Community Planning Aberdeen

Progress Report	Project End Report 9.2: Reduce by 10% both the number of offences of sexual or criminal exploitation and the number of 'digital' offences by Young People (Under 18) by 2022.
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Date of Report	18/01/23
Governance Group	CPA Board – 19 April 2023

Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim to 9.2 which aimed to reduce by 10% both the number of offences of sexual or criminal exploitation and the number of 'digital' offences by Young People (Under 18) by 2022 and seeks approval to end the project as the aim has been achieved.

Summary of Key Information

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 The Police Scotland Aberdeen City Annual Report on juvenile offenders showed during 2018/19, 675 young people (under 18) were charged with offences in Aberdeen, recording a total of 1488 offences, with anti-social behaviour, assaults and acquisitive crime accounting for a significant proportion.

1.2 Unwanted distribution of digital sexual material by young people is a major concern for parents, teachers and professionals. In 2018/19 there were 25 non-sexual digital offences and 56 sexual digital offences.

1.3 In terms of Group 2 (sexually orientated) crimes, 118 were recorded in 2018/2019, 56 of these were "digital" sexual offences which represented 3.8% of the total offence figures for overall youth offending in Aberdeen City. Unwanted non-sexual "digital" offences accounted for 25 recorded offences committed by under 18s. These sexually motivated 'digital' crimes range from sending indecent or intimate images, sharing or showing pictures. The 62 non-digital offences relate to a range of offences such as Rape, Sexual Assault to Cause a Child to View a Sexual Image, some incidents relate to one incident involving one young person, some involve adult victims. These crimes are not identified as Child Exploitation offences and not included in run charts. All incidents are robustly reviewed and the crimes recorded meet

the threshold for 'criminality' under the Scottish Crime Recording Standards. Incidents falling short of the threshold remain as 'incidents' and are disposed of out with the youth justice system, whether by schools, parents/guardians or informal advice.

1.4   Therefore, the baseline data used was 81 total (25 non-sexual digital offences and 56 sexual digital offences) for years 2018/2019. The breakdown of the offences were:
- Non sexual offences committed by 8-15 year olds were 18 (69%) and 7 were committed by 16 or 17 year olds (31%).
- Sexual Digital offences committed by 8-15 year olds were 38 (68%) and 18 were committed by 16 or 17 year olds (32%).

2.   IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

2.1   Against this background, the CPA Board approved the project charter for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to reduce by 10% both the number of offences of sexual or criminal exploitation and the number of 'digital' offences by Young People (Under 18) by 2022.

2.2   Digital offending by Children and Young People had been a growing concern over a number of years. This was thought to be due to a number of factors, the most prevalent being the increase of ease of access to digital devices and platforms to allow communication. The increase of social media and the influence of this was also thought to be another main contributor. The use of devices and social media platforms was compounded by Covid 'lockdowns'. On many occasions, it was found that when children committed these crimes, they were unaware that these were, indeed crimes. Given the lack of knowledge of both children and carers, it was thought a project of this nature could have a positive impact on those children and decrease the figures relating to these crimes and help support achievement of Stretch Outcome 9: 30% fewer young people (under 18) charged with an offence by 2026.

2.3   At the initiation of the project with a consistent data system not being in place in relation to Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) the project focused it change ideas on 'digital offences' which were showing the most prevalent kind of Child Sexual Exploitation within the age bracket with a view to scaling up and cascading the approaches on other areas such as CCE if successful.

3.   WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?

3.1   Following a review of the current system and engagement with children and young people, several areas for improvement were identified and the following changes were tested throughout the project and are listed below.

