

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

**Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development
Committee**

Meeting held 15 December 2014

PRESENT: Councillors Gill Furniss (Chair), John Booker, Mike Drabble, Talib Hussain, Karen McGowan, Pat Midgley, Colin Ross, Ian Saunders, Diana Stimely, Stuart Wattam and Cliff Woodcraft (Deputy Chair)

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Jules Jones, Education Non-Council Voting Member
Gillian Foster, Education Non Council Voting Member
Alison Warner, Education Non-Council Member

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Tim Rippon.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 The Chair (Councillor Gill Furniss) declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 (Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation Services in Sheffield), as she had been interviewed in connection with the compilation of the report.

3.2 Councillor Colin Ross declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 (Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation Services in Sheffield), as he had been interviewed in connection with the compilation of the report.

3.3 Alison Warner declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 (Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation Services in Sheffield), as a member of the Education Safeguarding Reference Group.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

4.1 Val Binney referred to the assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) services in Sheffield, offering her congratulations to the Council in respect of the positive report, but indicated that there was no mention of ongoing monitoring of the Council's CSE policies and procedures as routine work, which had been noted as one of the key

weak links following the recent enquiry in Rotherham.

- 4.2 Dr Kathryn Houghton, Safer Outlook Consulting Ltd., and author of the report now submitted, stated that, as part of the assessment, the Local Authority had clearly recognised the need to continually update its policies and procedures in relation to its CSE services. It had also been recognised that new policies would always be introduced, which would also need to be monitored and updated. It had been identified that there was a need to be careful in terms of designing policies and procedures in this regard as child sexual exploitation was only one aspect of the Council's Safeguarding Children services. As part of the assessment, there had been evidence of new quality assurance processes, thematic audits on child sexual exploitation and practitioners having reflective practice of children's experiences.

5. ASSESSMENT OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION SERVICES IN SHEFFIELD

- 5.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Children, Young People and Families, attaching an Executive Summary and Overview Report drafted by Dr Kathryn Houghton, Safer Outlook Consulting Ltd, on an Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Services in Sheffield. The Executive Summary and Overview Report had been drafted following a motion passed at the Full Council meeting on 3rd September 2014, requesting that such an assessment be undertaken in response to the publication of the report of Professor Alexis Jay's Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham. The motion stated that the completed assessment would be shared with both the Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet. The attached reports were presented in response to this request, and summarised the activity that had been undertaken in all areas of work in connection with the Council's Child Sexual Exploitation services.
- 5.2 Present at the meeting were Sue Fiennes, Independent Chair of the Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) and member of the Overview Panel, Dr Kathryn Houghton, Jayne Ludlam, Executive Director, Children, Young People and Families, Dorne Collinson, Director, Children and Families Service, Victoria Horsefield, Manager, Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB), Kevin Clifford, Chief Nurse, Clinical Commissioning Group, Councillor Julie Dore, Leader of the Council and Councillor Jackie Drayton, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families.
- 5.3 Sue Fiennes reported on the role of the Overview Panel, indicating that the assessment, which had been commissioned by the SSCB, had looked at how Sheffield City Council and partner organisations were achieving Sheffield's strategic aims in tackling child sexual exploitation, including the operation of the multi-agency team - Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service (SSES) - established in 2001.

She stated that, as well as the Board continuing to examine the various governance arrangements, there was also a robust Strategy Group, linked to the Board, which would take forward any actions arising from the assessment.

