

Tilley Award 2006

Application form

Please ensure that you have read the guidance before completing this form. By making an application to the awards, entrants are agreeing to abide by the conditions laid out in the Guidance. Please complete the following form in full and within the word limit. Failure to do so could result in disqualification from the competition.

Completed application forms should be e-mailed to Tricia Perkins; patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

All entries must be received by noon on Friday 28th April 2006. No entries will be accepted after this time/date. Any queries on the application process should be directed to Tricia Perkins on 0207 035 0262. Any queries regarding other aspects of the awards should be directed to Michael Wilkinson on 0207 035 0247 or Lindsey Poole on 0207 035 0234.

Please tick box to indicate whether the entry should be considered for the main award, the criminal damage award or both;

Main award

Criminal Damage Award

Both Awards

1. Details of application

Title of the project –	Operation Sorcerer
Name of force/agency/CDRP:	Staffordshire Police
Name of one contact person with position/rank :	Chief Inspector Paul GIANNASI
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Full postal address:	Police Station Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire ST7 4UP
Telephone number:	01785 233052
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Name of endorsing senior representatives(s)	David SWIFT
Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s)	Chief Constable
Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s)	Chief Constables' Office Cannock Road, Stafford ST17 0QG

2. Summary of application

In no more than 400 words please use this space to describe your project. Include details of the problem that was addressed a description of the initiative, the main intervention principles and what they were designed to achieve, the main outcomes of project particularly in relation to the problem, evidence was used in designing the programme and how the project is evaluated.

Child sexual exploitation is a significant problem in Stoke-on-Trent, it covers a wide range of circumstances from control of prostitution by parents to the more prevalent problem of the 'Grooming' of children by older abusive males, they form a relationship before coercing or forcing the child to have sex with strangers to fund the abusers lifestyle. The levels of harm, both physical and psychological can be extreme and victims suffer horrific long-term abuse that can leave psychological scars for the rest of their lives.

In 2002 the Stoke-on-Trent Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) commissioned a group to address issues of adult street prostitution, the group sought to identify the root-causes of the problem. Whilst there was little evidence of children being involved in this activity interviews with the prostitutes disclosed that over 50% had commenced sexual activity for reward before they were 16 years old. The research lead to an improved learning on the abuse of children and identified the prevalence of victims recruited whilst in social care.

The group sought to identify the extent of the problem and found it was not easily quantifiable. Reporting tended to be for generic offences such as rape, indecent assault and similar offences. The research identified a clear tendency for victims to be regularly reported missing from home, particularly from Social Care Units.

The nature of these crimes makes traditional enforcement activity more difficult and less likely to achieve the desired outcomes of protecting victims and potential victims. This is largely because victims are chosen because of their vulnerability and the grooming process inhibits their willingness to support prosecutions. Their troubled lifestyle also presents 'credibility' issues in the eyes of the Criminal Justice System. This has led the Operation to seek other ways of diverting victims and offenders.

Operation Sorcerer was commenced to tackle this abuse, it uses a wide range of partnerships to address the problems through a range of coordinated actions, which range from education, enforcement and victim support. It provided an assessment and communication structure to allow information sharing and an agreed plan tailored to the needs of the individual. The assessment model allowed for regular reviews of risk to prioritise and measure success in each case.

The group measure success on the reduction of risk factors for identified victims and also in the interventions to reduce the likelihood of vulnerable groups from being targeted in the future.

(398 words)