1. **Deliver digital offending awareness input to specific age groups within Schools, input to include 'bystander' awareness.** Packages were developed by the multi-agency project team, informed by the Young Person Working Group, Police Scotland and Cybersafe Scotland. These were then circulated within secondary School in the city and delivered by education in with
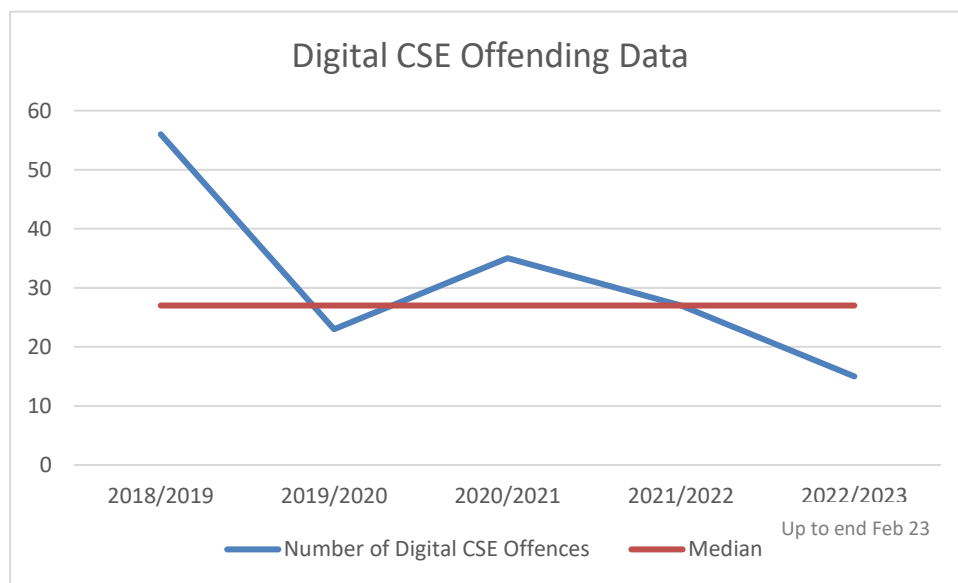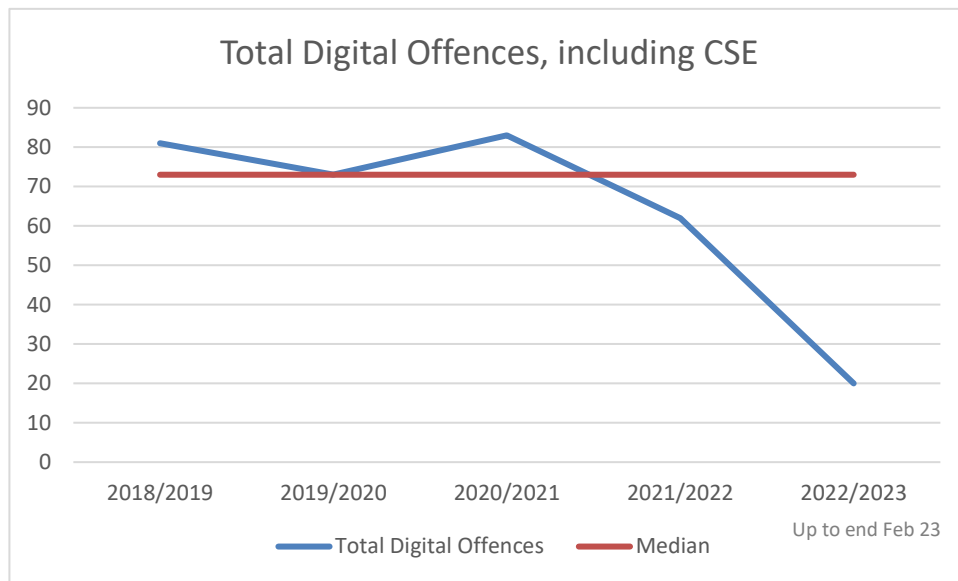
their own, internal packages which raised awareness of offences and importance of identifying same and the potential consequences.

2. **Develop a Young Person Working Group to understand culture and inform method and content of delivering digital offending material.** The group was established and consists of a number of care experienced young people (CEYP) through Barnardos and children and young people (CYP) engaged through Police Scotland Youth Volunteers. These young people informed the project team, advising of which platforms were mostly used and these were subject to change. As well as advising on platforms, the Group have helped create child friendly content. Given, as identified by the group, social media platforms change so quickly, and regularly with young people, the group will support this work on an ongoing basis to ensure that the right platforms are being targeted. Similarly, the young person group felt that future inputs should be refreshed often and young people consulted with to ensure the digital offending package for children and young people is relevant.

3. **Capture CCE data in the future.** It was established that there was no consistent mechanism of recording CCE data across any agency. This has been an issue for various subgroups across all Local Authority areas. To improve this, a new section to Police systems has been added to enable the data to be captured in a consistent format. From April 2022, CCE data is now available and shows six CCE incidents. These relate to young people being exploited for the purpose of drug dealing.

4. **Develop and distribute leaflets to those 'at risk' in the community.** Draft documents were developed for these proposed leaflets and consulted with through the Young Person Working Group. Due to the various ages and communities that were to be targeted, it was felt that there would need to be a number of variations of this leaflet to be beneficial. Due to this, these leaflets are still in the development phase but will be used to sustain the changes of this charter. There is no timescale for these leaflets but the aim is to have them being handed out within the next three months.

4. HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

4.1 The project has surpassed its aim of a 10% decrease with a 23.5% from 81 (digital offences including both sexual and non-sexual) in 2018/19 to 62 in 2021/22 reduction in both the number of offences of child sexual exploitation and the number of 'digital' offences by Young People (Under 18). Whilst data for the full 22/23 is still awaited, data up to Feb 2023, shows that the improvement has been sustained with 15 sexual digital offences and 5 non-digital offences having been committed. This shows a 68% decrease from 2018/19 with 20 in 22/23 up to Feb 2023.

4.2 In respect of "sexual digital offences by young people" aspect of the aim there has been a 52% reduction from 56 in 2018/19 to 27 in 2021/22. This aspect of the improvement was sustained between 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 with a 23% reduction in that period. Whilst for CSE, the data for 2021/2022 showed most

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offences included as "digital CSE offending" with a minimal figure for non-digital CSE offences relating to 'Causing a Child to View Sexual Material'.

