

REPORT TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL

DATES OF MEETINGS: 11TH SEPTEMBER 2015

SUBJECT OF REPORT: CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION WORKING GROUP

TOWN OR PARISH: NONE SPECIFIC

OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: COUNCILLOR ANN HARLEY

KEY DECISION: NO

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) That the Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services be recommended to approve

(i) that the Police and Crime Commissioner Office be requested in her budget considerations to give high priority to the resourcing of child protection and safeguarding operations;

(ii) that the development of IT systems to improve the sharing of information between partner agencies be welcomed and supported;

(iii) that Licensing Officers make use of the licensing process to raise awareness of CSE among hoteliers and proprietors of bed and breakfast establishments;

(iv) that the Clinical Commissioning Group be requested to ensure that the walk-in medical service have the right knowledge and procedures in place to deal and recognise indicators of CSE;

(v) that the appointment of a full-time CSE Co-ordinator post be strongly supported but that that this be a permanent and not a temporary position because of its key ongoing role;

(vi) that the Strategic Schools' Forum consider the role of Healthy Relationships in North Somerset schools as effective measures to prevent later life difficulties for children, one of which may be sexual exploitation;

(vii) that the satisfaction of the Working Group with governance arrangements be endorsed;

(2) that the Panel agree that the Working Group remain extant and meet six monthly to receive and scrutinise a report on progress from the new CSE Co-ordinator;

(3) that the Executive Member for Children's Services reports back to the Panel in January 2016 on progress in implementing the recommendations.

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report sets out the detailed work undertaken by the Child Sexual Exploitation Working Group, and contains a number of recommendations for action and further work.

2. POLICY

2.1 The work of the Working Group meets the corporate aim of enhancing health and well-being.

3. DETAILS

3.1 The Working Group was originally set up by the Panel to investigate the following-

- The process and transparency of information-sharing between members and officers
- The effectiveness of processes and procedures to reduce the risk to children from abuse
- Lessons that can be learned from the Jay Report.

3.2 The Working Group's investigation was in the following context-

- To scrutinise and receive assurance that processes and procedures are fit for purpose in terms of the Council's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- To ensure the Council learns from lessons of Rotherham Council's handling of child sexual exploitation.

3.3 The Working Group originally comprised Councillors Colin Hall, Donald Davies, Anne Kemp, Bob Garner, Sonia Russe, Catherine Gibbons and Roz Willis. The local council elections occurred before the Working Group concluded its investigation and the Panel agreed that Councillors Donald Davies and Bob Garner would continue as the remaining members with the addition of Councillor Ann Harley as lead member.

3.4 Members met with and/or received advice from a range of officers from the Council and partner agencies/organisations. These are listed in Section 4 of the report.

The Working Group assessed-

- Current processes and arrangements
- The Jay Report
- The effectiveness and transparency of the Council 's member/officer relations
- Local Government Association documentation regarding effective member/officer relations.

Note: the working group had an awareness and understanding of the legal framework, eg, Section 13 of the Children Act 2004 and Regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children Board's Regulations 2006.

3.5 The Working Group has completed its investigation, finalised its report and submitted its conclusions and recommendations. The sections below summarise the work and findings of the group.

Focus

3.6 The Working Group in its discussions with officers and partner agencies was keen to know what worked well, where there were challenges, and what could be done to develop / improve services.

3.7 The Working Group agreed that the Council was only part of the process. The Police, for example, had had a significant involvement in Rotherham and it would be helpful to gain statistical information from Avon and Somerset Police and also understand their approach to CSE.

3.8 Reference was made to the LGA paper "Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation - Key Questions for Lead Members of Children's Services". This paper set out key questions for Members to address relating to the following-

- Raising awareness
- Understanding what's happening
- Developing a strategic response
- Supporting victims of exploitation
- Facilitating policing and prosecutions.

3.9 The initial meeting of the Working Group highlighted the following-

- The assumption that CSE is happening in North Somerset unless there was clear evidence to the contrary (based on guidance to agencies from the LGA and Barnardo's)
- Other local authorities – the need to understand what is happening elsewhere
- The role of the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board
- The role of schools
- The role of Barnardo's and their strategic engagement with the Council in helping our work with young people.