3. Description of project

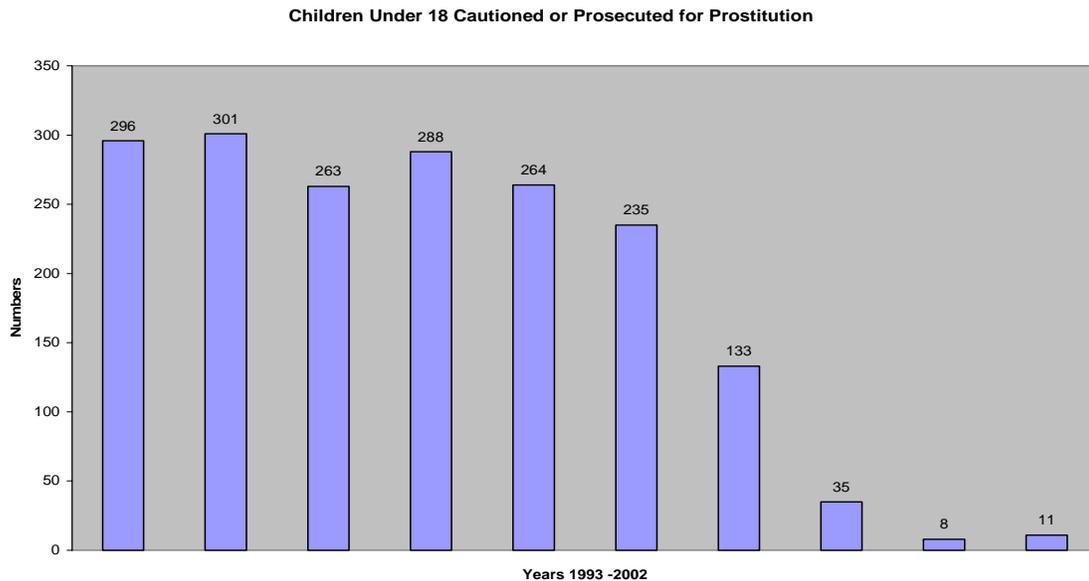
Describe the project following the guidance given in no more than 4000 words

1. OPERATION SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

The involvement of children in prostitution has been recognised in the United Kingdom for a considerable time, but within Staffordshire this has not been an overt problem recognised by the authorities. There have been incidents where children were found in the 'red light' area, but these have been very rare and have tended to be close to 18 years old. (Our remit is up to the age of 18 years to correspond to the Children's Act).

The response of Stoke On Trent to the sexual exploitation of children is under the title of Operation Sorcerer.

Historically, Police Forces have treated children involved as prostitutes but in recent years there has been a recognition that they should be considered to be child victims and The Home Office has recognised that the term child prostitute and prostitution are inappropriate as the term identifies the children as criminals. This change of emphasis is perhaps most graphically demonstrated in chart 'A' below, it shows the reduction in persons under 18 years of age who are cautioned or convicted for offences of soliciting for the purpose of prostitution.



The responsibility for addressing the issue of prostitution was handed by the CDRP to a Prostitution Priority Task Group (PTG) which consisted of numerous identified agencies. The targets handed to the group were all related to the problem of street prostitution which had been identified by many local residents as a significant community concern. The issue of the sexual exploitation of children was not raised as a concern and did not fit into the targets of the group.

In order to scope the extent of the problem and identify the root causes the PTG began a study which included examination of agency data but also a series of interviews with stakeholders, most notably with the women involved.

There were a number of surprising findings of the study, but amongst the most disturbing was that over 50% of the women began sexual activity for reward prior to their 16th Birthday. This led the group to extend its scope for study beyond its original remit and it went on to look at the extent of children involved in prostitution.

The PTG discovered significant anecdotal evidence of children being abused through prostitution, the vast majority were females and the age profile appeared to be from 12 years old. The extent of the study is outlined in section 2.

The PTG drew up another action plan which was submitted for approval of the CDRP. This action plan sought to minimise the risk to victims and to improve the service provided by agencies. We found some excellent examples of work from individual police officers and staff from the voluntary sector but what was clearly missing was a coordinated response across all agencies.

The detailed action plan included the following objectives

- To evaluate the extent of the problem
- To assess the quality of service offered by agencies and identify areas for improvement
- To educate officials to enable better identification and intervention of victims.
- To reduce the numbers of children subject to this type of crime
- To establish a way of measuring the risk to victims to identify success of interventions
- To target offenders
- To educate vulnerable children to enable self-protection from harm.

In order to deliver a meaningful response to the problem a range of stakeholders were drawn into the PTG to improve the chances of success. Key stakeholders include;

- Police
- Social Services
- Voluntary sector (particularly the Women's Project)
- Education Officials
- Health Officials
- Connexions
- Youth Offending Service

Given the difficult nature of prosecution where the victim is so vulnerable the plan was to see prosecution as a tool of the operation and would not be seen as the sole measurement, far more important is the reduction of risk to allow victims to regain their childhood and where possible prevent individuals from ever becoming victims.

The remit of the group was difficult to define as the parameters of the problem are diverse as depicted by the below case outlines, which describe different ends of the spectrum. What both of these cases show is that a person with

power over the victim is benefiting from the rape and prostitution of the vulnerable child.

Case Outline 'A'

Billy is a 13 year old girl who resides in private, rented accommodation with her mother. Her father is estranged and the mother has operated as a street prostitute in the past, but not believed to be currently active. Billy's mother moved out of the house to move in with her new partner and leaves Billy alone in the house. She arranges for friends of her partner to have sex with her daughter and ultimately for pre-arranged men to visit the house for this reason. Police were alerted by a neighbour and recovered Billy, who was found in a bedroom full of 'sex aids', new and used condoms. She had had sex with 5 men that evening and the money was paid directly to her mother.

Case Outline 'B'

Mary is typical of a 'groomed' child. Her case is outlined in the Case Study below but provides an example of the most prevalent circumstances for offending.

Educational attainment

Examination of victims showed that they had almost all failed to achieve their targets in education. Many were seen to be bright girls with reasonable prospects but the effect of sustained abuse was to seriously affect their achievements.

2. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

The nature of the problem of the sexual exploitation of children means that it is a hidden crime, as such, historical records of offences are not available. Within Staffordshire there is no quantifiable data to show the numbers of crimes prior to 2004. One of the reasons for this is that there is no clear line of definition between a child within an inappropriate sexual relationship and an abusive relationship, which exploits the child for the purposes of prostitution. The second significant reason is that detected offenders can be charged with a multitude of different offences, ranging from child abduction and rape to assault and living off immoral earnings. Several new offences were contained in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 but no figures are yet available regarding these offences.

There is a dearth of research to call on in evaluating this area of Policing as noted by Karen Sharpe (2000) who outlined the difficulty in obtaining any accurate information from (adult) prostitutes.

In order to identify what level of service was provided to victims we commenced a case study of Mary who was one of our most vulnerable victims the approach taken was to mirror the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) review,

to identify shortfalls in service.

Mary's Story - A Case Study

1986 Born in Stoke on Trent

1986-97 Mary is raised in poor family circumstances. Professionals believe she lives in an abusive family and is subject at least to emotional and physical harm.

Following a breakdown of her relationship with her mother, Mary is accommodated within residential units managed by Social Services.

Mary is described as academically bright but performs poorly at school with a poor attendance record and significant disciplinary concerns. She regularly 'self harms'.

2000-03 Mary is befriended by a male who is 14 years older than her. He gives her gifts including mobile telephones and he classically 'grooms' Mary. He introduces her to drugs which he supplies to her until she becomes addicted. He forms a sexual relationship with Mary. This develops to the point where she has sex with his friends at his request or to protect him from his drugs debts.

The ultimate aim of the groomer is to finance his lifestyle and drug abuse through her sexuality. A combination of fear, coercion, drug dependency and unquestioning 'love' from Mary means she will not make any complaint for fear of getting her abuser into trouble. Mary eventually ends up being sold to a large number of men, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, in a multi-occupancy dwelling which effectively becomes an unofficial brothel.

Mary reports a number of serious assaults and rapes. She is left in extremely vulnerable circumstances which results in her attacks. There is no doubt that some of the rapes and serious assaults were fabricated by Mary but investigators believe at least 3 violent rapes were genuine crimes. The false allegations diminish Mary's value of a witness and no one was ever convicted of a rape.

Mary had a gun fired over her head as a threat to her abuser to pay a drugs debt.

Mary regularly went missing from her residential unit and often was found at what she would call her boyfriend's home, but we now know to have been a brothel. Police would collect her from the house and return her to the unit, often without interviewing her about the events before her recovery.

On one such occasion Mary went missing on a Friday evening. She was eventually found when she flagged down a car in the street. She was bleeding profusely and taken to hospital where she had what doctor's described as 'serious sexually induced internal injuries'. Mary had no recollection of what had happened to her between Friday and Monday. The most feasible conclusion was that she was drugged and 'sold' to visitors to the house.

Partners escalated the care and protection plan which ultimately led to Mary being taken into secure accommodation. Her managed release included care away from the city and the management plan was kept in place until she became 18 years old.

Mary has continuous mental health demands and has become involved in criminality.

The case review of Mary went on to examine the way agencies had supported her and any lessons that should be

learned from the case. Some of the main issues are outlined in the following chart.

