

**Children and Young People
Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

**Agenda
Item No.**

14th October, 2014

9.

Title of the Report: Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) - Update on Partnership Working

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr B. Cassidy Cabinet Member (Children's Services)

Executive Summary:

The Walsall Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB), through a CSE Committee made up of representatives from Partner agencies, is leading and coordinating work across all Partners in the Borough to address the issue of CSE. The Board and Council have lead a significant and wide-ranging review of practice and procedures in light of Alexis Jay's report into CSE in Rotherham Council published in August 2014. The WSCB holds all parties to account for their work in identification, prevention and action to keep children and young people safe and minimise the risks of them being subjected to CSE. This report updates the Scrutiny Panel on work currently in progress.

Reason for scrutiny:

This item was discussed at the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 8th September in light of the Rotherham Report. Members requested a written Report to assure themselves that all appropriate action is in place across the Council and with Partners to safeguard children and young people and to review how effectively Scrutiny Panel operates in relation to challenge and holding responsible bodies to account.

Recommendations:

That:

1 The report be received and accepted as assurance of the Partnership's work to prevent and protect children and young people from CSE.

2 Scrutiny Members consider any other information or advice, either from within the Council or externally, that is required to ensure that responsibilities for CSE are effectively discharged.

Background papers:

None

Resource and legal considerations:

No additional resources are required at this time and there are no specific legal considerations.

Citizen impact:

The impact on children and young people in Walsall, and their families is significant if they are party to activities related to CSE. The impact on communities is considerable where CSE activities are identified.

Environmental impact:

None

Performance management:

The Council and Partnership are challenged and held to account by the WSCB. The CSE Committee provides strategic leadership for CSE work across the Borough. The CSE and Missing Group provide operational leadership and take responsibility for the identification of any young people at risk of CSE and manage and monitor the impact of prevention and intervention work to prevent and minimise the risk of them becoming victims. Within the Council the Children's Services Directorate is responsible for managing the work related to CSE across the Council, reporting through the Assistant Director: Social Care and Safeguarding to the Director of Children's Services.

The Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP) and the Cabinet Member (Children's Services) have an oversight of this work.

Equality Implications:

Teenage girls are most likely, although not exclusively, to be the victims of CSE.

Consultation:

WSCB has been fully cited on this work and reports are discussed with CYPP and the Cabinet Member.

Contact Officers:

Robert Lake – Independent Chair of Walsall Safeguarding Children Board

☎: 01922 646640

✉: laker@walsall.gov.uk

Tony Griffin – Assistant Director of Children's Services, Walsall Council

☎: 01922 652756

✉: griffint@walsall.gov.uk

1. Walsall Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) has a CSE Committee, reporting into the Board, to strategically lead and coordinate the work of all relevant agencies across the Borough. At the latest meeting of the WSCB, the chair of that Committee reported on a number of issues and local developments. In doing so she provided evidence of effective partnership working, which will be of interest to members of this Scrutiny Panel. The issues highlighted included the following:
 - 1.1 Rotherham Report: The publication in August 2014 of Alexis Jay's report into CSE has prompted increased interest in CSE issues locally, including a variety of requests for data, information and reassurance on the pathways, processes and issues in Walsall. Each agency is currently engaged in considering the report's 14 recommendations, in the light of the mapping exercise which took place in June 2014. Feedback from this exercise will both inform the Delivery Plan and form the basis of a further report to the WSCB
 - 1.2 Problem Profile: A refreshed and updated problem profile for CSE has been commissioned for the West Midlands region. The previous profile was based on police data alone. This time all partners will provide data to ensure that the resulting product better reflects the issues in Walsall and supports more meaningful comparison between areas. It is likely that this Scrutiny Panel will be interested in receiving the results of this exercise when they are available.
 - 1.3 Regional Delivery Plan: This is seen as helpful, though further work is being done to ensure that it is more specific, in terms of having named leads and defined timescales for the actions it contains.
 - 1.4 Children missing from home or care: Board members discussed the distinction between children deemed to be 'absent' rather than 'missing'. If used carefully these categories can help in targeting the attention of agencies on the situations of greatest risk. It appears that, in Walsall, there is less use of the label 'absent'. This may reflect good practice in that it leads to more use of appropriate support mechanisms. However, further work is to be done on the implications of this, as episodes of going missing can be indicative of being at risk of CSE.
 - 1.5 CSE co-ordinator: Following the successful bid to the Community Safety Partnership to fund a dedicated CSE co-ordinator for Walsall, the committee agreed that the chair and board manager should progress recruitment on behalf of the committee with appropriate speed.
 - 1.6 Barnardos contract: Aside from the support provided by Barnardos after children return from being missing, the organisation has contributed to regional investment via a child trafficking advocate. Further information about this is to be reported to the October meeting of the WSCB.
 - 1.7 Representation: The membership of both the committee and its operational sub-group are to be strengthened by attendance by Housing and Education representatives
 - 1.8 National Working Group membership: The Board agreed that it should fund Gold membership for the LSCB to the CSE National Working Group. This will enable all members of the Board to access the full resources of the group, including free access to special interest forums and e-learning for practitioners, and discounted costs for seminars and specialist events.
 - 1.9 Multi-agency audits: The next phase of these will be a themed audit of CSE cases, conducted with reference to the Rotherham recommendations.
 - 1.10 Future WSCB meetings will receive a report from the CSE Operational Group (CMOG) as a standing item. This will include data analysis which will highlight trends and themes.

1.11 Data collection: The new IT system being introduced into Children Services to replace PARIS will provide opportunities to enhance the collection and analysis of information about CSE.

2. On 17th September 2014, the Director of Children's Services called together representatives from within the Council and from West Midlands Police and the Safeguarding Board to consider the following:

- How are Walsall MBC and Walsall Police managing information/intelligence on Child Sexual Exploitation in the Borough?
- What agreements can be reached on information/intelligence flows?
- How do we manage the broader service areas e.g. taxi licensing, licensing of premises?

2.1 The action points, which are now being addressed, included:

- Map current referral/identification processes and review as necessary.
- Review internal communication systems, within Walsall Council and with its Partners, include Schools and School Governors to ensure they operate as effectively as possible.
- Update and reissue guidance on Child Safeguarding to all agencies and organisations
- Make wider use of available literature – leaflets specific to parents, young people, and social workers are available and will be re-issued and promoted.
- CSE Committee to identify a named contact for each partnership agency who can work together in a consistent way on the issues, including Freedom of Information requests and press enquiries.

3. There is a considerable amount of work underway across the West Midlands Region on CSE and the Director of Children's Services has recently met with Stephen Rimmer, who leads on Public Protection across the region, to ensure Walsall is fully contributing and learning from this work. The Regional Association of Directors of Children's Services has commissioned a piece of work to understand how each Local Authority is addressing the issues of CSE. This is currently being compiled and will provide further learning and examples of good practice.

4. All the relevant agencies within the Borough, including from Walsall Council itself, are working in partnership to address the issue of CSE. No agency is complacent: we will continue to work closely together to ensure that Walsall's children and young people are effectively safeguarded and protected from harm.

5. 5.1 Members of the Scrutiny Panel will share the interest of the WSCB in seeking reassurance that all partners are playing a full part in (and accepting accountability for their contribution to) work to address CSE locally. With that in mind the Panel may wish to seek further briefings on the subject and efforts to "Prevent, Protect and Pursue" victims and perpetrators.

5.2 Scrutiny might consider:

- Should future agendas be structured to ensure enough time is devoted to the subject?
- How does the panel hold external bodies to account?
- Would panel visits to observe good practice in other Councils be worthwhile?

In any future Ofsted inspection the effectiveness of the work of the Scrutiny Board in relation to CSE and the impact on Children and Young People in Walsall will be tested and therefore it is important that Members have confidence and are assured of the quality of work in Walsall.