

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Children & Families Advisory Panel
Date:	7 June 2023
Title:	Willow- Specialist Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Team (MET)
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 A report updating the panel of the progress of the 'Willow Team' which is Hampshire Children's Services specialist Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Team.

2 Contextual Information

- 2.1 In March 2015, Hampshire County Council was successfully awarded funding from the Department for Education Social Work Innovation scheme. The innovation scheme invited Local Authorities to implement initiatives that challenged the traditional ways of working in children's social care, reducing bureaucracy, improving outcomes for children in need of care and protection, and seeking to reduce the demand for children's social services in the longer term.
- 2.2 As part of these initiatives, Hampshire Children's Services created the 'Willow Team,' a multi-agency team to specifically address the needs of children and young people, who are repeatedly missing or are at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation and trafficking.
- 2.3 Hampshire remains focused on the challenge of tackling child exploitation in all its forms. Whilst there is no evidence to indicate organised sexual exploitation within Hampshire such as that found in Rotherham, Rochdale or Oxford, child exploitation and youth violence remains a key challenge for all professionals. This has been highlighted in the Home Office paper on preventing and reducing serious violence published in December 2022 ([Serious Violence Duty - Statutory Guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)). There are key links to serious youth violence, exploitation, trafficking and sexual harm that require partnership collaboration to ensure that the exploitation of children is eradicated.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That CFAP recognise the work undertaken by The Willow Team

4 Team Establishment & Focus

- 4.1 Since 2015, the Willow Team has developed in terms of staffing and partnership working and now consists of the following.
- Social care Team Manager (TM)
 - Social care Assistant Team Manager (ATM)
 - Three qualified Social Workers
 - Child & Family Support Worker (CFSW) embedded in Swanwick secure provision.
 - Catch 22 substance Misuse worker.
 - Young Women & Girls Worker (YWGW)
 - Two Missing Coordinators
 - Funding for two Nurses
 - Willow administrator
 - NRM Panel Coordinator
 - Frankie counsellors
- 4.2 Willow is co-located with children's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Out of Hours Service (OOHS) and leads in supporting district teams with child exploitation within Hampshire.
- 4.3 Willow initially developed support for children at risk of exploitation through:
- Improved identification of young people at risk
 - Improved support to victims of or young people at risk of CSE
 - Better quality CSD support to police investigations.
 - Increased awareness and understanding of MET within the professional community.
- 4.4 All these original responsibilities remain a core function for Willow and have been developed to improve child exploitation practice for all practitioners. These developments include:
- Support to Tier 2/3 Practice at LCPs (Local Childrens Partnerships)
 - Development of and support to 9 district Operational MET meetings
 - Linking in Modern Day Slavery concerns for exploited children through the NRM.
 - Continue to develop and deliver generic and bespoke MET training opportunities across the HIPS (Hampshire, IOW, Portsmouth & Southampton) area and the country.
 - Support the process for Missing children with the aim to reduce Missing episodes.
 - Developing all aspects of exploitation and linking Trafficking, MDS, CCE, CSE, push factors including ACEs support and contextual thinking.
 - Team manager is chair of HIPS Operational MET group and advises the Strategic Group as well as working with partners on Task & Finish Groups. For example, the Willow team manager led on developing HIPS CERAF.

- Willow also developed a response to unaccompanied or separated children (UASC), completing age and trafficking assessments and promoting best practice in Hampshire, including support for the National Transfer Scheme.

4.5 The Willow team is now co-located within the ‘front door’ Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Fareham Parkway. This has enabled the team to support decision making with new cases at the earliest opportunity in addition to providing advice and intelligence sharing to social care staff. The social workers in Willow complete initial assessments for cases where exploitation is a significant concern and allows appropriate decision making for children going onto Child in Need or Child Protection Plans.

