

Title of Report: Children who go missing from home and Child Exploitation**Report of Lisa Wood – Practice Lead – Innovation, Transformation & Vulnerable Adolescents**

Purpose of the report

This report outlines the activity and development of the response to children who go missing from home or care & Child Exploitation.

Background

A dedicated return to home Co-ordinator was appointed in 2019 within the specialist services who provides an independent return to home interview for any young person who has been reported missing from home or care.

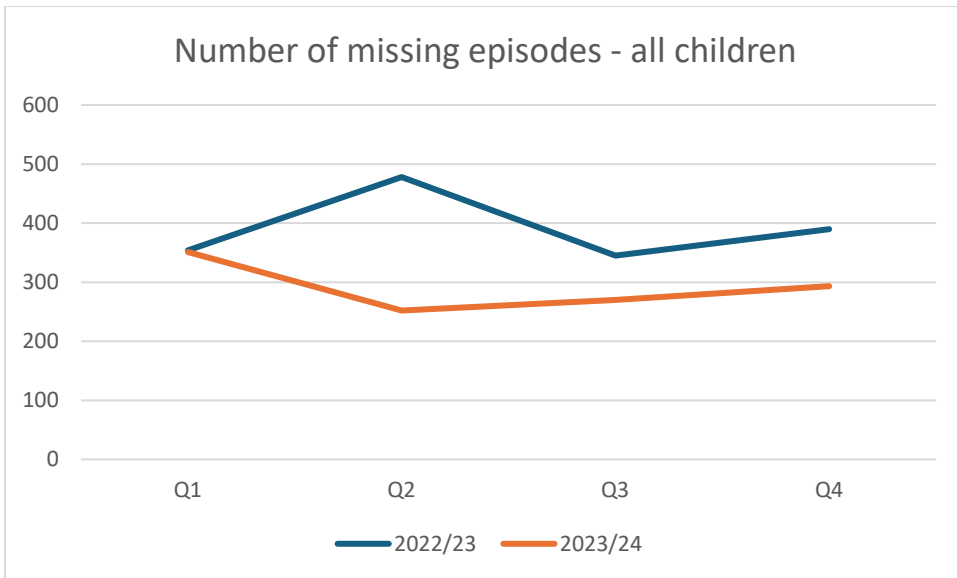
A specialist complex CIN team was created in 2019 which included a statutory assessment and intervention response to young people who are high risk or victims of child exploitation.

In 2022 Gateshead Children's Services secured funding for a pilot via violence against woman and girls funding for a Young woman and girls worker providing awareness raising and support to young woman girls who are high risk or victims of child exploitation or gang involvement. This funding is due to end in Mar 25.

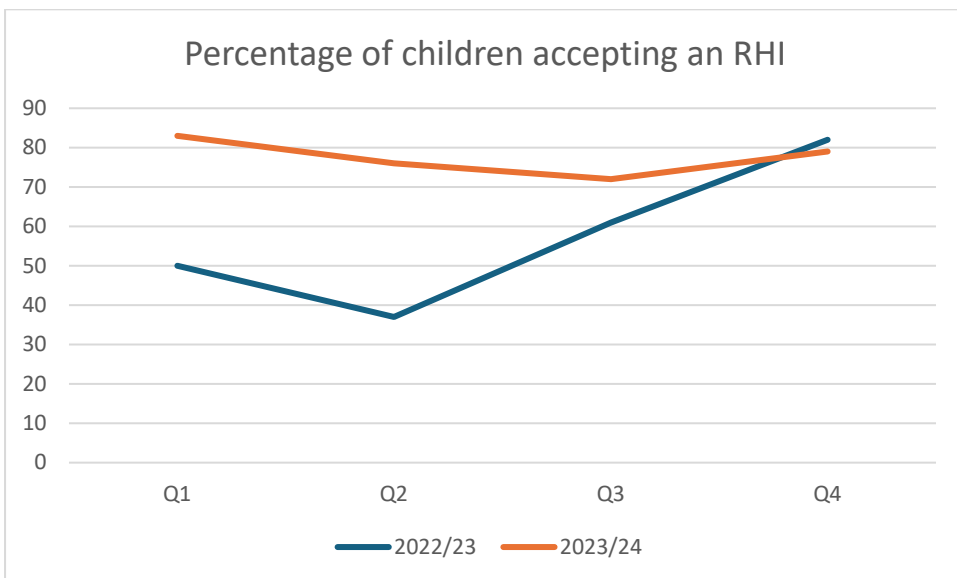
1. Young People who go missing from home or care**All children**

