset model is slightly different to the other Local Authority's in that it is built upon BASE staff providing consultation and regular oversight to case holding social workers and other children's professionals rather than restriction to a direct delivery 1-2-1 service for all children believed to be at risk of CSE. 1-2-1 direct delivery work in Somerset is reserved for cases where:

- There are a known group of multiple offenders exploiting a child or
- The exploitation case is in the criminal court arena

This service was based on a forecasted caseload of 23 (in 2017). The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) match fund this service. The contract has been running since 2017 and ends in March 2022.

ii. ROUTES

ROUTES, which is also delivered by Barnardos, delivers trauma informed, transformational relationship-based interventions to children and young people up to the age of 25 who are at significant risk of child criminal exploitation, county lines activity, and serious youth violence. Barnardos cover both Somerset and Bristol but have different funding streams in place. Funding arrangements for Somerset:

- 2018/19 Funded by home office early intervention youth fund
- 2019/20 Funded by Home Office Serious Violence funding underspend, held by Avon and Somerset Constabulary.
- 2020/21 Funded by Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
- 2021/22 funded by OPCC, SCC Children's Social Care and Public Health.

The current contract ends in March 2022.

As both contracts (BASE and ROUTES) are coming to an end in March 2022 future delivery models are under review.

### iii. Pathways to Independence (P2i)

The P2i service is designed to prevent homelessness by providing targeted prevention measures. If prevention is not possible the service will allow young people with housing related support needs to progress along a pathway of outcome-focused, needs-led provision, until they are able to sustain independent living without the need for support.

P2i aims to provide a service for all vulnerable young people in this age group who have a relevant need without discrimination. There are, however, some young people who are either unsuitable for P2i, or who are not eligible as they do not reside in, or have a local connection, to Somerset. In these circumstances the aim is to work in a multi-agency way to find the best immediate solution and plan for the needs of that young person.

There are two providers who deliver the Supported Accommodation element; YMCA Brunel Group (South Somerset and Mendip) and YMCA Dulverton Group (Sedgemoor and Taunton and West Somerset).

P2i has a statutory responsibility to support:

- 16 and 17-year old young people within Children's Social Care responsibility;
- Care Leavers aged 18 to 21 (or 25 if in full time education);
- 16 and 17-year-old homeless young people;
- Vulnerable 18 to 25-year old young people in priority need (as defined under homelessness legislation).

The P2i contract can support approximately 175 placements at any one time across the whole of Somerset.

g. Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) - Upskilling services

Through the PH Stronger Communities Team, SCC commissions Spark (Somerset's VCSE infrastructure organisation) to provide a range of support to VCSE groups. Part of this support includes helping VCSE groups understand their responsibility towards CE and developing policies and protocols to ensure an effective response when an issue presents. In partnership with Spark, the Central Volunteer Team provides two or three introduction to child protection courses each year using the SSCP Cascade Pack. Before the pandemic these free courses were face-to-face and they are now provided via Zoom. Via this route we help about 60 staff and volunteers in small VCSE groups gain the skills and knowledge to help them respond effectively to CE issues. The courses are provided at weekends and in the evening to make volunteer participation as easy as possible.

As part of its wider wrap-around support for VCSE groups, Spark provides a DBS checking and support service to groups which don't have their own facility. Pre-Covid the service processed 500-600 applications each year across children and adults, about 65% of which are for volunteers. This service is not funded by SCC or other public sector partner so costs must be recovered from applicants. Most VCSE organisations struggle for core funding so it is currently not possible to charge a sufficient fee to recover the full cost. Spark has provided this service at a loss of about £6000 per year for the last two years and is considering whether to discontinue it. If the fee is increased it will likely cause some groups to no longer DBS check their staff and volunteers, and if the service ceases completely it will leave over 100 groups with no easy access to checks.

It has recently been agreed that Spark will join the SSCP workforce group to represent the VCSE sector. This will help improve communication and ensure the

VCSE sector's needs are better reflected in the partnership's workforce development plans.

## 8. Recommendations

1. Participate in cross partnership activity to improve data collation and sharing to improve quality, and align with relevant statutory requirements (i.e. Serious Violence Duty)
2. It is recommended that the CE Strategic sub group considers training requirements across relevant stakeholders, including schools, and elected members to ensure there is an appropriate level of professional competency as well as awareness and commitment to the Child Exploitation agenda. This will include increase awareness and understanding of SEND vulnerability and transitions.
3. The Child Exploitation Strategic sub group should consider how it can capture the voice of the child to learn from the lived experience of exploited children and young people in Somerset.
4. It is recommended that the system for supporting exploited children and young people would be based upon a whole family approach by engaging with parents/carers and understanding the impact on the family.
5. Ensure that covid-19 recovery and building resilience forms part of the Child Exploitation Strategic subgroup's strategy.
6. Socio- economic inequalities increase the risk of exploitation. It is recommended that the Child Exploitation Strategic subgroup prioritises work in the most



deprived localities or targets young people for preventative activity who present risk factors.

7. Children who go missing are at higher risk of being exploited, can be victims or perpetrators of crime and may have other needs that require additional support. It is recommended that the Child Exploitation Strategic group include this cohort in its strategic planning activity.
8. Housing should be considered as a priority in the CE strategy, linking with the Homelessness Reduction Board in any strategic or policy developments.
9. It is recognised that young people who are transitioning into adult services will have increased risk and vulnerabilities if protective factors are removed or they are unable to access services. It is recommended that this is prioritised for the subgroup.
10. As part of whole system approach, relevant communications should be shared appropriately.
11. It is recommended that the group considers the use of an appropriate multi-agency Screening Tool
12. Child Exploitation Strategic sub group should be assured that the services designed to support exploited children in Somerset, specifically ROOTS, BASE and TOPAZ are performing well and meeting the needs of young people, this should include the voice of the child and lived experience to assist with continuous improvement.
13. Effective partnership working is key to preventing and tackling county lines due to the transient and fast paced nature of the model. It is therefore recommended that the CE Strategic sub group includes county lines as a strategic priority which can give effect to tangible multi-agency action.
14. Activity planning should take account of teachable moments available when a child or young person is either at significant risk of or actively being exploited. These 'moments in time' can be catalysts for change and improved, meaningful engagement and can be the beginnings of a move to a safer position for the child.

## 9. Glossary

Term	Definition
<b>Absolute Low Income Families</b>	<p>Absolute low income is defined as a family in low income Before Housing Costs (BHC) in the reference year in comparison with incomes in 2010/11. A family must have claimed one or more of Universal Credit, Tax Credits or Housing Benefit at any point in the year to be classed as low income in these statistics.</p> <p>Absolute low income takes the 60 per cent of median income threshold from 2010/11 and then fixes this in real terms (i.e. the line moves with inflation). This is designed to</p>

	<p>assess how low incomes are faring with reference to inflation. It measures the number and proportion of individuals who have incomes below this threshold. The percentage of individuals in absolute low income will decrease if individuals with lower incomes see their incomes rise by more than inflation.</p> <p>A family is defined as a single adult; or a married or cohabitating couple; or a Civil Partnership; and any dependent children. (10)</p>
<p><b>Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)</b></p>	<p>Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traditionally understood as a set of 10 traumatic events or circumstances occurring before the age of 18 that have been shown through research to increase the risk of adult mental health problems and debilitating diseases. Five ACE categories are forms of child abuse and neglect, which are known to harm children and are punishable by law, and five represent forms of family dysfunction that increase children’s exposure to trauma. (29)</p> <p>The 10 original ACEs are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical abuse</li> <li>• sexual abuse</li> <li>• psychological abuse</li> <li>• physical neglect</li> <li>• psychological neglect</li> <li>• witnessing domestic abuse</li> <li>• having a close family member who misused drugs or alcohol</li> <li>• having a close family member with mental health problems</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• having a close family member who served time in prison</li> <li>• parental separation or divorce on account of relationship breakdown.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">(29)</p>
<b>Child</b>	A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18 <sup>th</sup> birthday (2).
<b>Child Criminal Exploitation</b>	<p>Child Criminal Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity</p> <p>(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or</p> <p>(b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or</p> <p>(c) through violence or the threat of violence.</p> <p>The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (3)</p>
<b>Child Exploitation</b>	Is the ...use of children for someone else’s advantage, gratification or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child. These activities are to the detriment of the child’s physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It covers situations of manipulation, misuse, abuse, victimization, oppression or ill-treatment. (1)