4.6 The team provides specialist work as follows.

- Direct bespoke specialist MET work with children identified at High risk of being exploited. This has a contextual base.
- Direct work with the parent/carers/ residential workers.
- Assessing S47 and S17 cases directly from MASH where exploitation is the primary concern and developing support plans.
- Mentoring and consultancy to professionals – e.g., education, social workers, school nurses to support them to undertake direct work with the child/young person.
- Consultation advice and support to professional groups, i.e., attending High Risk Strategy Meetings (HRSM) to offer support on how to progress a plan for a child.
- Undertaking awareness raising – i.e., if a group of children raised within a specific geographical area, the team undertake work within schools/ youth groups to raise awareness.
- HIPS wide training on a range of MET related issues, CERAF, Missing, Exploitation, Trafficking & NRM, Modern Day Slavery.
- Disruption of perpetrators - the team seeks to sometimes support work on tackling the perpetrator rather than working directly with the child with police support.
- UASC support in trafficking and age assessing – Role has now changed due to the startup of CSD Refugee Teams.
- SPOC Support to District Op MET meetings.
- Planning around network mapping and offering MET SPOCS for Districts.
- Supporting major incidents as required with police – planning and attending where needed – British Transport Police Operations as an example.
- Promotion of best practice across Hampshire and beyond.
- Frankie Team is managed by the Willow TM and closely joined with Willow offering specialist Trauma focused counselling to Child Sexual Abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation
- CFSW offer for in house training and direct work to Swanwick Lodge staff and children.

- Targeted School delivery 'days of action'.

- 4.7 In 2016, a 'Swanwick Lodge MET worker' position was added to the team and remains part of the establishment. Swanwick Lodge is the purpose-built local authority secure children's home with mixed gender units, providing care for up to 16 children aged between 10 and 17 years from over the UK.
- 4.8 The Swanwick Lodge MET worker offers 1-1 sessions with children and young people, exploring risk taking behaviors, their 'push' and 'pull' factors and contextual situations, their understanding of grooming and exploitation to help children understand their previous experiences and help promote change. The worker engages in regular communication with other Local Authorities, (if they child is from outside of Hampshire) and supports the preparation of a discharge plan for children. A case study below highlights the 'value added' to this role for the children placed in Swanwick and for their staff.

5 Willow Team Additional Project Work

Willow work has expanded since 2015 and much of this is evidence based in relation to best practice and 'what works. A significant benefit has been to understand exploitation risks across the county and to develop and improve partnership working. The following are examples of successful interventions.

5.1 Young Women & Girls Worker

A Home Office funded tender over 2.5 years to work with females being in gangs that is a hidden and underreported issue and often linked to sexual exploitation rather than females running drugs as gang members. Some research estimates that nationally 12,500 girls and young women are actively involved in gangs, but the true figure is unknown. In Hampshire we estimate that there are many girls closely involved in gangs, but romantic relationships have previously been considered a key focus as to how females end up linked to gangs. However, the picture is more complex than that, and Willow has found that local drug networks over county lines appears more dominant. There is a link between wider family and children feeling a sense of loyalty due to their family networks and growing up in local communities so knowing gang or group 'elders' by virtue of their familial connections.

Therefore, there is a need for a dedicated worker who can provide outreach and direct work to females, understand, and offer training to internal and external agencies and staff, consultation for agencies and build upon the expertise that already exists within Willow. This role will be pivotal in developing Willow's work with females at risk of or experiencing gang related exploitation and the VAWG (Violence Against Women & Girls) agenda.

5.2 Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)

The Willow TM has linked in closely with the Hampshire VRU to support the provision of best practice initiatives that are Hampshire based. The VRU is embedded in the Office for Police & Crime Commissioner and below are some examples of work in place.

- Provision of a full-time substance misuse worker in Willow
- Navigator Project which offers youth support in Hospital A&Es to young people who have experienced harm at a reachable moment, and then offers social prescribing in the community.
- Sustained education for children in schools. This includes a year 6/7 initiative (Choices) around exploitation. The pilot is about to go live this term.
- Education Toolkit for teaching staff that includes locally sourced videos and a toolkit to help teaching and youth group staff to focus and broaden conversations around exploitation topics.
- Support the Violence Reduction Strategy

5.3 **Devolved Decision making for the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)**

All child victims of Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery require a referral to the NRM process as set out by the Home Office. This process allows identification of children who have been groomed and moved for the purpose of exploitation and helps protect them in any criminal case as well as keeping records of child trafficking victims. The previous referral pathway was taking in some cases over a year for completion, the Home Office had started four pilot sites to allow local decision making. This was extended last year to ten further sites to which Hampshire was successful in its tender application.

