

PFCC Decision Report

Report reference number: 167-22

Classification: Not protectively marked

Title of report: The Children's Society CARE Project 2023-25

Area of county / stakeholders affected: All Essex

Report by: Greg Myddelton (Strategic Head of Partnerships and Delivery)

Date of report: 02/12/2022

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Executive Summary

This report seeks approval to extend the Children's Society's Children at Risk of Exploitation (CARE) project for two years from April 2023 to the end of March 2025.

Recommendations

That the PFCC allocates £168,000 from the Victims' Fund and £138,000 from the Joint Violence and Vulnerability Fund to The Children's Society (TCS) as a contribution to the CARE project for 2023-25.

Background to the Proposal

The Children's Society has operated the Children at Risk of Exploitation (CARE) service in Essex since 2015. Initially funded through the National Lottery, the service is now jointly funded by the PFCC, Essex County Council and the Violence and Vulnerability Unit.

Proposal and Associated Benefits

Between April and September 2022, the CARE project received 114 referrals for 1:1 support and group work. 163 individuals have been engaged this year; 60 on a 1:1

basis and 103 through group work. This means the project has exceeded its annual target of 160 engagements in the first six months. Since the service began, CARE has engaged over 900 young people at risk of exploitation.

Of the 1:1 referrals worked with in 2022-23, 25% have presented as being at risk around Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), 15% at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), and 60% presenting as both. This represents an increase from last year, which saw 40% recorded as both and supports the suggestion that those at risk of exploitation remain vulnerable and can be subject to multiple forms of exploitation.

Performance information over the last six months shows that, overall, 96% of young people showed an improvement in at least one outcome (outcomes include domains such as emotional health and wellbeing, physical health, safety, and friends and personal relationships). For 1:1 cases, 76% of young people showed an improvement around their safety. For group work that figure was 69%.

Some of the trends and specific issues encountered in the delivery of the service this year have continued to be around addressing the reductions in protective factors across the last two years, as professionals were restricted in their approach and young people were not as visible to those that would be likely to identify and raise any concerns. The impact from this, from increased time spent online, young people experiencing isolation, and new risks presented by the pandemic is something TCS has been specifically working with young people on within this project.

The Children's Society is well represented on various local operational and strategic partnership forums including safeguarding boards, the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Sexual Abuse Strategic Partnership Board, out of court disposal panels, and Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings. CARE is well embedded in professional referral pathways and offers a route for individuals that do not engage in traditional support systems so otherwise would be left without a support service.

TCS was tasked to deliver CCE training to 100 professionals during this year. By September 2022, training had been delivered to 69 professionals with further dates booked in throughout the remainder of the year. Delivering this training via MS Teams has made it more accessible for attendees.

Options Analysis

The PFCC considered moving this service to a contractual model from 2023. We consulted stakeholders to discuss this proposal and engaged support from the 7 Force Procurement team, but ultimately decided that the best option was to maintain the current grant-funding arrangement with a view to conducting an open tender process in 2024-25. This was due in part to CARE being referenced as a support pathway within the Essex Violence and Vulnerability Business Plan 2022-25 which was approved by the Violence and Vulnerability Roundtable this year. There was also considerable positive feedback about the current service provided by CARE and concern around the potential disruption and risk presented by a tender process and change of provider / service model.

Consultation and Engagement

This proposal has been discussed extensively with the Violence and Vulnerability Unit and with colleagues in the 7 Force Procurement service. Discussions have also taken place with co-commissioners in Essex County Council.

Strategic Links

The CARE project is well embedded in Essex and is a vital service to support young people at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation. As such, it fits neatly with the strategic priorities of the Police and Crime Plan as well as the Countywide Sexual Abuse Strategy and the Violence and Vulnerability Business Plan 2022-25.

Police operational implications

The Children's Society has used some of its resources and expertise from the delivery of the CARE project to support victims associated with the Essex Police Op Haiti investigation. The CARE project continues to provide Essex Police with a referral pathway for young victims of exploitation.

Financial implications

The PFCC will allocate £99,000 from the 2022-23 Victims' Fund and a further £69,000 from the 2023-24 Victims' Fund to the Children's Society to deliver CARE from 2023-25.

The PFCC will also allocate £69,000 per annum from the 2022-3 and 2023-24 joint Violence and Vulnerability Budget.

In addition, Essex County Council will allocate £80,000 to the CARE project in 2023-24. ECC's 2024-25 funding is yet to be confirmed.

Legal implications

This grant will be subject to the PFCC's standard grant agreement.

Staffing implications

This funding will be used to fund staff posts in the Children's Society that will deliver the project. No ongoing long-term liability will be placed on the PFCC or other funding partners as a result of this grant arrangement.

Equality, diversity and inclusion implications

The CARE service is a specialist, targeted intervention which engages with young people following agency referral. The service seeks to work with those that have not engaged with traditional support services so is designed to be as accessible as possible. The service is limited by age to young people aged under 25 and is

available to all genders. Provision of 1:1 support is now delivered exclusively face-to-face (having moved to a hybrid model during the Covid-19 pandemic).

Risks and Mitigations

There is a risk that funding from Essex County Council will not be available in 2024-25. This will be managed by planning well in advance so that alternative avenues for funding, or required changes to the service model, can be explored and arranged in good time.

There is also a risk that the trend of increasing referrals results in an inability of the service to handle case volumes. In this scenario, TCS would implement a waiting list to ensure the service is sustained for those already engaged.

Governance Boards

This proposal was discussed at the Violence and Vulnerability Operations Board as part of discussion on developing the 2022-25 Business Plan. Discussions have also taken place between the funding partners.

Links to Future Plans

This funding will support the PFCC to deliver against the Police and Crime Plan, the Essex Sexual Abuse Strategy and the Violence and Vulnerability Business Plan.

The funding partners propose to move to an open procurement exercise for this service from April 2025.

Background Papers and Appendices

N/A

Report Approval

The report will be signed off by the PFCC's Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer prior to review and sign off by the PFCC / DPFCC.


Chief Executive / M.O.

Sign: 

Print: P. Brent-Isherwood

Date: 16 December 2022

Chief Finance Officer

Sign: 

Print: Janet Perry

Date: 20 December 2022

Publication

Is the report for publication?

YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

If 'NO', please give reasons for non-publication (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State 'None' if applicable)

None

If the report is not for publication, the Chief Executive will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1. Of Decision Sheet?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Of Appendix?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
	NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

N/A

Date redaction carried out:

Chief Finance Officer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

If redaction is required, the Treasurer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign:

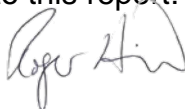
Print:

Chief Executive / Chief Finance Officer

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign:



Print:

ROGER HIRST

PFCC/~~Deputy PFCC~~

Date signed: 21 December 2022

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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.....
.....

Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: