



# **Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) Hub Information Guide 2020**

<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Dorcas Taylor – Interim Group Manager</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>January 2020</b>
<b>Version</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Date for Review</b>	<b>January 2021</b>

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Staffing in the MET Hub.....	3
3. Function of the MET Hub.....	4
4. Children/Young people Missing Education...	5
5. Undertaking Return Home Interviews.....	5/6
6. Principles of MET Hub.....	6/7
7. Being Alive to the indicators/Risks.....	7-12
8. Partnership working	
Other Local Authority (OLA) Children/Young People .....	12
Links with the Safer Relationship Team.....	13
Links with the District Teams.....	14-16
9. MACE Meeting.....	15/16
10. Operation MAKESAFE.....	16
11. Channel Panel.....	17
12. Joining up the Dots.....	18/19

## **1. Introduction**

The Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) Hub sits under the Integrated Front Door Services based at Chord Park which includes the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) and the Early Help Hub. This co-location ensures that any concerns regarding child exploitation as a result of a missing episode are responded to at the earliest opportunity and information is shared quickly to enable appropriate and effective action to be taken. Being placed within the IFD also facilitates the opportunity for the MET Hub staff to be part of decision making processes regarding progression and intervention of cases where child exploitation has been identified as a concern. The Met Hub works closely with the police MET Hub which is also based at Chord Park.

The aim of the MET Hub intervention is to reduce the risk of repeat missing episodes and exposure to exploitation by helping children to understand the risks associated with being missing and the support that is available to them. Further, to educate and to give young people the tools they need to recognise the warning signs, keep themselves safe and know how to report anything they are worried about.

## **2. Staffing in the MET Hub**

The MET HUB is made up of 6 alternatively qualified staff and is led by a senior practitioner supported by the MASH Team Managers and sits under the direct line management of the Group Manager. All workers have expert knowledge on the services available to meet the needs of the young people and they provide advice and guidance to the social work teams in order to ensure that the most vulnerable children have appropriate and robust plans in place to keep them safe.

Each MET Hub staff member has responsibility for liaison with a particular area to ensure that support is available and that practitioners in the field can be provided with guidance and information as needed.

See Appendix 1

### **3. Function of the MET Hub**

The MET Hub is responsible for completing Return Home Interviews (RHIs) for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough children and young people who are reported missing from home or care and who may, as a result, be vulnerable to child exploitation. They are supported in this by the National Youth Association Service (NYAS) who complete any required RHI for children in the care of either Local Authority who live outside of the 70 miles radius of the Cambridgeshire County boundary (Appendix 2). NYAS is a commissioned service who are contracted to undertake up to 80 RHIs per annum.

Notifications of missing episodes for Children Looked After from Other Local Authorities that have been placed in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are progressed to the MET Hub. This information is recorded and collated on the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Tracker and the responsible authority notified of the missing episode. The MET Hub do not provide RHIs for this cohort of children as the responsibility remains with the placing authority.

The MET Hub work closely with the MET Hub police to risk assess cases of children missing from home or care and to analyse data for patterns that indicate particular concerns and risks. Police Prevention Interviews (previously known as safe and well checks) are carried out by the police as soon as possible after a child reported as missing has been found. The purpose is to check for any indications that the child has suffered harm, gather information about who they have gone missing with and where they have been, and to provide an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them. A police notification is progressed to the MET Hub with details of the information collated during the Police Prevention Interview which triggers the RHI.

The MET HUB track and monitor the data around exploitation and the associated risks (links between children going missing and the risks of exposure to exploitation including; violent crime, gang exploitation, sexual exploitation or drug and alcohol misuse) and the senior practitioner provides a monthly report for each Local Authority MACE meeting. The MET Hub workers in consultation with the MET Hub police have responsibility for maintaining an overview of those Cambridgeshire and Peterborough children and young people at risk of child exploitation. This information is collated on

the MET Hub tracker which is updated on a daily basis with information provided by the MET Hub Police, District Teams and the Early Help Hub of children and young people that have been reported as missing or have been located following a missing episode and those who have been identified as being at risk of exploitation.