From Apr 2023 to Mar 2024 there were 1166 episodes of young people going missing which related to 323 individual young people. This is a decrease from the previous reporting year 2022-2023 where there was 1567 missing episodes which related to 352 young people.

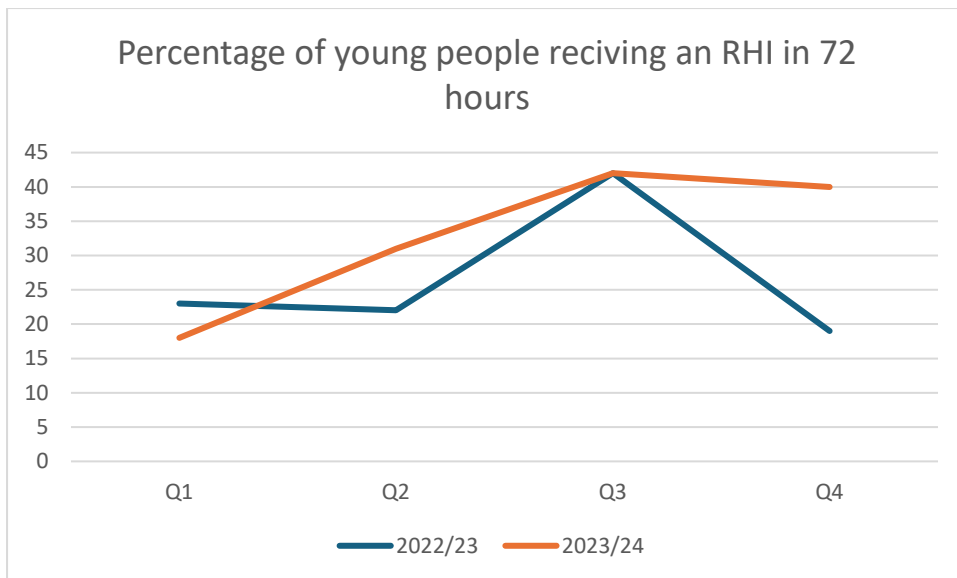
Less children are going missing, and the number of missing episodes has significantly reduced for all children.



The percentage of children accepting an RHI has increased from 73% in 2022/2023 to 77% in 2023/2024.



One of the most positive developments is the number of young people receiving an RHI within 72 hours, in 2022/2023 21% were within this time scale this increased to 32% in 2023/2024. There is still significant progress to be made to ensure the timeliness of RHI's.



All children – summary tables

2022/23

	22/23				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. Missing Children (All)					352
No. Missing Episodes (All)	354	478	345	390	1567
No. RHI Offered	354	478	345	390	1567
RHI Accepted (All)	180	176	212	318	886
% RHI Accepted (All)	50.8%	36.8%	61.4%	81.5%	56.5%
RHI Declined (All)	53	55	20	11	139
RHI Within Timescale	41	39	43	60	183
% within timescale	22.8%	22.2%	20.3%	18.9%	20.7%

Data is based on RHI interview taking place within 72 hours of Date/Time Found

2023/2024

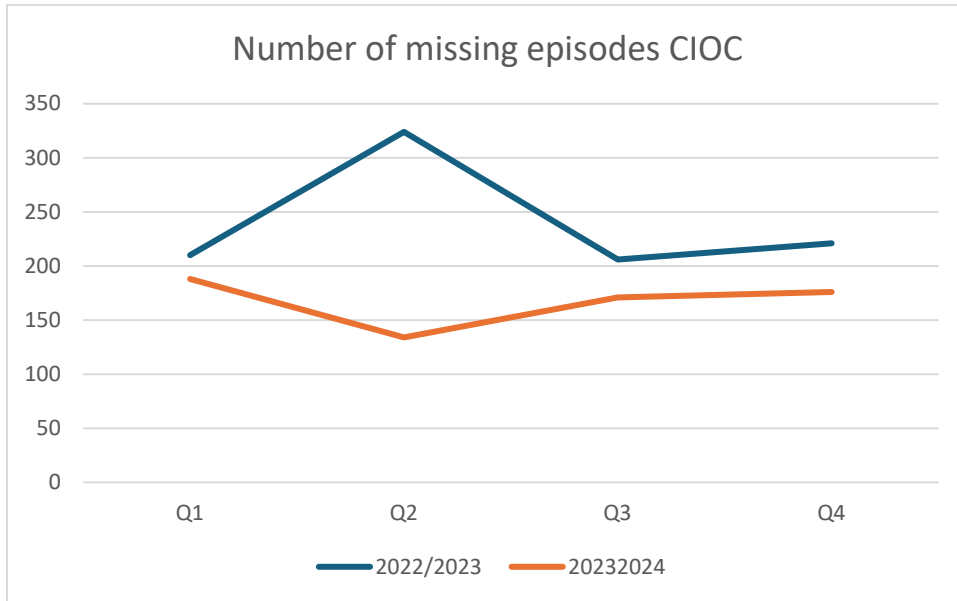
	23/24				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. Missing Children (All)					323
No. Missing Episodes (All)	351	252	270	293	1166
No. RHI Offered	351	252	269	289	1161
RHI Accepted (All)	291	191	193	227	902
% RHI Accepted (All)	82.9%	75.8%	71.7%	78.5%	77.7%
RHI Declined (All)	7	15	19	16	57
RHI Within Timescale	53	60	80	91	284
% within timescale	18.2%	31.4%	41.5%	40.1%	31.5%

Data is based on RHI interview taking place within 72 hours of Date/Time Found

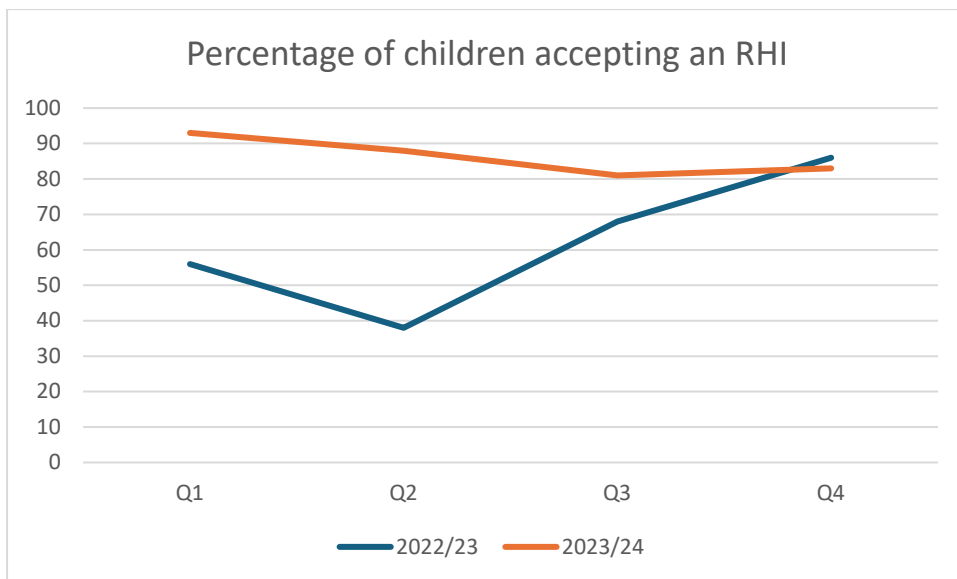
2. Children in our care

In 2022 – 2023 there were 961 missing episodes for children in our care which related to 87 children, in 2023 – 2024 there was a decreased in the number of children going missing. There were 82 children who went missing but the number of episodes significantly decreased to 669.