- 5.4 Dr Kathryn Houghton stated, as an introduction, that the CSE assessment had looked at many aspects of the Council's CSE services, including leadership and governance, multi-agency working, safeguarding, self-assessment, compliance with Ofsted's CSE thematic inspection Annexe A requirements, evaluation of processes, procedures and tools, evaluation of the CSE training programme, staff surveys on training and support, evaluation of ten cases managed through the SSES and an audit of 32 cases of children and young people who had received input from the SSES, and a Young People's Panel. Dr Houghton referred specifically to the case reviews, indicating that they were a prominent part of the report.
- 5.5 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-
- In terms of the areas for development outlined in the report, it had been recognised by all concerned that there was a continuing need to constantly review, develop and improve the services. The Service could not be complacent and could never think that it has got everything right. There was a level of awareness with regard to the fact that the education sector was very broad and that the procedures for CSE did work in practice. However, some educational establishments required assistance in developing a specific CSE policy or in amending existing safeguarding policies to fully encompass requirements. The report recommended that the SSCB assisted the educational establishments in this action.
 - The Strategy Board, a sub-group of the SSCB, had been formed around five years ago. The Strategy Board had been tasked at looking at the Action Plan, and had already commenced working on this. The SSCB would then receive regular reporting in terms of progress made in connection with the Action Plan. The Chair of the Strategy Board had commenced implementing a number of actions, and the Action Plan could be submitted, on a regular basis, to the Scrutiny Committee. The Strategy Board would also be looking at a number of actions from a sub-regional point of view, and not just relating to Sheffield.
 - It was accepted that it was not always possible to reach all groups, particularly those hard to reach groups in the Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCF) sector. There had been a number of publicity campaigns, which had helped to increase awareness, and training had been arranged for staff and local community

representatives, including representatives from the VCF sector. Both of these initiatives were beginning to have an impact, which had been shown by the level and nature of feedback received. Councillors had been encouraged to look out for, and inform the Council of, any such hard to reach groups who would welcome training. Online training had also been made available, which involved parents talking about their experiences. Sheffield had been innovative in this, and other local authorities were using the training package.

- There was a Licensing Manager on the SSCB, who was responsible for providing help and advice on safeguarding issues in respect of licensed premises. All new applicants for taxi licenses were required to undertake a BTEC course, with Safeguarding Children being one of the modules, and there were plans to roll this out for existing taxi drivers. A considerable amount of work had been undertaken with the hotel trade, with advice being provided for all members of staff in terms of CSE awareness, indicators and risks, with positive results of this work having already been witnessed.
- The issues relating to poor communication and information-sharing were usually highlighted as serious case review lessons on a national basis. It was important in all safeguarding children activities, not just CSE, to adhere to information-sharing protocols, as guided by Working Together 2013. This ensured that relevant information was shared with the right people and organisations. As part of the assessment, there had been evidence of good information-sharing and the case reviews highlighted an almost seamless system in this regard. One of the areas for development in the report was having a central base to hold information and this had been identified as the CareFirst system. This would mean that various workers would be able to access CareFirst at an appropriate access level. It was important that the Police shared relevant information in terms of criminal activity, which was, or could possibly, be linked to CSE. It was accepted that people were not infallible and so there could be no guarantee that all relevant information would be made available and/or shared with the relevant partner organisations. Whilst there were clear guidelines in legislation in terms of levels of information-sharing, it would never be a fool-proof system. The issue of information-sharing between partner agencies was made difficult due to the agencies having different protocols in this regard, but every effort would be made to share information, where relevant, in order to safeguard children. Efforts were presently being made to complete a sub-regional sign-off in terms of an information-sharing protocol, through agreement with the four South Yorkshire Authorities and the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner.

- In terms of mechanisms for allowing Members and other relevant people and organisations access to monitor whether CSE systems were operating effectively, one of the recommendations arising from a recent Ofsted thematic assessment was a requirement for the SSCB (with SSES) to produce a suite of reports for such relevant people and organisations, including the SSCB and this Committee, in terms of monitoring. It was also recommended that the SSCB and Scrutiny Committee should be provided with a timetable in respect of the receipt of regular update reports. Reference was made to the annual Safeguarding Report produced by the SSCB, and which was submitted to this Committee for information and scrutiny. It was also suggested that it would be useful for Members to have a checklist in terms of issues/questions they could consider raising as part of their scrutiny role.
- The in-depth audit of 32 cases of children and young people who had received input from the SSES had been considered a very important aspect of the overall assessment. Additionally, the Young People's Panel was critical to understanding their views. This required a considerable level of planning and preparation in terms of the Panel attendance. A lot of the information recorded as part of the Panel was reflected in the Overview Report.
- In the light of the challenges in terms of transitions and access to the Child and Mental Health Service (CAMHS), the Council had begun to challenge how appropriate the Service was for children and young people, both in terms of suitability and accessibility. Steps had been taken to look at how CAMHS, which offered general practice services as well as mental health services, could be provided differently. Questions had also been raised in terms of the gap in post-16 services, but this issue was now being addressed, with the Clinical Commissioning Group making a financial commitment on this issue.
- There were clear protocols in terms of how information was shared around CSE and referrals, and there was confidence, in the light of the robust processes adopted by the Council, that any referrals made to the Council would be dealt with adequately.
- It was clear that the recent media attention, particularly following the issues in Rotherham, had impacted on people's views and perceptions of child sexual exploitation which, amongst other things, had made people more aware, and therefore more confident, of reporting incidents. There was a considerable level of confidence in terms of capacity and level of expertise regarding staff in the SSES. It had, however, been recognised that the social work workforce in Sheffield was no different to

anywhere else in that it was subject to turnover and change, but there was every confidence that the staff were resilient and would be able to respond to the demands placed on them. It was recognised that there was still a need for staff to maintain high standards, particularly in connection with training, the provision of support and monitoring levels of need, as the Council moved through the next phase of development.

- Despite the heavy demands placed on Social Workers, and the high levels of blame laid on them, recruitment levels were still high, and there was still a highly committed workforce in the City. The Council benefited from operating a rolling recruitment process, which resulted in there being less gaps in staffing, as at other local authorities. Dr Houghton stressed that she was confident that Sheffield had robust processes in place in terms of its CSE services and that she would not have put her name to the report if she was not happy with the findings reported. The assessment had been so detailed and wide-ranging, that there was very little chance of anything being missed. Whilst accepting that, on occasions, information could go missing, there were adequate safeguards in place to limit such occurrences. Dr Houghton trusted all the Council officers and representatives from the partner agencies who had been involved in the assessment and had been very impressed with the attitude and work ethic of the Social Workers.
- In order to ensure that Members had as much information as possible, both in terms of levels of questioning and interpretation of data, in connection with their scrutinising role, relevant training would be provided. Whilst Members would not be able to access information in terms of individual cases, they would be able to monitor and raise questions in terms of trends and other statistics. The Overview Panel established to oversee the assessment of the CSE services had also performed a scrutiny role. The Scrutiny Committee may wish to request some of the expert witnesses, who had been engaged as part of the assessment, to attend a future meeting.
- The Police representatives on the SSCB had not been able to attend this meeting as they were party to an ongoing national Police review, and their attendance could potentially compromise their involvement in the review. The two Police representatives on the SSCB had attended the Young People's Panels, and had responded to a number of questions in terms of their roles. Also, the newly appointed Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire was scheduled to attend the Scrutiny Committee's meeting to be held in March 2015, to provide an update on his role around CSE. The Police had also taken part in the CSE self-assessment.

- In terms of recent Police prosecutions relating to child sexual exploitation, there had been three prosecutions as part of Operation Glover, two prosecutions as part of Operation Alphabet and five prosecutions as part of Operation Keg. In addition, a similar case (Operation Kreel) had been unsuccessful as the trial had collapsed. As a number of child sexual exploitation cases were considered by the Crown Court, in addition to those considered at Magistrates Court, there was also a need to educate juries on all aspects of child sexual exploitation. In such cases, the burden of proof was very important, so evidence gathering was considered a key element of such cases. Whilst comments as to whether the Police and Courts were taking tough enough action against perpetrators was a subjective issue, the Council was forced to trust and rely on both bodies in carrying out their roles to the best of their abilities. Officers had every confidence in the Police in the CSE Team, together with those Police Officers in the Community Youth Team.
- A number of sources assisted in the design of the CSE audit toolkit used in the assessment, including Working together 2013, Ofsted inspection toolkits, CSE evidence-based literature, best practice shared between local authorities, together with the experience of the report author, and the SSCB and SSES professionals. The audit toolkit had not been included in the report as it would have made it too lengthy. The audit toolkit could however be shared with the Scrutiny Committee if requested. The case reviews, which ran alongside the case audit, were very helpful. There was a need to be mindful as to how much data was included in the report.
- In terms of engagement with academies and private schools in the City, the Education Safeguarding Reference Group, linked to the SSCB, had an all-encompassing reach in terms of disseminating information with regard to CSE. In addition to this, the Safeguarding Service provided advice to all educational establishments in the City. Information could also be shared through the City-wide Learning Body. All educational establishments in the City had access to online policies, guidance, advice and online training.
- In terms of engagement with the VCF sector, there was a third sector representative on the Voluntary and Community Reference Group. The Group was open to any group who wished to join, and any volunteers or representatives of groups could attend any of the safeguarding training sessions arranged. They would also all have access to all the safeguarding policies and procedures.

- The issue with regard to the provision of help, advice and training for those people for whom English was a second language, had been addressed in the Overview Report, in that reference had been made to the receipt of any reports in other languages. It was accepted that, in some cases, problems with literacy was an issue and, where possible, community leaders were asked to help provide any relevant information.
- It was important that both perpetrators and victims of child sexual exploitation should not be stereotyped in terms of gender or ethnicity as this had the potential to increase risk to children.
- There were a number of strands of independence that had been applied to the assessment to ensure that due process had been followed, including the appointment of Sue Fiennes as the Independent Chair of the SSCB, and whose role it was to provide scrutiny and robust challenge to partner agencies in the City on all matters regarding safeguarding, including CSE. The level of independence was also reflected in the membership of the SSCB, which was made up of partner agencies which scrutinised and held officers to account. Ofsted's review of the SSCB in February 2014, had judged the Board to be 'good', and reported that Sheffield had demonstrated appropriate challenge. The CSE Service arrangements in Sheffield had been commended by Ofsted, a view consequently confirmed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). The Independent Chair had not seen anything in the report's findings to suggest that Sheffield was looking for a reasonable outcome, instead, finding that there had been a robust and transparent process throughout. Dr Kathryn Houghton stressed that she would not have undertaken this piece of work, or put the reputation of her company in jeopardy, if she had not been confident in the process.

5.6 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the Overview Report and Executive Summary – An Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation Services in Sheffield, together with the information now reported and the responses provided to the questions raised;
- (b) expresses its thanks and appreciation to Dr Kathryn Houghton for drafting the report; and
- (c) requests:-
 - (i) the Policy and Improvement Officer to draft letters, to be signed by the Chair of the Committee, and forward them

to (A) the Crown Prosecution Service, with copies to the Sheffield MPs, in support of the issue highlighted in the assessment that continuing work is required with the judiciary system to explain the complexities of child sexual exploitation, to increase the level of knowledge and understanding about the complexities of this issue, (B) the Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board, expressing concerns around the lack of resources and appropriateness of services for young people's health pathways, (C) those members of staff in the Children, Young People and Families Portfolio involved in the assessment, expressing its thanks for their dedication and ongoing work and (D) the young people involved in the assessment, expressing its thanks in terms of their involvement;

- (ii) specific training in terms of the interpretation of figures and statistics to assist Members in their scrutiny role, to be in line with one of the identified areas for development within the assessment;
- (iii) that officers from the Children and Families Service continue to engage with parents and carers as part of the process; and
- (iv) a copy of the case audit toolkit that was used in the assessment for use as part of its ongoing scrutiny role.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 6.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday, 26th January 2015, at 1.00 pm, in the Town Hall.