Total Digital Offences, including CSE

Total Digital Offences   Median

Up to end Feb 23

Digital CSE Offending Data

Number of Digital CSE Offences   Median

Up to end Feb 23

<u>Deliver digital offending awareness input to specific age groups within   Schools, input to include 'bystander' awareness.</u>

4.3   Initially**,** Cybersafe Scotland worked in three Aberdeen Secondary Schools delivering inputs, which found, after the inputs, young people felt like they had more knowledge and understanding of 'digital offending'. There was also an increase in understanding the consequences of carrying out these offences.

4.4   Feedback from teachers and parents include: **"Plenty of information regarding each social media platform covered" and "Good sound advice about internet safety and offending".** Following the sessions, the educational materials were updated and circulated within all Secondary Schools in the city and delivered by education in their own, internal packages which

raised awareness of offences and importance of identifying same and the potential consequences. These inputs will continue to be circulated and improved.

Develop a Young Person Working Group to understand culture and inform method and content of delivering digital offending material.

4.5   As above, the Young Person Working Group were instrumental in informing the project on the platforms and in developing the material to ensure that it was right for the various audiences. This co-production approach has been key to the success of the project and the Group will continue to support the ongoing refresh of content. The project teams' reflections on this approach has been "Very informative as learning from a different generation has been refreshing and pointed the group in the most relatable direction". While the young people on the group have gave advice such as "*TikTok – Using real life stories to get across important messaging, have someone who has experienced using delivering personal story which is hard hitting true facts." "Use animations with voice overs to tell a story.", "Give out incentives for watching videos such as Young Scot points which they can use to get discounts and money off, so watch the video in full get the points."* They felt valued having professionals listen to their opinion and try and act on same. Although unable to use Tiktok and other platforms, the content such as voiceovers and animations can be used in inputs going forward.

5   HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

5.1   Whilst awaiting the full year's data for 2022/2023, the data so far compared with the data for the same period in 2021/2022 is showing that the improvement has been sustained. To ensure this continues to be sustained the changes tested have been adopted as business as usual and will continue as they have reduced the total number of CSE, including digital offences by under 18s.

5.2   The educational inputs will continue to be carried out in Secondary Schools with material being refreshed and disseminated regularly. The Young People Working Group will be regularly engaged to review the material and communication platforms to ensure the inputs are relevant and appropriate for age and stage.

5.3   Awareness raising leaflets are being developed which will be able to be handed out by all agencies to people they are working with. There will be a number of variations of this leaflet from easy, child friendly reads, to more in-depth awareness leaflets.

6   HOW WILL WE MONITOR THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

6.1   Data is held by Police Scotland in relation to the offences required and will be monitored regularly to ensure these improvements continue. If there is an increase, this data can be analysed further to see where and how the offences are being committed. Inputs can thereafter be developed and distributed accordingly.

6.2   Should it be agreed that the project is ended, the data recorded will also continue to be monitored and reported to the Youth Justice Sub Group of the Children's Services Board, as well as added to the Outcomes Framework/Improvement Programme Dashboard to ensure that performance continues.

7   OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD

7.1   Following evaluation of the testing of the education material and three schools in the first instance, and the positive impact recorded, this has been scaled up and spread to all Aberdeen City Secondary Schools. Consideration is now being given as to whether the material should be adapted and made available for primary aged pupils. Development of such material will be co-designed by the Youth Working Group.

7.2   The Young People Working Group could be asked to help develop material/inform ways to raise awareness of other crimes and ways to reduce the risk to young people of these. The project team have reviewed data to help inform priorities for the revised Children's Services Plan and intend to spread this approach to the new multi-agency improvement aims under Stretch outcome 8. This co-design approach with young people to developing change ideas and communication approaches aligns with the new Community Empowerment Strategy and one model that could be adopted by improvement projects where the decisions/outcomes impact children and young people.

Recommendations for Action

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

i)   Agree that testing is concluded and that this Improvement Project is brought to an end on the basis that the aim has been surpassed, and that the changes tested will continue as businesses as usual and that the Youth Justice Sub Group of Children's Services Board will continue to monitor the data;
ii)   Note that the data set for the overall aim will continue to be reported via the improvement programme dashboard to ensure progress is monitored; and
iii)   Note the plans to scale up and spread the changes tested.

Opportunities and Risks

The main risk highlighted in this report has been the lack of consistent reporting of CCE data. The group has ensured that this is improved in the future and now, as mentioned above, will be captured on iVPD.

Consultation

The following people were consulted in the preparation of this report:
Lisa Kerr
Hannah Bennett
Anabel Turner
Julia Milne

Rachel Thompson
Kim Wood
Youth Justice Sub Group
Children's Services Board
CPA Management Group

Background Papers
The following papers were used in the preparation of this report. LOIP 2026-26 9.2 Project Charter

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