
The Hampshire Partnership

Minutes of Meeting
held on
Thursday, 21st March, 2019

Attendees:

Councillor Roy Perry – Hampshire County Council
Councillor Keith Mans – Hampshire County Council
Councillor Andrew Joy – Hampshire County Council
John Coughlan – Hampshire County Council
Councillor Keith Evans – Fareham Borough Council
Councillor Clive Sanders – Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Rebecca Emmett – Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Councillor Caroline Horrill – Winchester City Council
Laura Taylor – Winchester City Council
Councillor Chris Carter – Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Matt Robertson – Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service
Natalie Wigman – Eastleigh Borough Council
Councillor Paul Taylor – Rushmoor Borough Council
Councillor Diane Andrews – New Forest District Council
Councillor Barry Rickman – New Forest District Council
Laura Cadd – Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Apologies:

Councillor Michael Wilson – Havant Borough Council
Councillor Richard Millard – East Hants District Council
Nick Tustian – Eastleigh Borough Council
Sam Underwood – Southern Water
Neil Odin – Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service
Amanda Barnes – New Forest National Park Authority
Gill Kneller – East Hants District/Havant Borough Councils
Councillor David Clifford – Rushmoor Borough Council
Paul Shackley – Rushmoor Borough Council
Councillor Trevor Cartwright - Fareham Borough Council

1. **WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS - COUNCILLOR ROY PERRY,
LEADER OF HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Councillor Perry welcomed partners and gave an update on the Hampshire County Council (HCC) Brexit preparations. The Local Resilience Forum had been looking into implications for the county, in particular traffic and transport, including the potential impact on ports and major highways. However, at the time

of the Partnership meeting, nothing was certain with Brexit negotiations in Parliament still to be concluded.

Councillor Perry provided an update on the Hampshire 2050 Commission of Inquiry (the Col) and outlined that further hearings had taken place gathering some useful evidence from across the county. Partners were encouraged to submit evidence via the Commission web page if they had not already done so. Councillor Perry proposed that an extraordinary meeting of HCC be arranged in September 2019 to review the outcomes of the Col, followed by an update for Partners at the Partnership meeting on 22 October 2019.

Finally, Councillor Perry confirmed that it was his intention to stand down as Leader of HCC at the County Council AGM on 17 May 2019. After May, Councillor Perry noted that he would continue his role as a councillor for the Romsey Rural Division until May 2021 .

2. **COUNTY-LINES GANGS - THE THREAT OF SERIOUS ORGANISED CRIME AND THE EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN**

Steve Crocker, Director of Children's Services introduced this item as one of eight strategic community safety priorities for Hampshire which had been agreed by the Hampshire County Strategy Group for Community Safety (CSG) in its Strategic Assessment. At its meeting on 11 March, the CSG had considered the safety risk from **county lines gangs, serious organised crime and child exploitation**. In line with statutory responsibilities, the CSG was in the process of conducting an assurance and development review in relation to each of the county-wide priorities in formulating a County Agreement between partners.

The other priorities referenced were:

- The increase in vulnerability through information and communications technology and media channels
- The interconnectedness and impact of mental ill-health, substance misuse, domestic abuse and adverse childhood experiences
- The continuing threat of radical extremism
- The changing demographics of our communities and the importance of promoting inclusion and community cohesion
- The risks facing the capacity of voluntary support services for vulnerable people
- The importance of engaging all children in positive activities and building aspiration
- Alignment of scarce resources to focus on vulnerability and repeat victimisation

Members of the Hampshire Partnership received a presentation on county lines and the threat of serious organised crime and child exploitation by representatives of the Hampshire Constabulary and the HCC's Children's Services.

The concept of 'county lines' was explained as when criminals from major cities such as Liverpool, Manchester, London and Birmingham expand their drug networks to other areas of the country. Adults operating in organised gangs and networks were deliberately targeted and grooming vulnerable children and incited violence, exploitation and abuse. Partners heard how child exploitation was considered a genuine issue taking place not only within larger urban areas and cities inside, and outside, Hampshire, but also throughout rural areas.

The Hampshire collaborative approach to tackling child exploitation was highlighted, including the strategic response headed through four local safeguarding boards and the work of the Willow Team and MET Police Team.

Partners heard how some children were particularly vulnerable to becoming involved in county lines come from a variety of backgrounds. The influencing factors – referred to as 'push' and 'pull' factors – which had an impact upon child exploitation were outlined as set out on slide 13 of the pack. Examples of groups vulnerable to grooming included looked after children, children absent from school, temporarily excluded from school or in pupil referral units, and those with risky or chaotic homes who may be involved in a range of services. It was noted that the recreational use of drugs by adults across the socio economic spectrum was a driver for organised criminal activity which was directly connected to exploitation, violence and other aspects of criminality.

It was noted how the use of technology was becoming more prevalent and children were also being enticed with gifts and cash to gain their trust. The presentation outlined the mapping work already conducted to identify drug networks and organised crime gangs. Whilst this was an evolving national and regional threat the position in Hampshire was that:

- In 2017, individuals rather than gangs continue to pose the biggest threat in Hampshire.
- Victims are mostly white British females aged around 15 years; offenders are commonly white British males aged around 18 years (2018).
- The internet remains a key thematic threat and helps perpetrators exploit children.
- There are cross-overs between all forms of exploitation. Missing episodes, trafficking and exploitation are interlinked and affect both boys and girls from any background.
- The impact of exploitation on boys is not always recognised in the same way as girls.

Partners noted that ten awareness and training events were planned with front line staff across a wide range of partner agencies in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to raise awareness and train staff on the threat of county lines and child exploitation. These would be taking place within the next 12-18 months and would focus on the importance of intelligence gathering, for which a CP1 agency referral procedure had been introduced.

In response to questions, partners heard that:

- Protecting sources of information and intelligence was of high importance and ensuring, in accordance with the Human Rights Act, that individuals felt safe and able to provide information to authorities where necessary.
- That not only children but vulnerable adults were also being targeted through county lines activity. This also involved home invasion and the use of the property colloquially termed as 'cuckooing'.
- That funding for 80 more neighbourhood police officers had recently been approved to enhance the visible police presence within the community.
- With regards to vulnerable children, it was confirmed that the rate of referral to specialist pupil units in Hampshire was consistent between both academy and mainstream schools. Attendance in Hampshire schools was above the national average.

Partners were grateful for the detailed and thorough presentation and recognised the significance and magnitude of the issue of county lines and related child exploitation for Hampshire. Partners felt it would be useful to be involved in future events to help share information and provide insights into their particular areas of focus to help create a more accurate overall picture.

3. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

John Coughlan provided Partners with an overview of the County Council's Transformation to 2019 and Transformation to 2021 programmes. Partners were interested to hear how the County Council was taking an innovative and forward thinking view, transforming its services to ensure that they remained fit for purpose and effective as well as how services were looking to generate income to become more sustainable in the future.