



Exploitation

(including modern slavery and human trafficking)

Our aim: Reduce the harm caused by organised crime in the city in relation to drug dealing, drug use and exploitation

Please note this strategy is currently in draft form – the most up to date version can be found at <http://www.safeinthecity.info/documents-and-data>

What we want to achieve

- Prevent children, young people and vulnerable adults from becoming involved with organised crime groups and gangs
- Safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults who are being exploited
- Provide a safe, effective pathway to enable children, young people and vulnerable adults to exit involvement with organised crime networks
- Decrease drug gang related activity in the city
- Increase awareness of the signs and risks of all forms of exploitation amongst agencies and the wider community

Why this is a priority

Brighton & Hove Community Safety Partnership invited the Home Office Violence and Vulnerability Unit to undertake a review of the scale and impact of all forms of exploitation in the city in March 2018. This led to violence, vulnerability and exploitation being included into the previous Community Safety and Crime Reduction Strategy in 2018. In addition to this, Brighton & Hove City Council has undertaken an internal review of its compliance in adhering to statutory duties under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Crimes involving exploitation tend to be committed in private spaces rather than in the public domain and often involve the criminal exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults on a physical, sexual or financial basis. This is a major concern nationally and within Brighton & Hove. Gang activity based around 'county lines', where drug dealers from London and elsewhere set up in areas like this city, leads to anti-social behaviour, violence and safeguarding concerns. This often involves the criminal exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults. There is national recognition that the links between criminal exploitation, modern slavery and human trafficking are significant so these crime types have been absorbed into a wider exploitation agenda.

Key facts

There are many factors which make someone vulnerable to exploitation, with more than one factor present increasing the risk. These may include poor mental health, substance misuse, poverty or debt, school exclusion, experience of coercion or abuse, isolation and homelessness.

Exploitation can take various forms, but mostly involves coercion and control of one person or group over another into criminality for the profit of an organised crime group or gang. There can be high

levels of violence involved, including the use of weapons to intimidate and control members and associated victims, so this priority area crosses over with the previous section on serious violence.

In terms of county lines, gangs may establish a local base, typically by taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults (such as drugs users, older people, people with mental health issues or a learning disability) by force or coercion in a practice referred to as cuckooing. They then use the premises to deal drugs from and recruit local children, young people and vulnerable adults as drugs runners. There is evidence of this in Brighton & Hove, with 108 cases of cuckooing investigated between April and November 2019. Approximately one third of the cases are identified as cuckooed properties after investigation.

Who's affected

As of November 2019 there were 46 children receiving support or services from Brighton & Hove City Council's children's social care who were identified as at risk of or engaged in criminal exploitation, and the same number at risk of or engaged in sexual exploitation (NB. some individuals may be included in both counts).

Being controlled by gangs is one form of modern slavery. Bearing in mind that modern slavery is a 'hidden crime', 21 crimes of modern slavery were recorded in the city in 2018/19, including 9 females and 8 males, and with 10-19 year olds being the most common victim age group. Brighton & Hove City Council has made a total of seven 'potential victims of trafficking' referrals to the National Referral Mechanism between April 2019 and March 2020 relating to six children and one adult.

Our plans

Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children Partnership (BHSCP) has an existing exploitation subgroup made up of representatives from statutory and other relevant stakeholders to direct activity to

tackle these forms of exploitation. This subgroup is jointly supported by the city's Safeguarding Adults Board and Community Safety Partnership Board. Work will be informed by Home Office guidance, Sussex Police working groups for county lines and modern slavery, and by national reviews, Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Safeguarding Adult Reviews.

The BHSCP exploitation subgroup will also develop a multi-agency communications strategy and action plan led by lead partners comprising of the local authority, police and health (Clinical Commissioning Groups) to deliver regular, clear messaging, ensuring children, young people and vulnerable adults are aware of the support services available and how to access them. This will include training, learning and development opportunities for people with lived experience, front-line workers and professionals. We will continue to embed a contextual safeguarding approach to ensure people involved in gangs / local crime groups are supported and their needs met. Contextual safeguarding acknowledges that traditional child protection methods tend to focus on familial harm as opposed to the harm that can be caused by peer groups, different locations and via social media, for example. It also seeks to include as many partners as possible in safeguarding including businesses, community or residents' groups. We will also seek to prevent vulnerable people becoming involved with gangs / local crime groups through peer support and workshops for children, young people, parents, carers and guardians.

There will be ongoing work to disrupt criminal activity via multi-agency tactical operations and focused weeks of action for emerging vulnerable locations or issues. Our enforcement activity will continue to use tools and powers against those who exploit children, young people

and vulnerable adults, for example Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs).

Pan-Sussex partnership work will continue to improve the quality and quantity of local data to better inform strategic assessments, commissioning and campaigns to increase understanding of the impact of exploitation. We will maximise the use of available funding opportunities for joint commissioning within the community and voluntary sector including specialist providers.

Brighton & Hove City Council is a member of the Sussex Anti-Slavery Network which brings stakeholders together from multiple agencies across Sussex to work in partnership to tackle modern slavery and trafficking. The local authority will seek opportunities to continue the modern slavery learning events for community and voluntary sector workers involved with homelessness in partnership with the Passage, who provide services to prevent homelessness in Brighton & Hove. At present there are no specialist modern slavery and trafficking services in Brighton & Hove, but we will work with existing national services to enhance local capacity and understanding to meet the needs of those who have experienced modern slavery or have been trafficked.

Our stakeholder and public consultation in 2019 highlighted a need to ensure fixed-term school exclusions are managed carefully, particularly for those with additional needs / protected characteristics including Black, Asian and minority ethnic children, children with ADHD, dyspraxia, Autism, dyslexia or those with mental health issues; as these exclusions often increase the risk of a child or young person to exploitation. We will also strengthen our plans to work with parents as partners in safeguarding children; and work with the community and voluntary sector to support particular groups in the city, including sex workers,

drug users, people with learning disabilities and people in particular occupations.