Following a training schedule Hampshire is now holding its own child trafficking panels biweekly and making decisions at the panel, which is multi agency and includes, police, CSD, Education, YOT and Willow supporting. The process is based in MASH and the benefits are much quicker Reasonable & Conclusive Grounds decisions (2 to 3 weeks) being made and improvements in NRM referrals as well as the Willow TM offering training across HIPS on Trafficking risk and the NRM process.

5.4 **Specialist Training**

Willow remains active in promoting best practice through education to all professionals across the HIPS area. The training can be generic or bespoke and is updated regularly to ensure that it is offering up to date and localised information.

- Key training in respect of Missing children, CERAF (Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework), CCE (Child Criminal Exploitation & gang links to drug issues) to district CSD teams including foster carers.
- Hips Training on CERAF use, Missing Children, Modern Day Slavery, Trafficking & the NRM, Understanding Child Exploitation
- Training in schools on Modern Day Slavery, knife Crime and safe social media use as well as drug and substance use.
- Community Care – The Willow TM and Service Lead have presented at a live event in Basingstoke and London and then a virtual event to the whole country. The title was '*Child Exploitation Pathways to safer living*' Willow Team – making the difference.

- Albania – Willow TM worked with professionals from Albania (Police, Education & Social Care) which culminated in a visit to the Hampshire MASH in December 22. This was followed up by an invite to present in Tirana, Albania to professionals for the RAYS consortium which was funded by the Home Office. Willow now presenting on the global stage but also sharing best practice from Willow and our MASH process and CERAF forms to help Albanian professionals better safeguard their children.

5.5 **Police Operations & Mapping**

At the same time as Willow was set up, Hampshire Constabulary formed their own specialist child exploitation team. Both teams remain linked and support one another:

- Supporting and attending Joint Operations
- Intelligence sharing, mapping & naming HOTSPOTS
- Regular Team Manager & Duty Sgt/DI contact
- Child Centered Policing support
- Joint Training across HIPS and to student social care staff

The longer-term aim is still to co-locate and share resources. This will offer a more streamlined approach to both specialist teams and the highest risk cases. Contact with police colleagues means we also have strong connections to the High Harm Teams and Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPT).

5.6 **Op MET (Operational MET Meetings)**

The nine district Op MET remain monthly meetings. The meeting actively shares local intelligence and identification of hotspot areas which supports contextual understanding. Op MET identifies emerging trends and share the impact of local issues from different authorities. This also allows identification and disruption of perpetrators and ensures that evidence is provided for the CERAF as well as the risk grading being correct.

5.7 **Missing Children**

Willow increased activity for missing children in 2019 noting it as a key indicator in relation to exploitation risks. The missing process has been updated to make it clearer for social workers and deliver training to practitioners in the recording and missing work. The Return Conversation template has been updated to be more user and child friendly. Willow missing workers have worked within the MASH process to develop early identification of vulnerable children including reviewing police reports that come through the MASH system.

6 **Willow Evaluation & Impact**

- 6.1 The Willow team worked with over 450 children between April 2022 to March 2023, with over 2700 cases worked on since 2015. The team has an average of 150 children open at any one time on different levels of planning and oversight. The team have delivered training to approximately 6500 plus professionals within Hampshire in their work to increase awareness of child exploitation issues. The Missing workers have been able to bring an

improvement in Return Conversation Offers to month on month being over 76%.

- 6.2 Willow has had two police commendations for operational work and one from the Police & Crime Commissioner as well as winning a national Anti-Slavery award which was part of a country wide honour. Hampshire CSD also had two focused OFSTED visits in 2023 and 2021 to which both were positive about the work Willow undertakes.

2023: Focused Visit

It was highlighted from the recent Ofsted visit that child exploitation work has progressed in Hampshire. The language they used to describe practice was 'impressive' 'really strong' etc. They did not raise any cases of concern and were overwhelmingly positive about the strength of practice in respect of children in care, UASC and those CiC who are at risk through missing/exploitation.

2021: JTAI

The multi-agency response to children at risk of criminal exploitation, trafficked, smuggled or who go missing is pioneering and impressive. Strong and effective communication, between police officers in the Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) team, the Willow Team, and the child assessment safeguarding teams (CAST) social workers, appropriately uses current intelligence to target and protect children most at risk.

