

Children and Young People's Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Agenda
Item No.

26 March 2013

Child Sexual Exploitation in Walsall

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr R Andrew- Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Executive Summary:

The Children's Society were asked as an Independent organisation to look at how Walsall Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) safeguards children and young people in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), with the view of recommending improvements in process and practice, with specific focus on:

- A shared strategy for how WSCB will safeguard children and young people in relation to CSE
- An audit framework for the Safeguarding Board in order to hold services and partners to account
- A self-evaluation tool for services which enables transparency around CSE and clarifies direction
- Productive and robust partnerships in regards to CSE across Walsall
- Enabling courageous conversations in relation to CSE among council staff and across partnerships

Reason for scrutiny:

To enable the Children and Young People's Scrutiny and Performance Panel to have an overview of specific aspects of children's services safeguarding improvement activity.

Recommendations:

1. To note the report.

Background papers:

Ofsted Report for Walsall Children's Services

Resource and legal considerations:

The Children's Society was commissioned to do this piece of work by the Children's Improvement Board.

Citizen impact:

The Children's Society will be having one-to-one conversations and focus groups with specific families and children and young people who have been affected by CSE and the views and opinions that they have will be included in the report and inform recommendations going forward. This will be a consensual process and those taking part will be made fully aware of how the information provided by them will be used.

Following the report and recommendations that the Children's Society will encourage the WSCB to implement, there will be better systems in place to monitor how well CSE is prevented, how well children and young people are supported and protected and how well prosecutions are sought.

Environmental impact:

There will be limited environmental impact.

Performance management:

A fortnightly update report is provided to the interim Director of Children's Services and a final report will be produced for the WSCB.

Equality Implications:

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out? /No
If yes, summarise the key findings here.

Consultation:

Children's Services – Safeguarding, Targeted Youth Support, Youth Justice, Social Care
Walsall Street Teams
West Midlands Police
Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust
NHS Walsall (drug and alcohol services)
Walsall CS Serco
SAFE Project
Walsall Street Pastors
Crisispoint
Spurgeons

Contact Officer:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rose Collinson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Rose Collinson – interim Director, Children’s Services

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Report

1. Context

- 1.1 As part of a national invitation, Walsall Metropolitan Council submitted a request to the Children's Improvement Board to work with The Children's Society and with Walsall Safeguarding Children's Board:
- To identify gaps and areas to develop in relation to audit, assessment and performance concerning Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) practice in Walsall; and
 - Specifically to develop a suite of toolkits (an audit tool for LAs, an assessment tool for service/departments, a performance assessment tool for individual frontline staff and a CSE tool for reducing level of risk and responding to risk indicators) that can be used by children, young people, families and practitioners.
- 1.2 The Interim Report from the Office of the Children's Commissioner (Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups) 2012, makes a number of recommendations for implementation in order to best safeguard children and young people from CSE. Alongside Statutory Guidance 2009, and the University of Bedfordshire's Research there is a wealth of evidence-based recommendations that we can draw on. Walsall Safeguarding Children Board need to ensure that the board and CSE sub group are operating in an effective way, in line with these recommendations, with robust processes in relation to CSE which seek to prevent, protect and prosecute.
- 1.3 Following some high profile CSE cases in Rochdale, Derby and closer to home in Telford, it is essential that Walsall Safeguarding Children Board evaluates how well they are safeguarding children and young people in this respect so that there is awareness of the scale of the problem and a clear strategy in place for addressing it. Walsall was one of the first Local Authorities to operate a panel looking specifically at CSE and developing innovative ways in which to work with children, young people and families through street-based work and drama performances - the aim should now be to surpass that.
- 1.4 The Children's Society have looked nationally, regionally and locally at what is happening in relation to CSE and the way in which it is monitored in order to learn from 'best practice' models that already exist. The Children's Society will be arranging a field visit to an 'outstanding' performing LSCB to gain further insight as to how they operate.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

- 1.5 In order to engage all key partnership agencies in this process so that there is shared ownership of the direction going forward the Children's Society has met with a number of key partners who sit on the Strategic and Operational Children at Risk of Exploitation (CARE) panel to establish

- what the current processes are in relation to making CSE referrals
- how well they feel that current arrangements are working in relation to safeguarding children and young people from CSE
- what recommendations they would make to improve processes

1.6 Staff are clearly motivated to work together to safeguard children and young people from CSE and those that have taken part in the process so far have been honest and up front about what they feel needs to happen in order to better safeguard children and young people around CSE. To date some emerging key are:

- there is currently no shared strategy for dealing with CSE across Walsall
- there is a perceived communication loss between strategic and operational level
- data collection and analysis is sporadic
- there is currently no way of measuring the impact of interventions
- there are weak links between the WSCB and the Children and Young People's Partnership – i.e. a current Children and Young People's Plan which does not mention specific safeguarding concerns such as CSE as a priority
- some lack of clarity in terms of what to do with information relating to CSE concerns
- a reliance on particular members of staff/teams to deliver on CSE work with no wider shared ownership i.e. its everybody's business

1.7 The Children's Society is still due to speak with staff from health, Voluntary organisations and Serco to ensure that key partners have been engaged in this process.

1.8 The Children's Society has arranged to meet with families and young people specifically affected by CSE to ensure that their experiences are a driving factor in the recommendations for how partners can best work in the future to safeguard children and young people. The Children's Society colleagues are due to meet children and young people and families over the next month.

IMPROVEMENTS WALSALL ARE ALREADY MAKING:

1.9 The new chair of WSCB is currently reviewing the structure and has already suggested a Board member chairing each sub-group to ensure that there is a clear link between each. The Children's Society think that this is a positive move that will create a strong link between the board and sub-group and ensure effective communication.

1.10 WSCB has also proposed a rethink of the CARE panels in their current format. The Children's Society would agree that there needs to be some discussion around the role and functions of the CARE panel so that it is robust and effective.

- 1.11 WSCB Chair has recommended that the Children and Young People's Plan includes a direct reference to CSE, particularly in relation to preventative/early intervention work. The Children's Society strongly supports this to ensure that CSE is kept as a priority for Walsall going forward.
- 1.12 Walsall Street Teams collect data on missing and CSE cases and have carried out some analysis of this in order to identify 'hot spot' areas and trends. However, we are concerned that this data is not currently being used and scrutinised at board level.
- 1.13 WSCB will be adopting the regionally agreed CSE Induction Toolkit and risk indicators and risk assessment matrix. These are locally produced, innovative toolkits which Walsall have been involved in developing. This is a positive step forward in terms of ensuring a standardised approach to approaching CSE.

OUR NEXT STEPS:

- 1.14 Professor Eileen Munro in her report on child protection, '*A Child Centred System*' said that LSCB's need to become 'Learning systems' in which a culture of learning and development are fostered. The Children's Society will be looking at ways of developing 'Courageous conversations' with regards to CSE, using methods such as the Specific Incident Learning Process (SILP) in order to ensure continuous development and improvement.
- 1.15 The Children's Society will be looking in more detail at how best to use multi-agency disruption strategies as a way of both protecting and prosecuting perpetrators.
- 1.16 The existing audit frameworks will be assessed in relation to CSE in order to develop a framework that is fit for purpose for WSCB.
- 1.17 The Children's Society will be meeting with families and young people to ensure that their experiences are a driving factor in the improvement of current systems and practices in relation to CSE in Walsall.