ISSUE	COMMENT
Communications between agencies had failed to identify risk.	When all intelligence was put together a clear picture of abuse was apparent but no one person had a review of all information.
Responsibility for retrospective and preventative action was not clear	Social services have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need (S17 Children's Act 1989) and Police have a duty to investigate and detect crime but there is a 'blurring' which was not clearly defined.
Joint action plans only available after 'case conferencing'.	The majority of victims were not subject of multi agency case conferencing procedures.
Front line staff not aware of signs and symptoms of abuse.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expertise within the Police rests with very small number of staff. 2. Response officers not carrying out return interviews after 'missing person' recovery. 3. Police Officers do not 'like' Mary as she creates a significant burden on their workload and she is aggressive when she is taken back to the residential unit.
Missing persons system does not include historical data.	Missing persons are recorded manually and 'trends' are not discovered e.g. regularly being found at same location.
Relationship between victims and Police is poor.	<p>Victims see Police as oppressive as they are the ones who return them when 'found'.</p> <p>PC's are irritated by repeated 'missing persons reports' and the child's attitude when found.</p> <p>There is very little respect for the Police which hinders confidence to give evidence</p>
Investigations of crimes were single agency led.	Better communication at investigation officer's level would have improved investigation.
There is little consistency of investigating officer.	Several crimes for one victim are investigated by different investigating officers reducing their view of the 'big picture' and minimising opportunity for confidence building for the victim.

The PTG collated the data held by all partner agencies and sought to identify future reduction activity. It found that victims were more likely to come from a small number of schools and in particular children who were in the care of a local authority either locally or placed in Stoke-on-Trent by another authority with a private accommodation provider.

Given the reluctance for some victims to give reliable accounts of their activities the PTG agreed that there was a need to find some way of assessing the risks they face. The data was used from the initial assessment to identify the factors which were most likely to be found in a child who was subjected to sexual exploitation and applied to an assessment tool developed by the children's charity Banardos, which was accepted to be a valuable assessment framework. The final assessment tool was agreed by all parties and forms the basis for measurement of risk and the value of interventions. In identifying the elements which create risk, professionals are able to target activity to protect a child even where they are unwilling to engage with professionals.