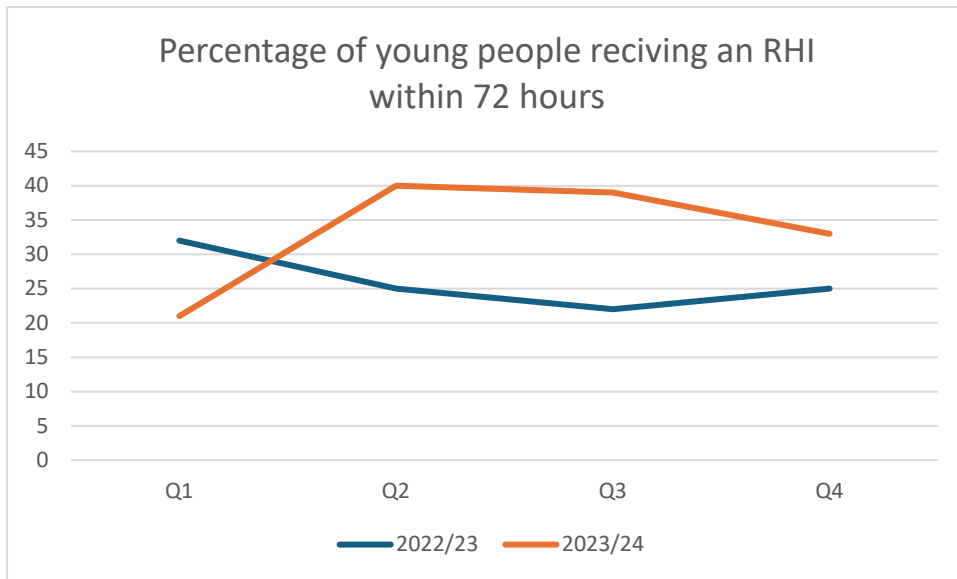
Less Children in Our Care are going missing, and the number of missing episodes has significantly reduced.



The percentage of children in our care accepting an RHI has significantly increased from 59% in 2022/2023 to 87% in 2023/2024.



The number of young people receiving an RHI within 72 hours, was 26% in 2022/2023, this increased to 32% in 2023/2024.



Children in Our Care – summary tables

2022/23

	22/23				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. Missing from Care Children					87
No. Missing Episodes from Care	210	324	206	221	961
No. RHI Offered	210	324	206	221	961
RHI Accepted (Care)	117	122	141	191	571
% RHI Accepted (Care)	55.7%	37.7%	68.4%	86.4%	59.4%
RHI Declined (Care)	32	35	6	2	75
RHI Within Timescale	37	31	31	48	147
% Within Timescale	31.6%	25.4%	22.0%	25.1%	25.7%

Data is based on RHI interview taking place within 72 hours of Date/Time Found

2023/24

	23/24				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. Missing from Care Children					82
No. Missing Episodes from Care	188	134	171	176	669
No. RHI Offered	188	134	171	175	668
RHI Accepted (All)	176	118	138	146	578
% RHI Accepted (Care)	93.6%	88.1%	80.7%	83.4%	86.5%
RHI Declined (Care)	1	5	11	11	28
Within Timescale	37	47	54	48	186
% Within Timescale	21.0%	39.8%	39.1%	32.9%	32.2%

Data above is based on RHI interview taking place within 72 hours of Date/Time Found

In summary

Less young people in both cohorts are going missing and the frequency of the missing have significantly reduced.

More RHI's are being accepted in both cohorts and there has been an increase year on year in relation to them being completed within 72 hours.

3. Service development

We have reviewed and strengthened our approach to children who go missing over the last 12 months.

We have launched our Trusting Hands Trauma Informed Team in Children's services, who work with care teams for children in our care to help them understanding the lived experience of young people. The Team provide psychology led formulations to provide a trauma informed response to all young people living in residential children's homes in Gateshead which has had an impact on our response to YP's going missing from care and as a result reduced numbers of children going missing and also the frequency of their missing episodes.

We have worked with our Supported Living Providers to implement systems for 16-17yr olds, when young people don't return to their accommodation by curfew but there are no safeguarding or risk outside the home concerns to report young person as missing from placement to the Emergency Duty Team rather than report to Police as a missing child. Any concerns providers are advised to following safeguarding procedures and report to police.

We have strengthened our oversight of strategy meetings for young people who have 3 x missing episodes times in 30 days to ensure there are clear actions to reduce future missing episodes and increase safety.

We have had a small number of young people in our care who have reached their 18th birthday who were going missing from care on a regular basis.

4. Impact

The majority of return home interviews are conducted by the dedicated Return Home worker, ensuring consistency and quality in the process. Analysis indicates that the quality of these interviews is generally commendable, with a predominant emphasis on establishing rapport with the young person and attentively addressing their concerns underlying the missing episode. Moreover, clear safety guidance is consistently provided to mitigate risks associated with the behaviour of young people.

The missing, return home function is within the newly developed adolescent service, this allows some young people to be offered an independent interview at the earliest possible opportunity, This will be further developed across the team, so this function isn't the responsibility of one worker, but undertaken by a skilled adolescent intervention team, which will increase the timeliness of RHI's for young people within best practice which is 72 hours.

The independent return home worker has completed Hydra training with Northumbria police. This has helped to raise awareness of the importance of information sharing and working together and recognising and identifying links between missing from home or care and exploitation.

5. Learning from audits and reviews

- Majority of RHI's are written to the child and to a high quality, evidence of curious questioning and good engagement with YP's and feature within the young person care plan.
- Safety advice is regularly given to young people.
- Information is routinely shared with the Social Worker, all RHI's are shared with police.
- There were delays in the process which impacted on the length of time it took to complete the return home interview with the young person. In order to overcome delays in the process a Learning Lab is due to take place to make changes to the Mosaic case management system.

6. Improvement recommendations

- The weekly missing report needs to be an additional trigger for determining if a strategy meeting is necessary.
- Clear management oversight needs to be documented if a strategy meeting is not required.
- Timely strategy meetings should take place in accordance with the joint procedures.
- Lean Review of the process within Mosaic to ensure no delay in notifications when young people go missing, found, require a strategy and return to home interviews are within timescale.

7. Future developments

Development of the service to ensure all members of the adolescent service working evening and weekends can respond and complete return home interview to increase timeliness of response.

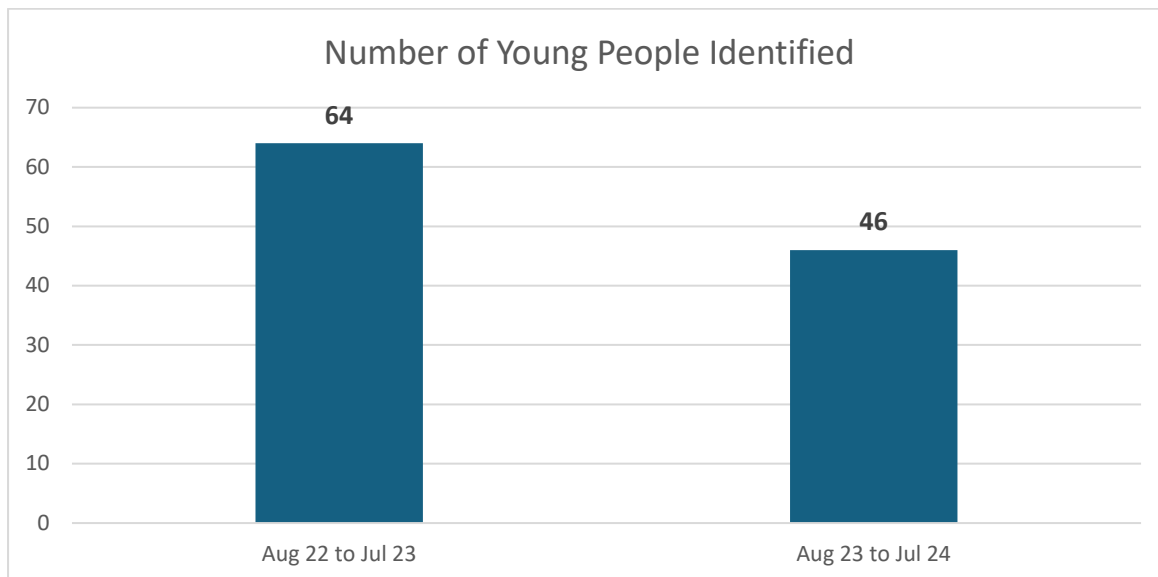
Redesign the missing from home or care workflow in Mosaic to ensure effectiveness and accuracy of reporting and response.