<p><b>Child Protection Plan</b></p>	<p>A child protection plan is a plan drawn up by the local authority. It sets out how the child can be kept safe, how things can be made better for the family and what support they will need. (30)</p>
<p><b>Child Sexual Exploitation</b></p>	<p>Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity</p> <p>(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or</p> <p>(b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.</p> <p>The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (2)</p>
<p><b>Children Looked After</b></p>	<p>A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours is known as a looked after child. Looked after children are also often referred to as children in care, a term which many children and young people prefer.</p> <p>Each UK nation has a slightly different definition of a looked after child and follows its own legislation, policy and guidance. But in general, looked after children are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• living with foster parents</li> <li>• living in a residential children's home or</li> <li>• living in residential settings like schools or secure units.</li> </ul>

	A child stops being looked after when they are adopted, return home or turn 18. However local authorities in all the nations of the UK are required to support children leaving care at 18 until they are at least 21. This may involve them continuing to live with their foster family. (31)
<b>Children in Need</b>	Children in need are defined in law as children who are aged under 18 and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need local authority services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development</li> <li>• need local authority services to prevent significant or further harm to health or development</li> <li>• are disabled</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">(32)</p>
<b>County Lines</b>	County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. (4)
<b>Education Health &amp; Care Plans</b>	An education, health and care (EHC) plan is for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through special educational needs support.  EHC plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs. (33)
<b>MARAC</b>	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference is a regular local meeting to discuss how to help victims at high risk of murder or serious harm. A domestic abuse specialist (IDVA),

	<p>police, children’s social services, health and other relevant agencies all sit around the same table. They talk about the victim, the family and perpetrator, and share information. The meeting is confidential. (34)</p>
<p><b>Owed a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act</b></p>	<p>Households including one or more dependent children owed a prevention or relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act, crude rate per 1,000 estimated households that include at least one dependent child. Children should count as dependent if they're under 18 and living at home. An 18 year old can also count as dependent if they're in full time education or can't support themselves for other reasons, and they live at home.</p> <p>Prevention duties include any activities aimed at preventing a household threatened with homelessness within 56 days from becoming homeless. Relief duties are owed to households that are already homeless and require help to secure settled accommodation. Although it is in principle possible, it is not likely that a household will be included in the numerator more than once per financial year. Applications are made on a household, rather than individual, basis and the timescales and nature of the process are such that it is not likely that a household will make more than one application in a year. (14)</p>
<p><b>Referral to Children’s Social Care</b></p>	<p>A referral, in the context of child protection, is when someone contacts Children’s Services because they have concerns about the safety and well-being of a child.</p> <p>Anyone can make a referral including a parent, wider family member, friend, doctor, teacher or health visitor. (35)</p>
<p><b>Safeguarding and Promoting the welfare of children</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protecting children from maltreatment</li> <li>• preventing impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development</li> <li>• ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes (6)</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy meeting (AKA Strategy discussion)</b>	The purpose of a strategy discussion [AKA a strategy meeting] is to decide whether the threshold has been met for a single or joint agency (HSC and Police) child protection investigation, and to plan that investigation. They happen when it is believed a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, serious harm. (36)
<b>Systematic Review</b>	Systematic reviews typically involve a detailed and comprehensive plan and search strategy derived a priori, with the goal of reducing bias by identifying, appraising, and synthesizing all relevant studies on a particular topic. Often, systematic reviews include a meta-analysis component which involves using statistical techniques to synthesize the data from several studies into a single quantitative estimate or summary effect size (37)

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