- 6.3 The multi-agency approach remains a significant improvement in the professional connections and communications across Hampshire for the children at high risk of exploitation. This communication has also enabled improved understanding through intelligence sharing of the impact of perpetrators and hotspot areas. The number of Community Partnership Information forms has risen from around 17 a month to over 600.
- 6.4 Feedback to the team manager from professionals is always positive and many professionals have appreciated the work of the Willow Team in relation to young people at risk of exploitation, in particular commenting on:
- The responsiveness of the service
 - The specialist advice they received from the team.
 - Specialist assessments and, in many cases, interventions
 - Advice, consultation, and training
 - Improving the overall knowledge of Social Workers in this specialist area, particularly recognising the signs and risks for CSE & CCE and complex nature of exploitation.
 - The development of a specialist multi-disciplinary team is seen as valuable.
 - The duty phone line is highly valued.

- All agencies see the team as responsive, with effective communication and providing good feedback from the work that they undertake.
- The Willow Team is seen as having made a significant difference to the response and understanding of child exploitation issues in Hampshire. This includes achieving greater consistency and clarity on the response. The issue is now seen as firmly established on the multi-agency agenda.

7 Future Priorities

7.1 Future work for Willow remains aspirational and several areas of development have been identified. These are.

- Ongoing promotion of intelligence sharing by all agencies to further improve disruption of perpetrators within Hampshire and understand the changing picture of child abuse.
- Supporting other services to develop their skills in delivery of preventative/ educational work regarding exploitation.
- Improve awareness of the emerging themes of other forms of exploitation i.e., exploitation via gang culture- drug running, exploitation via modern slavery, social media abuse
- Provide a paper to CSD CFMT (Children and Families Management Team) on contextual safeguarding to improve its integration into mainstream practice.
- Continue to review the work of the Frankie Team in offering trauma focused counselling.
- Look to co locate with the police METT team.
- Learn lessons and improve training for work from the Young Women and Girls worker.
- Improve missing work and decrease episodes for Missing children.
- Establish the NRM Pilot pathway.
- Recruit two Nurse posts.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Since its creation in 2015, The Willow Team remains consistent in its aim to reduce exploitation risks for children and young people. The team are dedicated, diligent and child focused and continue to foster positive trusted relationships with children, families and other professionals and promote exploitation best practice.

8.2 The team has been successful in identifying and safeguarding many children within Hampshire and has been instrumental in the promotion and development of our multi-agency work to ensure we strive to find more innovative ways of improving the outcomes for children and disrupting those that wish to harm

children in our county through exploitation. Willow remains a positive force at the forefront of the child exploitation work.

9 Consultation and Equalities

9.1 **N/a**

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	Yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	Yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
OR	
This proposal does not link to the Corporate Strategy but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:	
<i>NB: Only complete this section if you have not completed any of the Corporate Strategy tick boxes above. If it is not applicable, please delete.</i>	

NB: If the 'Other significant links' section below is not applicable, please delete it.

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2 Equalities Impact Assessment:

See guidance at <http://intranet.hants.gov.uk/equality/equality-assessments.htm>
Inset in full your **Equality Statement** which will either state

- (a) why you consider that the project/proposal will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics or
- (b) will give details of the identified impacts and potential mitigating actions.

3 Impact on Crime and Disorder:

4 Climate Change:

4.1 How what does is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption? N/a

4.2 How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer-term impacts? n/a

Annex – Case Studies

Case Study 1 - Young Women and Girls Worker (YWGW) Willow Team (working with missing, exploited, and trafficked children) Hampshire Children's Services Case of L.

This case has been selected as it highlights the experience of "hidden girls." The challenge of reaching this young woman experiencing gang-related harm has been compounded by the relationship she is in, the family dynamic surrounding her, and suspected additional needs which had not previously been identified.

This case has been selected as it evidences relationship-based practice as crucial to engaging young women and YWGW as integral in reaching gang-involved young women and girls. Since the point of referral, this young woman has not engaged with any professional except for YWGW. Hampshire METT / High Harm policing team reflected, “without the information the YWGW is sharing with police, L would not exist on paper.”