3. OPERATIONAL RESPONSE

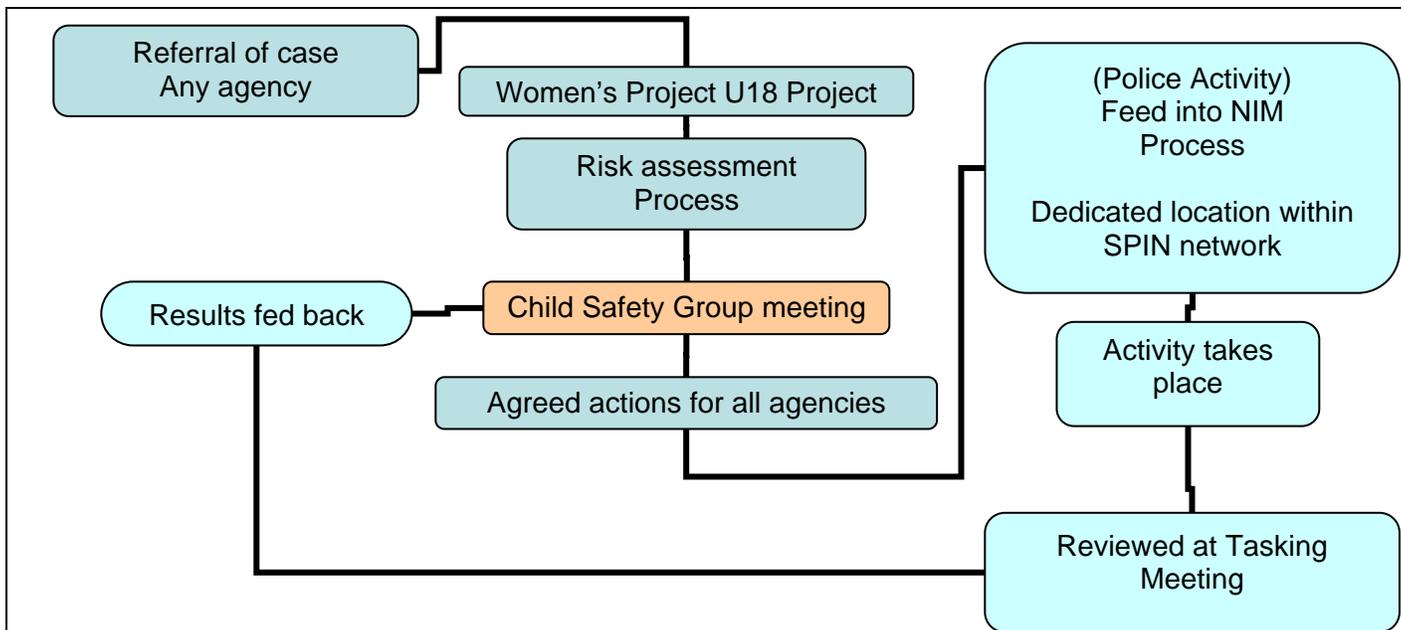
Communications

A key development during the Operation was the establishment of a communication structure to allow the effective sharing of information and a coordinated response to the problem. The Child Safety Group was established to be the focus of activity. The meeting is chaired by a Social Services Manager and regularly brings together representatives of diverse agencies who are engaged with victims. The group is subject to a confidentiality agreement and allows the exchange of data to inform decision making. Each child has nominated key workers to allow effective communication between meetings.

The Child Safety meeting discusses each child who is subject of an assessment indicating risk until such time as the assessment indicates that the risk is reduced and the child is no longer considered to be vulnerable.

Whilst the meeting is victim focussed it also considers tasks to target offenders and the locations where children are targeted for 'grooming'. This has led to the Police and Local Authority activity targeting 'fast food' outlets in Stoke-on-Trent.

The Structure of the meeting is outlined below;



The structure of the meeting and progress against assessment targets is recorded onto an action plan document. A blank document is attached appendix 'A'

Dedicated Personnel

An assessment of the time of the local CID department spent on the retrospective investigation of Operation Sorcerer offences enabled a business case to dedicate an officer to this activity, this would enable easier communication with other agencies and give an opportunity to build the confidence of victims. Detective Constable Jane HOWLE has been seconded to Operation Sorcerer since early 2004.

Evaluation of risk

The agreed risk assessment tool allowed a uniformity of judgement. To ensure consistency it was agreed that the under 18's women's project would be the single point of contact for all new referrals, regardless of the origin of the concerns. Referrals come from all agencies as well as concerned parents and on occasions children self-refer to the group after educational inputs or seeing friends engaged with the group. (Appendix 'E')

Training

The PTG study disclosed a lack of knowledge of this problem amongst professionals and in order to improve response a training plan was developed. The degree of training is dependant on roles but awareness and basic training has been delivered to all front-line police officers and police staff in Stoke-on-Trent as well as all Social Care staff in residential units and many others, including the local Magistrates, health and school staff.

Child Abduction Notices

One of the most impactful tools to professionals has been the use of the Child Abduction Notices. Section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984 was designed to deal with custody conflicts but it provides an offence for someone over 16 years to take or be with a child under 16 years against the wishes of the responsible guardian. The benefit of this offence is that it can be committed even where the child is willingly with the offender. The act has proved difficult to apply as the prosecution must prove that the offender knew the child's age and that the guardian did not wish them to be in the offenders company.

When we looked for solutions we discovered that another force used a similar letter to target children who regularly run away from their carer. We adapted this letter to suit our needs and after consultation with the CPS and Force solicitor we adopted the letter (Copy at Appendix 'B')

In order to maximise the value of the notices a database was created on our intranet site to allow the creation of the notices and to automatically populate a database to ensure accurate recording and integration into Force intelligence systems.

Operation Jangle

During the monitoring of Operation Sorcerer it became apparent that offenders from one ethnic origin were prevalent. Analysis of the data showed that the offenders were asylum seekers who were placed in Stoke-on-Trent by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). The analysis showed that the offenders were predominantly paying for the sexual activity rather than the 'pimp' but the group were involved in 31 incidents in the three months prior to the commencement of the operation.

Links were made with community leaders as well as the Immigration Service and it was discovered that sexual activity with girls under 16 was not illegal in their country of origin.

It was established that their induction did not include advice on sexual ages of consent. Operation Jangle was a joint initiative with the Police, Immigration Service and accommodation providers. A leaflet was produced based on the advice of the Child Abduction Notice but was made more general to ensure that the recipient was given advice to prevent unwitting criminality. The form was delivered to those identified as potentially involved in inappropriate relationships and was handed out by accommodation providers as part of the induction pack, on arrival in the area.

Community leaders were keen to become involved and agreed to promote the notice.

The form was translated into 9 different languages and handed out at the local reception centre until its closure. Links have recently been made to integrate this and other guidance in a course developed by a local refugee support group.