#### **4. Children/young People Missing Education**

Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Children and young people who run away and go missing are also likely to be missing from education. Information will be exchanged with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough County Council Children Missing Education Officers, the District Teams and the MET Hub staff to ensure that both a safety plan and risk reduction strategy are in place for the child/young person.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/550416/Children\\_Missing\\_Education\\_-\\_statutory\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf)

[Schools-Attendance-AttendancePolicyAppCME](#)

[\\CCCAUSER07\users\local\tk331\Desktop\CME Policy \(For Maintained Schools and Academies\) September 2016.pdf](#)

#### **5. Undertaking Return Home Interviews**

Prior to any Return Home Interview (RHI) being undertaken with a young person, the practitioner/police officer will gain consent from the parent/carer and young person for the interview to be undertaken and agree, who information will be shared with and the purpose of the information sharing.

If the young person is unwilling to engage in an interview they will be signposted to other agencies that they can speak to anonymously about any concerns they may have. Parents and carers are offered the opportunity by the MET Hub worker to provide any relevant information/ intelligence and to share any concerns they may

have. The MET Hub workers will offer parents and carers advice in respect of preventative approaches that can be taken to help reduce the risk of further missing episodes and identify early the support needed.

RHI's should be carried out within 72 hours of the child being found. The MET Hub workers are trained to carry out these interviews and are able to identify and signpost any follow up actions that emerge. The interview and the actions that follow from an RHI should:

- Identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered – including harm that might not have already been disclosed as part of the Police Prevention Interview– either before they ran away or whilst missing;
- Understand and try to address the reasons why the child/young person ran away;
- Help the child feel safe and understand that they have options to prevent repeat instances of them running away;
- Provide them with information on how to stay safe if they choose to run away again, including helpline numbers.

Where children/young people refuse to engage with the RHI, the attitude of professionals, such as police officers and social workers, towards a child who has been missing can have a big impact on how they will engage with subsequent investigations and protection planning. However “streetwise” they may appear, they are children and may be extremely vulnerable to multiple risks. A supportive approach, actively listening and responding to a child’s needs, will have a greater chance of preventing the child from going missing again and safeguarding them against other risks.

## **Barriers to Engagement**

Both the Police Prevention Interview and the Return Home Interview may be perceived as intimidating for a child/young person, so taking time to ask searching questions and using professional curiosity can get underneath this and enable a rapport to be built with the young person. Children and young people’s willingness to engage with

professionals is also likely to be linked to their previous experiences and the responses they have received.

Young women and young men may face different barriers to coming forward: for young women, this could be fear of victim blaming; for young men it could be fears over their concepts of masculinity. It is critical that those undertaking the initial contacts with the child/young person are sensitive to their culture, gender orientation and religious beliefs as well as the influences of the community in which they live.

## **6. Principles underpinning MET Hub Team Response**

- Sexually/Criminally Exploited children should be treated as victims of abuse not offenders
- Child Exploitation should not be regarded as a lifestyle choice
- Young people do not make informed choices to enter or remain in sexually/criminally exploitative relationships but do so out of coercion, manipulation, enticement or desperation
- Children under 13 cannot consent to sexual activity; this is statutory rape
- Child Exploitation does not always involve physical contact and can occur through the use of technology
- The primary law enforcement effort must be made against the groomers and perpetrators of CSE/CCE
- Regard to age, disability, race, ethnicity and cultural background will be taken into account in undertaking risk assessments

## **7. Being Alive to the indicators/Risks**

It is imperative that practitioners and those coming into contact with children and young people are alert to the signs and what makes young people vulnerable to exploitation; as a multi- agency partnership we can therefore co-ordinate a timely and effective intervention at the earliest opportunity to prevent young people being placed at further risk of harm.

The following diagrams are tools to aid practitioners in recognising some of the vulnerability factors which could place young people more at risk of exploitation, as well as some of the risk indicators which can be used in identifying whether a young person may be at risk of, or experiencing exploitation. The list of indicators/vulnerabilities is not exhaustive and their presence may not necessarily mean that a young person is being exploited. However, they assist practitioners in identifying the warning signs which may warrant further assessment and investigation.

### **Vulnerability Factors that could place young people at risk of exploitation**





**Risk Indicators that can help identify a young person at risk of, or experiencing exploitation**



## **Child Trafficking**

Child Trafficking and modern day slavery are complex global crimes requiring international and local action to combat them. The hidden nature of these crimes makes it difficult to identify victims, understand the scale of the problem locally and develop effective responses.

Children who are trafficked are intentionally hidden and isolated from the services and communities who can identify and protect them. While identification may be difficult, there will be indicators to look out for.

## **The National Referral Mechanism**

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.

This guidance explains how to complete the referral form before it is considered by the relevant Single Competent Authority (SCA) within the Home Office.

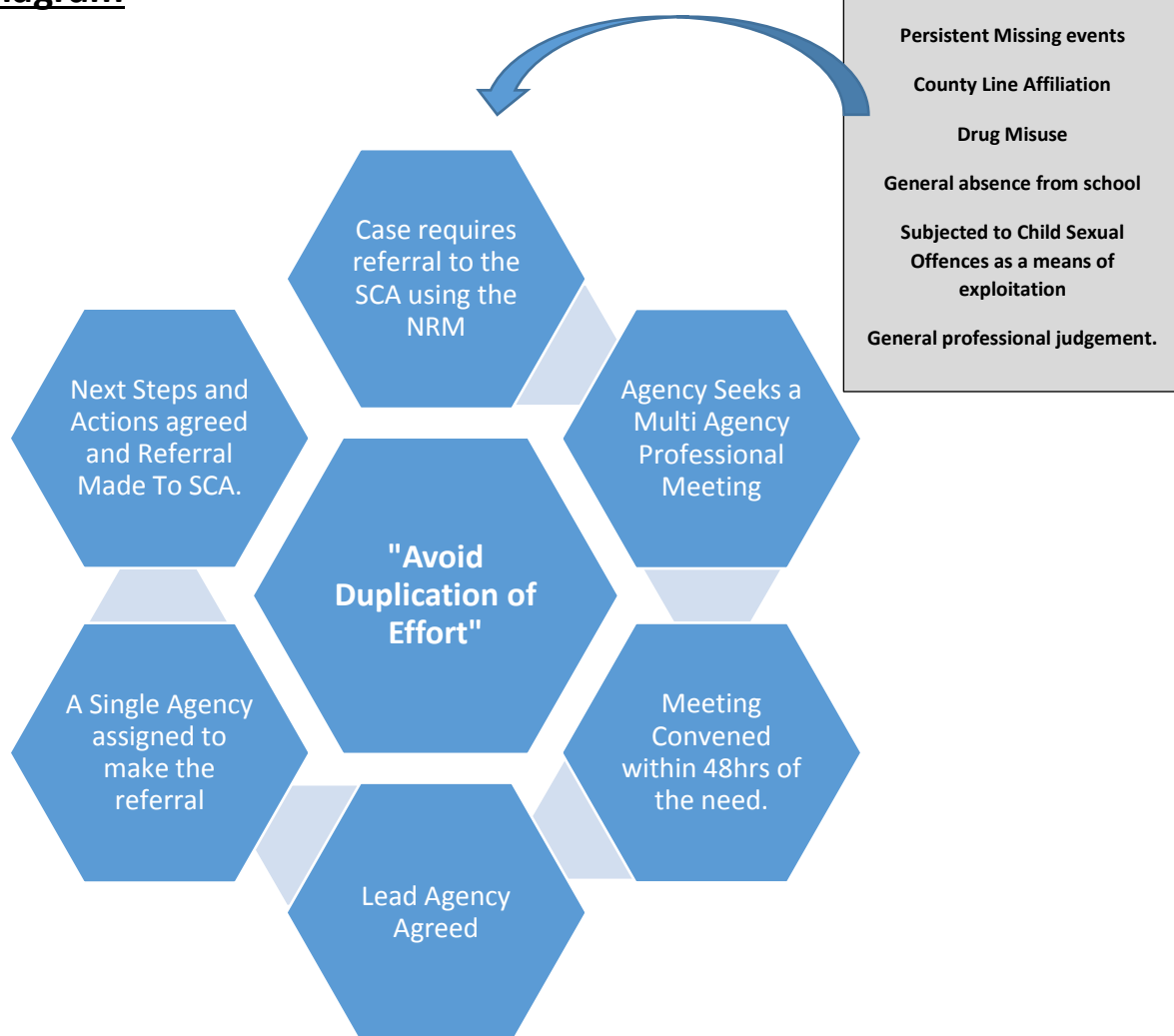
From 1 November 2015, specified public authorities are required to notify the Home Office about any potential victims of modern slavery they encounter in England and Wales. Completing this NRM form is sufficient to satisfy this duty to notify as long as all of the sections marked with a † are

completed. A young person's consent is not required.



Completed forms should be sent to: [dutytonotify@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:dutytonotify@homeoffice.gov.uk)

## Process Diagram



**Recognised Indicators for children who have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked:**



The MET Hub works alongside partner agencies to offer a child centred approach to identify and support vulnerable children and young people who have been, or who are potential victims of exploitation.

The MET Hub Team is committed to building relationships within the local community and developing positive partnership working with our local youth services, education, health services (including sexual health), and voluntary agencies.

The MET Hub Team is available to offer advice and support to partner agencies and professionals who have concerns regarding young people at risk of exploitation. Sharing information is imperative to keeping children and young people safe and we encourage professionals to seek support when in doubt.

## **8. Partnership Work**

### **Other Local Authority (OLA) Children/Young People**

The responsibility for notifications to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough of Children Looked After by other authorities who have been placed out of borough lies with the responsible authority, as per the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review statutory guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review> The guidance stipulates that with regard to children who are known to be at risk of child exploitation communication must occur between the responsible authority and host authority prior to the child being placed. This is to allow information about localised risks to be considered by both authorities. The responsible authority should make contact with [METHub@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:METHub@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) to discuss the individual risks relating to the child and any localised intelligence that may impact on the child. During this correspondence, a decision will be made about which MACE will be responsible for discussing the exploitation risk to the child. The statutory guidance is that the placing authority must complete and send a notification form to the host authority and MACE representative within 24 hours of the child being placed. An updated 'trigger plan' that clearly identifies the risks and responses should accompany the notification.

<file:///C:/ccc.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/data/OCYPS%20MASH/CSE%20and%20MFH/Admin%20Docs/Trigger%20Plan%20Template.docx>

Missing and Return notifications for Other Local Authority Children (OLA) children who are placed in Cambridgeshire/Peterborough are sent by the police to the local authority responsible for the child/young person and are also sent to Cambridge and Peterborough Customer Service Centre. The responsibility for coordinating arrangements for the RHI lies with the placing authority. The notification is sent by the Customer Service Centre staff to the MET HUB inbox. This information is recorded and collated on the MET Hub tracker.

Three missing from home episodes within 90 days or a child missing for more than five consecutive days will trigger a Strategy Meeting in line with 'Working Together' 2018 guidance. The responsible Local Authority must be informed by the MET Hub Senior Practitioner via email and phone that a strategy meeting is required and record this information in case notes on the child's file. The responsible LA will convene and chair the strategy meeting which will be attended by the MET Hub Senior Practitioner or delegated worker from the MET Hub to share relevant information and contribute to the safety/risk reduction plan.

### **Links with the Safer Relationship Team (SAFE)**

In June 2019 the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner were successfully awarded funds from the Early Intervention Youth Fund to develop a project to support complex young people at moderate and significant risk of Exploitation and Youth Violence. The funding has been awarded to allow for a 12 month trial with possible extension if additional funding is identified.

The SAFE team will work in close collaboration with the MET Hub and the MET Hub police team in the identification and service delivery for young people and their families to help them recognise the risks of exploitation and develop safety plans and strategies to avoid increased involvement in exploitation and/or serious youth violence in the future.

The SAFE Team are located within the Youth Offending Service High Risk Team and deliver a service across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The team deliver interventions alongside the Early Help District Teams and Social Care Teams in

Cambridgeshire, the Targeted Youth Support Service and Social Care Teams in Peterborough and both Youth Offending Services.

## **Links with the District Teams**

The MET Hub Team do not hold case responsibility for any child or young person but are instrumental and active participants in undertaking assessments of risk when completing their RHIs. Independent Return Home Interviews provide an opportunity to capture the child's voice, understand their lived experience and therefore better inform case planning. The outcome of each RHI is recorded on the child's case file and shared with the allocated worker and their manager if an open case. The information contained in the RHI should be reviewed and any actions agreed by the allocated worker and their line manager and used to inform case management and risk reduction strategies.

Direct work with children and young people who are identified through the RHI process, as being at risk of significant harm or exploitation, is undertaken by the allocated worker from the district social work teams or Early Help services.

Three consecutive missing episodes within a 90 day period or a child who has been missing for more than five days meets threshold for a strategy meeting to be convened. The responsibility for convening the strategy meeting lies with the allocated worker and the MET Hub worker should be invited to attend to share relevant information and contribute to the risk reduction plan.

The MET Hub police officers can support allocated social workers on joint visits to young people where there are concerns regarding exploitation. This often reduces the need for young people to have to repeat their story, which can be frustrating and on occasions emotionally harmful.

When a child goes missing, a review of their care plan alongside the information provided in the RHI can provide an opportunity to check that it addresses the reasons for an absence. The review should result in the development of a strategy to minimise a repeat of the missing episode. In particular, any issues relating to the vulnerability of the child to sexual exploitation, trafficking or criminal or gang

involvement should be identified. Actions to address these needs and ensure the child is kept safe should be clearly set out in the care plan. Partner agencies involved with the child should be given the opportunity to contribute to the review.

Once a concern has been identified that a child/young person is at risk of exploitation the allocated worker should complete the Exploitation (CSE/Criminal Exploitation) Risk Assessment and Management Tool which can be accessed on the link below.

<http://www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk/children-board/professionals/child-sexual-exploitation/>

On completion of the Risk Assessment and Management Tool the allocated worker needs to make a professional judgement about the level of risk of child exploitation to the child/young person. There are three categories of risk; Emerging, Moderate and Significant. The allocated worker needs to discuss with their line manager the outcome of the assessment and appropriate next steps in respect of case management and risk reduction. The outcome of the assessment should be used to inform the care plan/case planning in respect of the child/young person.

A copy of the Risk Assessment and Management tool should be sent to the MET Hub inbox, [METHub@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:METHub@cambridgeshire.gov.uk), in order for the information to be entered onto the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Tracker to contribute to the mapping process and to be shared at the respective MACE meeting.

The Exploitation (CSE/Criminal Exploitation) Risk Assessment and Management Tool should be updated every three months or when there is a significant incident that impacts on the risk reduction strategies in place to safeguard the child/young person. All updated risk assessments should be forwarded to the MET Hub in order for the MACE Tracker to be updated.

This enables the MET Hub to maintain a clear picture of the number of children/young people vulnerable to exploitation and secondly it enables the MET Hub to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies that are being employed to reduce risk of harm and for consideration of alternative strategies in the event of the risk increasing.



Where there are repeat episodes of a child/young person going missing the allocated social worker should complete a Trigger Plan <file:///\\ccc.cambridgeshire.gov.uk\data\OCYPS%20MASH\CSE%20and%20MFH\Admin%20Docs\Trigger%20Plan%20Template.docx> The purpose of the plan is to set out an effective multi agency tactical response to safeguard and protect children and young people who are at risk of frequent missing episodes.

It is important to include, where possible an up to date photo of the child/young person. A copy of the Trigger Plan **MUST** be given to the Police, Met Hub and all other agencies working with the child and a copy must be uploaded onto a child's file once completed.

## **9. Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Meeting**

The MACE meeting is a multi-agency meeting that is held monthly in both Peterborough and Cambridgeshire and is chaired by the Head of Service, Integrated Front Door, to provide continuity, consistency, to facilitate wider strategic planning and to ensure a county wide overview.

The MACE meeting provides a multi-agency forum in which cases of suspected or actual child exploitation can be discussed to ensure that all possible actions have been implemented to reduce risk, protect victims, disrupt and prosecute perpetrators.

The MACE meeting provides data on children and young people who are going missing and ensures that all information available from partner agencies is shared to confirm effective plans to reduce/mitigate risks are in place.

The MACE meeting highlights patterns and/or trends of child exploitation in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire and facilitates a sharing of information/intelligence relating to suspected individual/groups of victims/ perpetrators, vulnerable locations etc.

The MACE meeting provides support to practitioners who are managing high risk cases and ensures that any identified obstacles/tensions or challenges across the partnership can be resolved.

Further to this the MACE meeting has responsibility for agreeing mapping activities and for considering any actions that need to be taken as a partnership.

The MET Hub team are key members of the MACE meeting and provide a monthly report that identifies themes and trends across the county in respect of Missing, Exploited and Trafficked children. For example, whether children are going missing from a particular children's home, whether there are emerging concerns about a cohort of young people at a particular school or whether there has been an increase in youth violence in a particular area. This enables the partnership to co-ordinate information and ensures a more co-ordinated and proactive approach to addressing how best to intervene to disrupt/support.

## **10. Operation Makesafe**

Operation Makesafe is a police led initiative focussing primarily on the identification, disruption and targeting of suspected perpetrators of child exploitation and the identification of local 'Hot Spots'. This police intelligence is utilised to build the best possible picture and understanding of child exploitation within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is also used to deliver timely and proportionate safeguarding enforcement activity in response to the known intelligence picture around child exploitation in the county. Appropriate information from Operation Makesafe is fed into the MACE meeting to ensure that professionals working with numerous connected young people are able to share up to date relevant information and to support appropriate safeguarding and enforcement activity.

## **11. Channel Panel**

Channel is an early intervention multi-agency process designed to safeguard vulnerable people from being drawn into violent [extremism](#) and/or terrorism. The MET Hub Senior Practitioner attends the Channel Panel to ensure that relevant information pertaining to vulnerable children and young people is shared within this forum.

Channel is a pre-criminal process that is designed to support vulnerable people at the earliest possible opportunity, before they become involved in illegal activity.

When a child/young person is referred to Channel, the referrer (or a representative from the referring agency) will be invited to attend the Channel Panel meeting.

Similarly, other professionals who are working with an individual will also be invited to attend. This partnership approach ensures that the people who work most closely with vulnerable children and young people, and who best understand their specific needs and risks have a key role to play in developing support packages for them.

## **12. Joining up the Dots**

Safeguarding children depends on effective joint working between different agencies and professionals that work with children and young people, including education (e.g. schools and colleges), health services including sexual health services and therapeutic mental health services, youth services, children's social care, together with criminal justice agencies and voluntary sector services supporting children and families. Their full involvement is vital if children and young people are to be effectively supported and action is to be taken against perpetrators of child exploitation. All agencies should be alert to the risks of exploitation and be able to take action and work together when an issue is identified.

Tackling exploitation requires a three-pronged approach: prevention, protection and prosecution and requires cooperation between partner agencies.

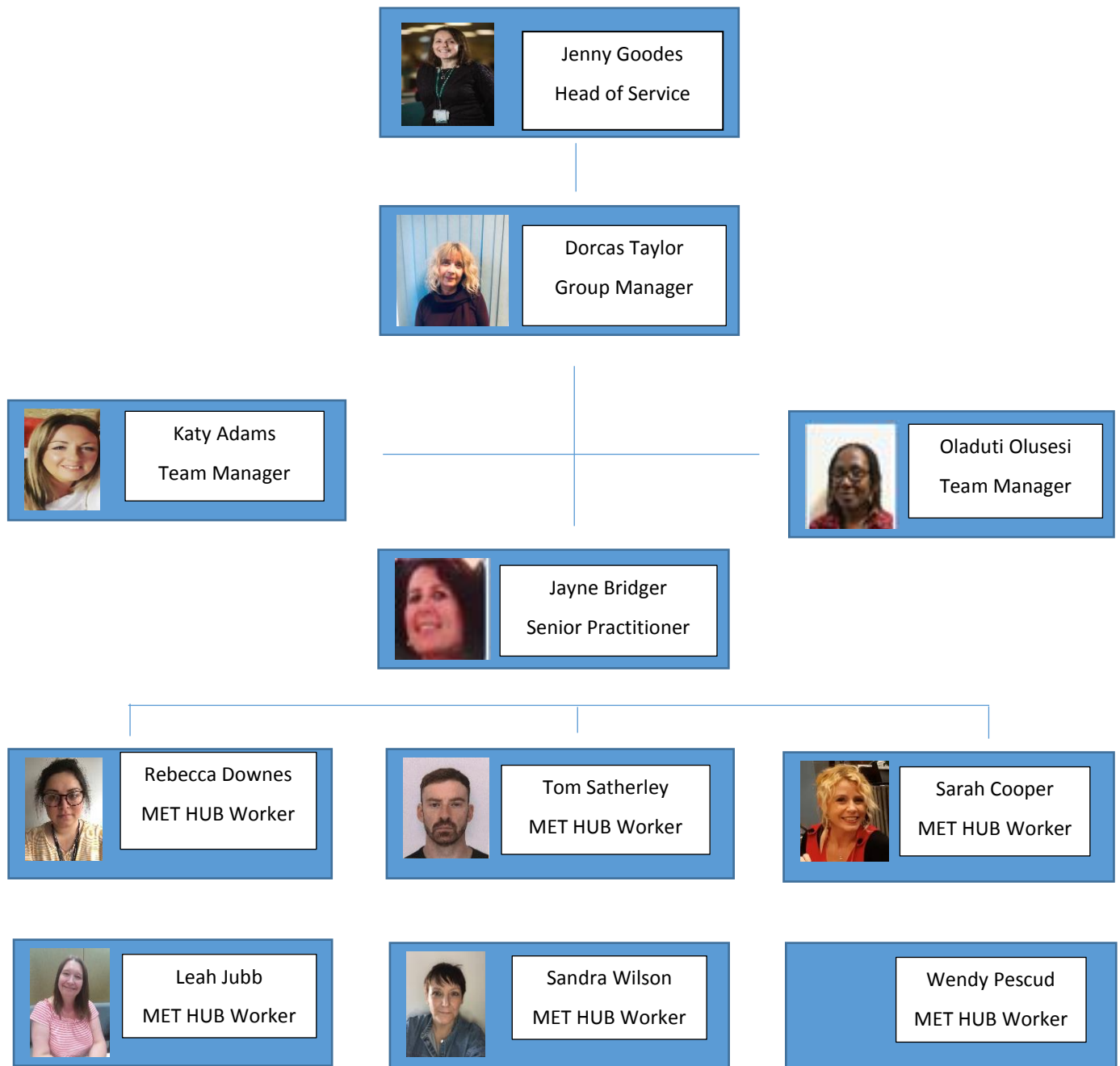
Action to tackle child exploitation should be proactive, focusing on prevention, early identification and intervention, as well as on disrupting activity and prosecuting perpetrators. It is imperative that partner agencies work in collaboration and take an active role in tackling child exploitation. It is important for cases to be managed so that interventions to safeguard children and young people also support the gathering of evidence to increase the chance of successful criminal prosecutions of their perpetrators, thereby safeguarding potential future victims.

In order to help children and young people achieve good outcomes it is important to identify issues and problems early and to take prompt preventative action. Early intervention is likely to be far more effective than intervention at a later stage when the impact on the child or young person's health or development is likely to have escalated. Prevention strategies should therefore be regarded as a key part of agencies' approaches to child exploitation.

Whilst the MET Hub have a significant role in the identification and coordination of responses to child exploitation across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough it is critical that partner agencies have a working knowledge and sound understanding of their role in this process. Effective measures to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people from exposure to child exploitation is a shared responsibility and cannot be achieved in isolation.

## Appendix 1

# MET Hub Team Structure



## Appendix 2

### Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Plus 70 Miles