North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board

3.10 Susan Masters (Chairman, North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board CSE Sub-Group) met with the working group (Please refer to Appendix A for the key points of the discussion).

Bristol City Council

3.11 The Service Director, Care and Support Children and Families at Bristol City Council met with the working group to share their experiences following a thematic Ofsted inspection of CSE and a case in Bristol Crown Court (Please refer to Appendix B for the key points of the discussion).

Note: the discussion was in general terms because the detailed issues were

confidential and the subject of a Serious Case Review and Court restrictions.

Police - Facilitating Policing and Prosecutions

3.12 Detective Inspector Phil Jones of the Avon and Somerset Police met with the working group (Please refer to Appendix C for the key points of the discussion).

Barnardo's - Supporting Victims of Exploitation

3.13 Duncan Stanaway of Barnardo's met with the working group (Please refer to Appendix D for the key points of the discussion).

Governance - Member/Staff Relationships

3.14 The Working Group was made aware that in Rotherham, a big issue was the relationship between Members and staff whereby staff felt unable to raise major concerns because of (i) their perceptions that Members were not wanting to hear of such things and (ii) a bullying culture emanating from Members and some senior officers.

3.15 The Director of People and Communities posed the question to the Working Group about how would Members be able to assure themselves that officers were enabled to bring matters to their attention and they would deal with them.

3.16 The Working Group acknowledged that in Rotherham, the Member/Officer relationship was not effective, there was a denial of the existence of child sexual exploitation and also, a lack of leadership. This was exacerbated by the failure of officers to keep members fully informed. The prevailing culture was one of bullying and machismo.

3.17 The Working Group recognised that it was important to ensure that such a culture did not develop in North Somerset. The Working Group was satisfied that such a culture did not exist in North Somerset for the following reasons-

(1) The robustness of current systems, processes and arrangements as outlined to the Working Group and supported by partner agencies and by a good professional working relationship between officers and Members.

(2) The acceptance and recognition by officers and Members alike of the existence of child sexual exploitation

(3) The willingness to share information

(4) The strong professional commitment of senior management and the Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services to tackling child sexual exploitation.

Conclusions

Based on the work undertaken and the discussions with partners, the Working Group has concluded that:

3.18 The resourcing of child protection and safeguarding operations was a matter of high priority;

Note: A letter from Councillor Ann Harley (in her capacity as Chairman of the CYPs Policy and Scrutiny Panel and Lead Member of the Working Group) to the Chief Executive of the Clinical Commissioning Group requesting that the CCG include in the new remodelled CAMHS, provision of financial support for dealing with CSE)

3.19 Developing IT systems to improve the sharing of information between partner agencies/organisations working group was of high importance;

3.20 The importance of co-ordination between partner agencies/organisations will be strengthened by the appointment of a full-time CSE Co-ordinator.

3.21 The importance of effective and open governance arrangements.

3.22 The Working Group remain extant and and meet six monthly to receive and scrutinise a report on progress from the new CSE Co-ordinator.

Recommendations

See the first page of this report.

4. CONSULTATION

The Working Group's findings were informed by consultation with the following officers of North Somerset Council and partner agencies/organisations:

- Sheila Smith, Director of People and Communities
- Eifion Price, Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Support
- Sue Masters, North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board
- Jean Pollard, Service Director, Care and Support Children and Families at Bristol City Council
- Chief Inspector Phil Jones, Avon and Somerset Police
- Duncan Stanway, Barnardo's

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A number of young people who are in the care of the local authority came in because they are at risk of sexual exploitation or have been sexually exploited. Due to the very strong influence of the abusers the local authority has placed those young people some distance away and will continue to do so in order to provide security, care and support for the young people to rebuild their lives. Officers will continue to safeguard young people effectively and provided the numbers do not increase then the financial risk should be managed within the directorate budget – provided it is not subject to a significant reduction.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

The North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board (NSSCB) continues to monitor closely the progress made by all relevant agencies and holds them to account in regard to protecting children and young people from harm. The Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services holds the Director and her staff to account for the directorate's work with vulnerable children and young people and the Director ensures that risks and mitigations are shared with the NSSCB, the Chief Executive and the Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services.

7. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Children and young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation or who are being sexually exploited are responded to as children in need of protection. Legislation and guidance make clear the responsibilities of local authorities and North Somerset Council's policies are compliant in this regard. The local authority prioritises services for all children suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm regardless of whether or not they have a protected characteristic.

8. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Improving outcomes and reducing the costs is a priority in the Corporate Plan.

This investigation by the Working Group aligns with the values in the Corporate Plan of putting people first and working with and involving others.

Members of the Working Group

Councillors Ann Harley (Lead Member), Donald Davies and Bob Garner.

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Appendix A - Key points of the discussion with North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board

(1) The Board worked to safeguard and promote local child welfare. The membership of their CSE Sub-Group was multi-agency and had recently been enhanced by including representatives of Children and Families, Early Years and an Educational Welfare Officer (regarding children who are not in mainstream education). The Sub-Group was primarily concerned with the prevention of CSE, protection from CSE and the pursuit of perpetrators.

(2) Any possible instance of CSE was promptly referred to the Safeguarding Board's Referral and Assessment Panel which if necessary, would refer cases to the MARAC (Multi-Agency Referral and Assessment Committee). This multi-agency body would be responsible for ensuring an effective co-ordinated response to CSE and was jointly chaired by the Police and the Safeguarding Board. The Referral and Assessment Panel had close liaison with housing and education officers and with Health (including GPs).

(3) CSE is child abuse so it is important not to have separate lines of referral and that processes are aligned. Most if not all CSE strategies focused on identifying and preventing CSE from happening by gathering data and intelligence from agencies about children most likely to be at harm (eg, information about school absences and behavioural and emotional problems). Schools were required to report absences.

(4) The Missing Person Co-ordinator from the Police was a member of the MARAC. – the Working Group suggested that agencies liaise with the Railway Children's Charity.

(5) All agencies were required to report monthly to the Department of Health on cases/instances of female genital mutilation.

(6) Training - Ensuring that staff were trained to recognise indicators of CSE and that there were clear pathways for referral. The CSE Sub-Group in liaison with the Training Sub-Group would ensure there was training of schools' representatives and the up-skilling the multi-agency workforce to enable them to identify signs of CSE.

(7) Additionally, seeking to ensure that CSE Level 1 training was mandatory for schools.

(8) In order to raise awareness of CSE, the Local Safeguarding Board was commissioning a play entitled "Chelsea's Tale. This was about to be quality assured and if approved, would be rolled out to schools in the New Year.

(9) Gathering and reporting data

North Somerset officers were in the process of reviewing local data regarding children with whom North Somerset Children's Social Care had been in contact. The intention was simply to add tick boxes to the data input process which would be used by social workers to indicate a victim or potential victim of CSE. Additionally, there would be some technical changes to enable reports and data to be produced far more quickly. The data held by North Somerset would be cross-referenced with the data held by the MARAC, data held by the Police and data on school attendance/absence.

Appendix B – Key points of the discussion with Bristol City Council

- (1) The recent events provided an opportunity for learning and for understanding cross-border issues
- (2) CSE was not simply an aspect of gang behaviour but occurred across the whole spectrum regarding behaviour and activity where there was an imbalance of power.
- (3) Young males groomed by older females did occur but was less frequent
- (4) It was important to be open-minded to the dangers children get into and what we need to do to get them back into a safer place
- (5) Operation Brooke – the key learning points were highlighted
- (6) CSE cases involving ethnic minorities tended to be high profile
- (7) There was a lot of online grooming
- (8) The need to work together to tackle CSE
- (9) Rotherham – Bristol's Response. It was importance to learn from the Rotherham experience whilst recognising that Bristol is different
- (10) Innovation Grant was strengthening work taking place around CSE
- (11) A lot of work taking place with GPs
- (12) People who have recently moved into the area were difficult to track
- (13) Perpetrators were clever at removing victims from school for a few hours after registration. Dialogue was taking place with schools regarding registration at each lesson
- (14) Girls were often bullied by other girls with the latter inciting male friends to sexually assault the former.
- (15) Engagement with hoteliers and owners of bed and breakfast establishments for them to identify victims – however, they were not professionals trained to look for signs of CSE.

Appendix C – Key points of the discussion with the Police

- (1) The difference between CSE and inter-familial exploitation was outlined.
- (2) The nature of CSE in North Somerset differs from that in Bristol and Rotherham – no large cultural groups in North Somerset. Bristol, Rotherham and Oxford were extreme cases and therefore high profile.
- (3) The police priority was to make sure that the victim was safe and this was a greater priority than prosecution
- (4) The lone model was the white male – the more co-ordinated cases related to cultural backgrounds though not entirely
- (5) Developing the MARAC (Multi-Agency Referral and Assessment Committee) process will help ensure an effective co-ordinated response to CSE

(6) Co-ordinating role of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office (PCCO)

There were 5 Local Safeguarding Children's Boards in the Avon and Somerset Police area, each operating differently. The PCCO was seeking to co-ordinate the MARAC practices across the area to help improve the identification of perpetrators and the sharing of information.

This cross-border working welcomed by the Working Group – perpetrators do not recognise boundaries.

(7) CYPS sources of intelligence regarding Children Looked After were greater than the Police

(8) ICT and databases – systems lagging behind and there are issues of trying to share data between different IT systems and avoiding duplication of information.

(9) Since the Working Group started, 20 children had been identified whom were regarded as being at risk (not necessarily being abused) – not more instances but greater awareness

(10) How to strengthen co-ordination?

The Working Group welcomed the action being taken to appoint a temporary a dedicated full-time co-ordinator to pull the various strands together and ensure that systems were in place.

(11) Raising awareness - North Somerset awareness training for staff was better than most.

Taxi licensing - Licensing Officers at the Council were active in checking applications from a safeguarding perspective.

The working group was keen that the licensing process was used to ensure that awareness was raised among hoteliers and proprietors of bed and breakfast establishments.

(12) Resources – It was about having the right people in the right place

(13) Where are we? – No comparative data – sense that the situation in North Somerset is not as bad or as extensive as larger cities. How prevalent is CSE in North Somerset?

(14) From a CSE perspective, the Night-Time Economy Sub-Group chaired by the Police District Commander was concerned with engagement with clubs and the sex industry. The District Commander had been invited to the CSE Sub-Group to pick up on local issues.

- Taking perpetrators out of the equation – prosecuting and sentencing them for crimes they had committed, even if this was not CSE
- Engaging Health in the process – the issue of victim consent and ethics of patient confidentiality
- Co-location – There were plans to have a multi-agency safeguarding hub at some stage but this may not be a physical co-location.

Appendix D – Key points of the discussion with Barnardo's

(1) Barnardo's had been involved in dedicated victim support around child sexual exploitation for 20 years, developing a range of projects; the BASE project was 18 years old. The BASE project provided support to victims of CSE. They also trained the children's work force to understand what is CSE so they know to respond and support.

(2) The majority of referrals were by professionals working with the cohort of children considered to be most vulnerable – vulnerable adolescents were significantly represented.

Poor parenting – largest common denominator.
There was developing engagement with parents.

(3) There was a standing arrangement with the Police to receive details of missing children; Barnardo's have a contract with Bristol City Council to carry out return to home interviews.

(4) Children in care were 50 times more likely to be sexually exploited than children not in care.

(5) Victims of child sexual exploitation occurred in both urban and rural locations.

(6) Barnardo's were involved in close partnership working with the Police, local authorities (particularly social workers and social care teams) and Health.

(7) When contact is initially made, the person concerned is often still in the exploitative situation. How to get them out of that situation? Most were living in a physically safe environment (eg foster care).

The work was individually tailored. Most Barnardo's staff were social workers – they assessed the young person and drew up a work plan and judgement was reached after speaking to partner agencies.

It was important to provide a network of support to avoid victims regressing. The least risky intervention may, on occasions, be the need to place a child or young person in a place of safety such as secure accommodation.

(8) Barnardo's did not have the capacity to provide a crisis service.

(9) Funding –

(i) Current sources of support included the Blaygrade Trust and the Lottery though these were time-limited

(ii) the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner and the Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner had been successful with a joint bid for funding to the Home Office to support enhanced capacity to deal with CSE.

(10) North Somerset Council had spot purchased Barnardo's to carry out dedicated work with some children identified as being at high risk.

(11) The way CSE is perceived has changed quickly over a short period of time.

(12) Schools – the focus was on healthy relationships rather than sex education.