Background:

L (16), was referred for Young Women and Girl’s Worker support in December 2022, following police information she had been found in a stolen vehicle with a gang-involved male, D, who also has a history of perpetrating domestic abuse. D lives with his older brother J, a gang-involved adult male, and their mother. D’s family have extensive CSD and police history. D is also currently overseen by the Willow team due to his own CCE risk but has consistently refused to engage with any professionals for some time. At the point of referral, L lived with her mother, stepfather, and two younger siblings (6 and 7). L had CSD involvement historically due to domestic abuse perpetrated by her mother’s ex-partner. L’s father has significant substance misuse issues and has not been an active part of L’s life. L’s mother reports she and L’s relationship had broken down over the past few months due to D not being allowed at mum’s property due to the risks associated with him. L’s mother is considered a protective factor.

Current situation:

Concerns have continued to increase over the past week with L’s mum informing YWGW L is frequently travelling by car driven by D’s older brother, J. J has also followed L to the home address when she returned home upset. YWGW continues to share concerns with police, METT, and CSD professionals and is seeking for this case to be managed at child protection due to the significant and escalating risks posed to L. YWGW support is ongoing, with a plan to work innovatively with METT police colleagues to promote L’s safety and reduce her exposure to gang-related harm.

Analysis:

Although the changes outlined in this case study may appear to be small, the impact of these changes on L is significant. The change in L’s engagement behaviour is integral and forms the basis for further support intervention to promote L’s safety.

This foundation of a working relationship, within which L feels supported even when she is not actively engaged in support, has been instrumental in L feeling able to reach out and to feel safe to start to talk about her experiences and receive much-needed targeted support. Additionally, the YWGW relationship with L, and her mother, has resulted in imperative intelligence-gathering and information-sharing through partnership working, culminating in a robust multi-agency approach and multi-agency understanding of the previously hidden lived experience of this young woman.

Case Study 2 Additional YWGW work

BasingSafe event, February 2023

YWGW partnership working has also facilitated community-based project work led by Hampshire Police Violence Reduction Unit. YWGW collaborated with police to deliver an event to the public, #BasingSafe, organised and attended by various partners including police, YOT, knife crime prevention, domestic abuse support services, sexual health, and the Willow Team delivering CCE/CSE risk awareness, healthy relationships, and substance misuse awareness. Basingstoke has an established gang network and large numbers of associated / peripheral young people. Young people known to be at risk of harm in the community were invited by invitation and supported with incentives such as Nando's at the event and £5 Amazon gift vouchers funded by the Violence Reduction Unit within the police. Additionally, careers opportunities such as Army careers, and interactive activities and stalls were available including a graffiti wall, cricket, and martial arts, to support young people into structured extra-curricular activities which is known to reduce risk of exploitation harm.

YWGW delivered an activity aimed at young women and girls to demonstrate and understand what healthy relationships look like and to offer insight into markers for exploitative and domestically abusive relationships, with the understanding this is prevalent in the population of young women and girls experiencing gang-related harm. An interactive map of Basingstoke was also on display whereby young people were able to stick red or green dots on areas they felt safe or unsafe. This has been utilised by Hampshire Police to support contextual safeguarding in areas of concern. The event was well-attended and the feedback from all partners regarding YWGW delivery was outstandingly positive. The success of this event has initiated funding for a VAWG event to be organised and held in Basingstoke in the autumn of 2023 which YWGW will be co-delivering with Hampshire Police.

Case Study 3 – Missing

Missing Case 1

A 15-year-old girl (M) was referred into Willow following multiple missing episodes, one of which resulted in serious sexual assault, she was raped by an adult male. Willow completed a programme of direct work with M. The 6-week programme included activities and conversation starters focused on missing and the risks, risks and identifiers of child sexual and criminal exploitation, the grooming process and safety planning for the future. M reflected that she enjoyed the direct work as it was not a constant focus on her and hypothesizing around risk. Following this, Willow worked directly to consider the risks to her, and she was able to identify and understand them. During this work, M also identified concerns for her peers, and these were passed on to the relevant social work team. On completion, M had had no further missing episodes She is now closed to CSD and Willow.

Missing Case 2

W is a 15-year-old female was referred into Willow as she was repeatedly reported missing and there were concerns about her vulnerability to criminal and sexual exploitation. W was regularly smoking cannabis and others were concerned that she may also be taking other substances (something she denied). She was in a relationship with an older male who was known to being criminally exploited and was involved in county lines. Several known peers were also deemed vulnerable to exploitation. Her relationship with her family had broken down and she was accommodated into local authority accommodation. On referral to Willow W was not in a stable placement and was refusing to go to any identified and choosing to stay with others known to her.

Sessions at the beginning were more about relationship building and allowing W a place to work through things that were happening and had happened for her, meeting where W felt comfortable to talk. This was during a period of volatile and unsettled placements.

Sessions looked at push and pull factors, mental health concerns, and changes that W could make. Sessions then looked at understanding of risk, county lines, healthy relationships, internet safety, coping strategies, and sexual health. As W's life became stable, she was able to look at her relationship with the person of concern, she then ended this and was able to ensure that no further contact was made.

W is now in a stable, suitable placement with supportive foster carers. There have been no reported missing episodes for several months. W understands why people need to know where she is and agrees to a curfew and to keep in contact with carers. W is currently about to take end of school exams and has a part time job. She has said that she has valued Willow input but understood that it reflected where she was at now that it was the right time for Willow support to end.

The Willow worker was able to provide consistent support during a time of constant change. It was offered in a non-judgemental way that allowed W to explore concerns for her safety at a pace of her choosing and tailored to how she wanted to work.

Case Study 4 – Willow Social Work case

A CAST Social Worker referred to Willow for support and guidance on a recent assessment. The young person was open for a S47 investigation with a 16-year-old female child (S) who had been arrested for sexual assault.

The young person had been groomed by a male aged 22 and had been exploited into sexual activity in his car with another 15-year-old child. S was over the age of consent at this stage so was arrested for sexual assault against the 15-year-old child. The allocated Social Worker for S identified that she had been “in relationships” with men much older than her, one being in their 60s and had previously been identified at risk of exploitation.

The social worker found that S did not want to engage, and expressed that the sexual activity was consensual, and she did not disclose any assaults or crimes, or that she received anything in return for these interactions. Given the unwillingness to engage by the child the social worker considered closing S to children's services and sign posting to sexual health support. The social worker sought assurances from Willow that all options had been explored and that all support had been provided to the family.

The social worker and Willow worker held a reflective conversation and reviewed that although S is legally at age of consent, she remains a vulnerable young person. Willow was clear that the adult males were exploiting her. Willow highlighted that often children do not realise that they are being exploited or recognise the risk. S vulnerabilities were highlighted through this discussion, the young person was not popular in school and has struggled with friendships and fitting in with peers. S was isolated and struggled with social anxiety and spent a lot of her time in her room gaming.

S was exploring romantic relationships and intimacy and seeming to be seeking out affection, love and acceptance. This consultation steered the direction of the assessment, and S was kept open to children's services whilst Willow completed some direct work with her.

S was open to engaging, however did initially find this difficult, in the early stages of the work there were a couple of visits cancelled as she was not feeling up to meeting. There were also days where on arriving she was still in bed in the late afternoon. Over time, with consistency and a child-focussed approach, S began to engage in the visits.

S is very interested in gaming / virtual reality and therefore Willow trialled the Willow Virtual Reality headset with her, looking at the teenage brain, helping S to understand why teenagers, although largely independent are still vulnerable to exploitation. This seemed to be positive, and S was involved in the technical side which helped raise her self-esteem.

Willow also worked on healthy relationships and self-esteem and helped her to understand grooming and exploitation. This was largely through conversation out in the community, she began to open-up a bit more about relationships and this gave the opportunity to explore "red flags / green flags" and challenge and reflect her own perspective on relationships and friendships.

During the time her demeanour changed, and she became more animated and confident in herself. This work seemed to be positive for S, she engaged well, and has since fed back that she has learnt a lot. Her social worker has also reported that in a recent CIN visit that her engagement and demeanour had completely changed, she was up, dressed and ready, confident and spoke highly of our work. In my view, should this consultation and subsequent direct work not have

happened then S would have felt like she was being viewed upon as a criminal and not a child who has been exploited.

S was able to receive support in a child-focussed manner and it was agreed in a recent Child in Need meeting, that the risk has reduced, and that we will look to close to children's service and signpost to tier 2/3 services.

Case Study 5 – UASC Case

RR is a 16-year-old separated child from Iran. He was forced to leave Iran due to becoming involved in political activism without realising he was, subsequently his life was at risk because of this involvement. He travelled for three months on his own to seek safety in the UK.

When RR arrived in the UK he was processed and placed in a hotel for unaccompanied children. This hotel has received considerable news coverage due to concerns about children's safeguarding. There were concerns about high numbers of children missing and therefore at risk of trafficking and exploitation. RR lived in the hotel for a month before transferring to a Hampshire supported lodgings placement for children over the age of 16 as part of the National Transfer Scheme.

When RR arrived in placement, a Trafficking Assessment was completed within 24 hours of his arrival. This was completed (despite previous safeguarding assessments) to understand his trauma and experiences, gather information about his journey and to assess whether he was trafficked at any stage of his journey. During this assessment we are also able to identify and assess current risks to RR.

The trafficking assessment identified RR was smuggled into the UK and that he had not been the victim of any crime whilst he was travelling. Whilst the assessment did not identify any current risks to him in the local community, a safety plan was identified to ensure he was able to settle safely in his placement. This plan meant he was supported to access the local community resources and attend a local mosque to ensure his religious and cultural needs were met.

Throughout the early interventions with RR, the multi-agency support ensured that RR was able to quickly access an education provision. This was tailored to his needs, and he was able to access an English course with other separated young people. The college was local, accessible, and contact was held with the safeguarding lead to ensure he had access to emotional and practical support from the start of his course. Through college RR was able to integrate with other young people who spoke the same language and had similar life experiences. This experience was valuable for RR and meant he was able to access other community resources which supported his integration within the local community and that he did not become isolated.

RR raised worries about a friend he had from the hotel he had stayed in on his arrival to the UK. He was concerned his friend was missing and had not been

found. This triggered a session with RR about grooming, exploitation and how to spot the indicators. RR was able to identify that there was not much for them to do, and they were often bored, had little money and could not engage in meaningful and fun activities. RR acknowledged that this was an isolating experience for many.

RR felt that these reasons all pushed the young people to seek connections from outside the hotel and this is where exploiters would groom and target them. RR was able to identify that these exploiters were able to offer young people things they did not receive at the hotel (money and a sense of belonging). However, he was insightful through discussions and recognised the potential harm and exploitation risks. He was able to recognise how exploitation could happen in his local community and worked on responses he could use if he were approached and who he could speak to if he had any worries.

Positively RR had a great relationship with his key worker and manager at placement and this with his insight into the possible risks to young people in communities acted as protective factors for him.

RR is now settled and stable in his placement. He continues to attend college and is also involved in regular sporting activities which he enjoys and has a positive impact on his physical and emotional wellbeing and his socialisation.

Glossary Summary:

ACES – Adverse Childhood Experiences
ATM – Assistant Team Manager
Catch-22 – Substance Misuse Team
CAST - Children Assessment Safeguarding Team
CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CERAF – Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework
CFSW – Children Family Support worker
CCE – Child Criminal Exploitation
CIC – Child in care
CFMT- Children and Families Management Team
CSD – Children's Services Department
CSE – Child Sexual Exploitation
CLA - Child looked After.
CP - Child Protection
HIPS – Hampshire, IOW, Portsmouth, Southampton
HHT – High Harm Team
HRSM - High Risk Strategy Meetings
LCP'S - Local Childrens Partnerships
MASH - Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
MDS – Modern Day Slavery

MET - Missing Exploited Trafficked

Missing – A Child who has been reported missing, whereabouts unknown.

MDS - Modern Day Slavery

NRM – National Referral Mechanism

NPT - Neighbourhood Policing Teams

OOH – Out of Hours

PP – Police Protection

S47 - Section 47 enquiry for child at risk of or being significantly Harmed.

S17 - Section 17 a child in need

SPOC – Single Point of Contact

Trafficking - Child moved for the purpose of exploitation.

TM – Team Manager

UASC – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

VRU - Violence Reduction Unit

YWGW – Young Woman and Girls worker