Gateshead Children Social care is arranging and hosting a regional development event for return home managers and practitioners in September 2024 to develop good practice and consistency across the Northeast.

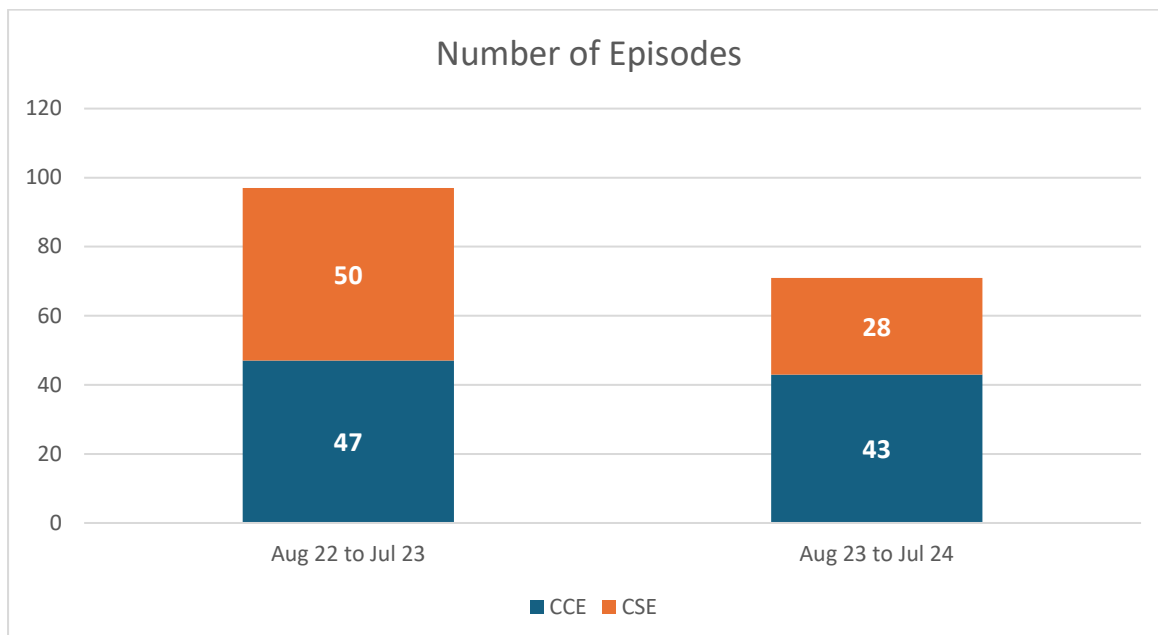
Continue to complete quality audits to ensure good service delivery and continuity within children's plans.

8. Child Exploitation

From August 2023 to July 2024 there were 46 young people identified as high risk or victims of child exploitation. This is a decrease from the previous 12 months (August 2022 to July 2023) where there was 64 young people. Northumbria Police CE team are also reporting a decrease across the Northumbria Police footprint (6 LA's.)