Missing Persons

There is a close link between children reported missing and vulnerability. Children who are missing are vulnerable because they lack the normal support structures but children who are being abused often arrive home late because of their abuse. For this reason our missing person database has been amended to show that any child who is at risk in Operation Sorcerer is considered to be a high risk and is brought to the attention of a member of the Basic Command Unit (BCU) command team, this ensures that the enquiry is robust and that de-briefs are effective when the child returns.

Religious leaders

Analysis of offenders shows that many are actively involved in religion, and originate from families where religion is a strong influence. Religious leaders have been engaged and all strongly believe that the types of abuse outlined in Stoke-on-Trent are against the moral teachings of their religions. Their support for the aims has been sought. All have agreed to help by actively seeking to guide potential offenders away from abuse.

Victim Support

The victims identified in Operation Sorcerer tend to have complex needs and require long-term support. It is very fortunate that in order to address the problem partners have funded the Under 18's project under the management of a local Housing Association. They lead on prevention of potential victims and risk groups and diversionary activity for those who are identified as victims.

They are able to deliver individual and group activity and facilitate the victims reintegration to education and other beneficial activities. Whilst the team operate independently from the Police and Social Services the close working relationship assists in building confidence in the services.

Education of potential victims

The long-term success of the Operation relies on reducing the number of new victims, the best chance of achieving this is to educate children to be able to recognise an abusive relationship and to have the confidence to seek support before they become victims.

Analysis of adult prostitutes and child victims identified that there was a commonality of some factors of their upbringing. Factors like disruptive family circumstances and socio-economic factors enables us to identify target groups and schools for educational inputs. Staff from the Under 18's project are able to carry out workshops for children. Where necessary this can be supplemented by dedicated Police and Social Services staff.

Media Strategy

The nature of this type of criminality means that media providers often wish to become involved, but the use of the media, which could prove so valuable in providing reduction advice to parents could also have negative impacts in effectively acting to 'advertise' the availability of children. For this reason partners agreed to a joint press policy to maximise the positive benefits by concentrating on successful prosecutions.

4. EVALUATION

The evaluation of each individual concentrates on the reduction of score using the assessment tool. Each child is considered by the Child Safety Group until they present an acceptable degree of risk.

Since January 2003, 388 'nominals' have been linked to the Operation Sorcerer Intelligence site of which 223 have been subject of concern as a victim. At its peak the Group considered 65 girls to be at significant risk.

At the end of March 2006, just 36 children were currently considered by the group to be at high or medium risk and will be considered until the risk is reduced. This reduction has also led to some significant cost benefits, most notably in the reduction of children who were placed in secure accommodation which costs between £4-5,000 per week per child and at the peak of the problem 7 girls were secured.

The women's Under 18 project produce monthly statistics to highlight performance against the targets of the PTG, a specimen return is attached at Appendix 'C' This allows managers of the agencies who invest in the solution to evaluate success against agreed targets.

Arrests of targets

The most prevalent targets of Operation Sorcerer are adopted as target nominals for the BCU which coordinates enforcement activity. This has led to a number of arrest for rape, assault and similar offences. The targeting has also led to arrest for unrelated activity but this is actively pursued as it provides an excellent opportunity for intervention with victims.

Child Abduction Notices

Since the database was commenced 132 Child Abduction notices have been issued and to date only one person has been identified to have breached the warning. The obvious limit to this notice is it is only of value to the specific child but where persistent offenders identify new targets we proactively seek guardians approval to protect the potential future victim.

Operation Jangle

By comparison to the 31 incidents in the three months prior to this Operation involving the specific ethnic group there was only one identified incident in the following six month period.

Education and prevention

The numbers of children who receive an educational input is measured and the ongoing analysis of victims informs the target schools to ensure that effort is most relevant. The performance in this area is highlighted at Appendix 'D'

Force Threat

By integrating Operation Sorcerer into the National Intelligence Model the Operation has been integrated into BCU and Force planning. Where offending has crossed boundaries the interventions have included host areas.

Staffordshire Police has recognised the threat of this criminality in its NIM Level 2 response. The practice has been adopted as a force response and the problem of sexual Exploitation has been included in the Force Threat Assessment and is monitored at Level 2.

The problems outlined in Operation Sorcerer have been recognised in the new Stoke-on-Trent Children and Young Person's Plan and the Child Safety Group is to be adopted under the newly formed Safeguarding Children's Board, this will allow long-term monitoring of the problem and our responses.

(3,960 words)