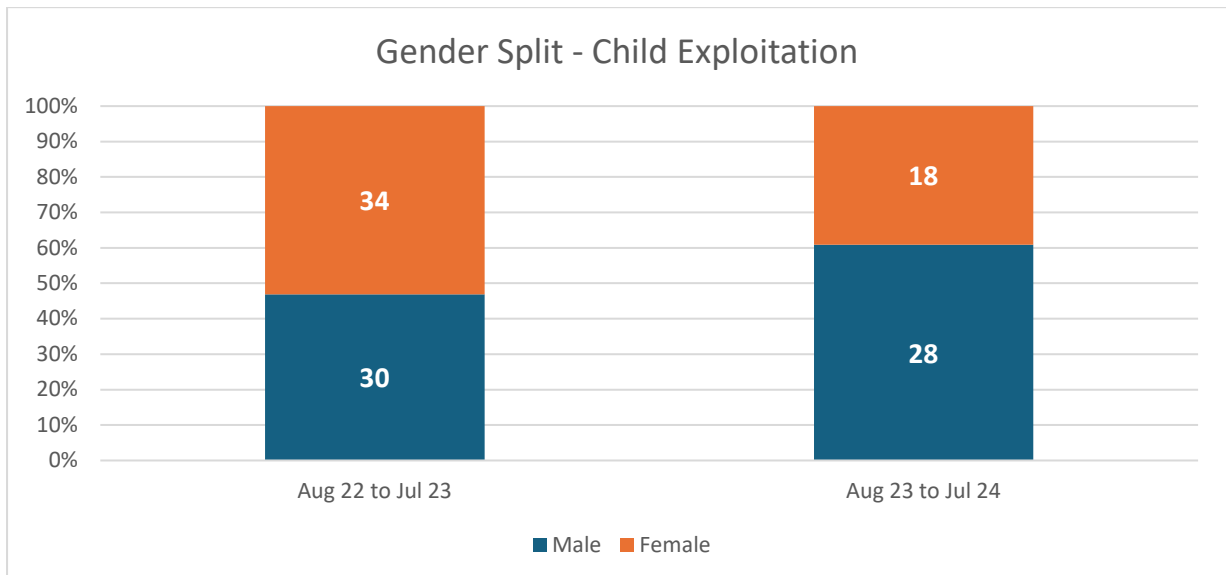


From August 2023 to July 2024 of the 46 young people identified, 43 young people were high risk or victims of child criminal exploitation and 28 young people high risk or victims of child sexual exploitation. It is worth of note that some young people can be at risk or victims of both form of child exploitation which is why there are more episodes than individuals.

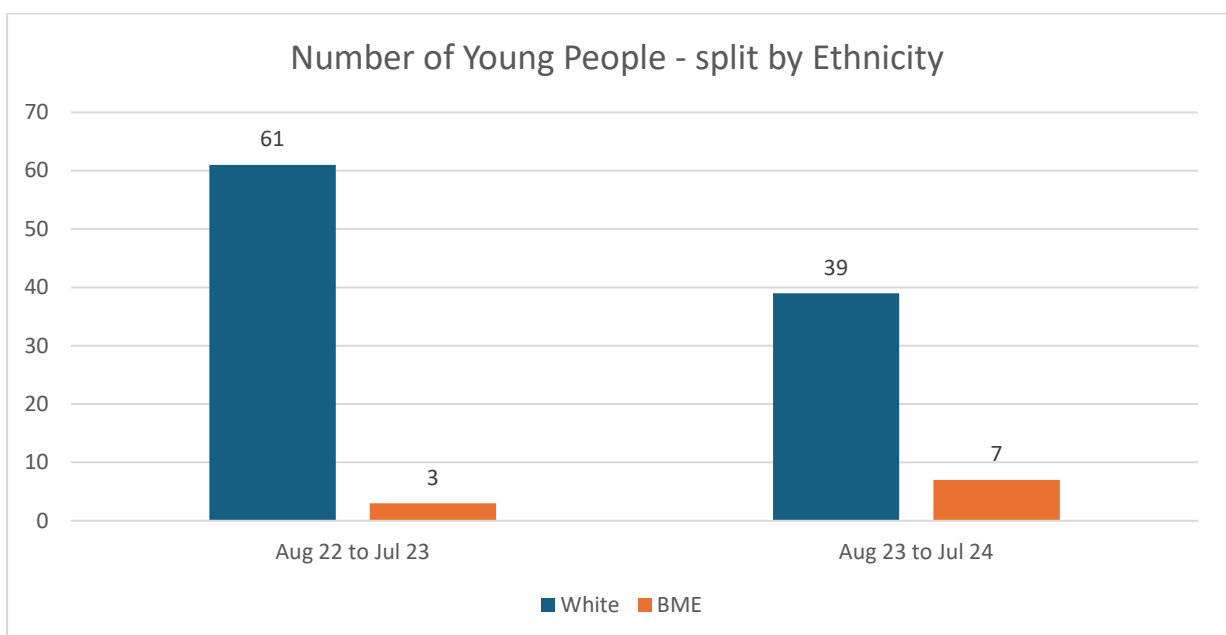


The number of young people at risk or victims of child criminal exploitation are similar to the 47 young people from the previous reporting year, however we have seen almost 50% decrease from the 50 young people identified as at risk of victims of child sexual exploitation from the previous reporting year.

There has been a noticeable change in the gender split when comparing the last 12 months to the previous 12 months. There were 18 females at risk or victims of child exploitation (40%) and 28 males (60%) in the last 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months where there were 34 females (55%) and 30 males (45%) .



The number of young people from ethnic minority communities who are high risk or victims of child criminal exploitation has slightly increase during August 2023 to July 2024 in comparison to the previous 12 months.



9. Young woman and girl's worker (YWGW)

The Young woman and girl's worker receives referrals via the Multi-agency Exploitation Group, and has provided direct support and training to professionals, please see below activity in the reporting period Apr 23 - Mar 24

- 12 referrals for specialist exploitation interventions via MSET (Multi-agency Exploitation Group)
- Direct interventions with 12 young woman and girls via MSET
- 10 of the 12 young woman reported reduction in exploitation and gang association and significant improvements in their wellbeing.
- 70 professionals from across children's services received training delivered by the YWAG's worker in Child exploitation and young women in gangs

10. Learning from audits and reviews

- All young people where there were exploitation concerns had a strategy recorded, MSET referral had been reviewed by the Team Manager with recommendations.
- A themed audit of young people who had been presented showed that for the majority of young people, objectives to reduce harm from exploitation was included in the YP's care plan.
- No monitoring system in mosaic to measure impact eg how many young people were high risk are no low or no risk.

11. Improvement recommendations

- Review via Mosaic learning labs to ensure impact on reducing harm outside the home to individual young people can be measured and monitored.

12. Child Exploitation - Developments and service improvement in 2023/24

In Nov 2023 Childrens Services Senior Leadership Team agreed to a review of services and response for vulnerable adolescents and develop an options paper as to how best to meet the needs of young people who are "high harm, high risk, high vulnerability".

In January 2024 an options paper was presented to Children's Services Senior Leadership Team and option agreed to create an integrated vulnerable adolescent Team which would include the joining up of a number of services and include the following criteria: -

- Youth Offending
- child Exploitation
- child on parent aggression and violence
- persistent missing from home or care
- edge of care
- 16-17yr edge of homelessness

- Serious Youth Violence
- Complex mental health /risk of admission
- Hazardous & harmful substance misuse

It was agreed that the new service would adopt an enhanced case management model, which is a psychology led model currently used by youth justice services in Wales and embraces the one trusted adult, trauma informed approach to working with high harm, high risk, high vulnerability young people.

This will bring together specialist adolescent workers skilled in working with harm outside the home include child exploitation and children who go missing from home.

13. Multi-agency Missing, Exploitation and Trafficking (MSET) Review

A review of the current multi-agency procedures for young people who are high risk, or victims of exploitation was undertaken in early 2024, led by Northumbria Police. The current MSET procedures cover the 5 local authorities within the Northumbria Police force area.

The review highlighted the following: -

- Needs to be a stronger focus on perpetrators.
- Needs a stronger focus on disruption.
- Needs a stronger focus on locations and hotspots.
- Needs to change to an all-age process to include transitional arrangements into adulthood.
- Refreshed referral mechanism and partnership attendance including children's and adult's services.
- No pre-mset process, if YP meets criteria, then automatic referral.

14. Next steps

MSET will be relaunched under the new name and procedures as PREM (Partnership Response to Exploitation and Missing) in Sep/Oct of 2024. The relaunch will include briefings and roadshow for partners. It is worthy of note that this is a process for young people who require a high-level multi-agency response in addition to care planning arrangements. The changes do not impact on agreed thresholds and agreed referral or triage mechanisms for partners when they are worried a child or young person is being exploited.

15. Recommendations

are asked to:

- I. Note the contents of the report.

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