

CHILDRENS SERVICES Scrutiny AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Monday 27th January 2020 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference Room 2, Council House, Walsall

Committee Members Present

Councillor M. Statham (Chair)
Councillor T. Jukes (Vice-Chair)
Councillor D. Barker
Councillor H. Bashir
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul
Councillor M. Follows
Councillor L. Jeavons
Councillor C. Statham
Councillor S. Wade

Portfolio Holders Present

Councillor T. Wilson - Children's and Health and Well Being

Officers Present

Colleen Male	Assistant Director
Andrea Potts	Assistant Director
Carol Boughton	Head of Service - Safeguarding
Nikki Gough	Democratic Services Officer

Liz Murphy – Independent Chair of Children's Safeguarding Board

Nuala Waide – Head of Safeguarding (Walsall Healthcare Trust)

Sue Walters – Interim Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children (Walsall CCG)

Helen Matthews – CEO Walsall (Street Teams)

Andy Thompson - Operations Manager (Street Teams)

DCI Des Lambert – West Midlands Police (Public Protection - Child Abuse)

DCI Karen Geddes – West Midlands Police (Criminal Exploitation)

40/19 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor L. Rattigan.

41/19 Substitutions

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

42/19 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

43/19 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to be considered in private session.

44/19 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were considered.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2019 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Welcome and introductions were made to the wide range of partners who had attended the meeting.

45/19 Child Exploitation

The Head of Service (Safeguarding) stated that the report provided an overview of the issues relating to child exploitation including child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation. The wider partnership response, to date, was described – this was led by the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership. It was stressed that the partnership sought to address those individuals who exploited children.

The Chair invited 'Street Teams' to address the Committee and describe the work that the organisation did in relation to child exploitation. The Chief Executive Officer stated that Walsall Street Teams were currently commissioned by Walsall Council to provide sexual exploitation services and the team accepted low to medium risk referrals of sexual exploitation. The team provided a prevention offer to primary and secondary schools, and supported families, who had been victims of exploitation, to move house and access other support. A Member asked how referrals were received; the Operations Manager stated that referrals could come in from anywhere. Street Teams were now part of the MARVP – which discussed children who had been criminally exploited.

In response to challenge about what had been done to raise awareness of exploitation. The Chief Executive Officer stated that there had been several awareness raising campaigns, and Street Teams tried to educate the community and worked across all

faiths. It was stressed that when a child was entrenched in exploitation prosecution and disruption activity was needed.

A Member asked for more information on the revised screening tool used for exploitation, the Chief Executive Officer stated that it was for anyone living/working in Walsall; previously the tool was not fit for purpose. The revised tool is not a tick box but encouraged professionals to provide a narrative of their concerns.

A Member asked what the challenges were in Walsall, and the Operations Manager stated that often parents did not think that exploitation could happen to their child, and mobile phones posed a danger to children. To combat this the team raised awareness and partners attempted to make the town a difficult place to exploit.

Partners were asked if local businesses cooperated with the partnership, and the Committee were reassured that generally, businesses were keen to engage and given the example that McDonald's staff were trained and employed security guards. It was also noted that taxi drivers completed training as a requirement of their license. The DCI (Public Protection, Child Abuse) stated that the culture within businesses had changed for the better in relation to exploitation and that the challenge could often be a high turnover of staff.

A Member challenged how well partners were working together to tackle child exploitation and to ensure that action was taken where necessary. The Committee were assured that the partnership worked effectively together to identify those children at risk of exploitation. In response to challenge around how well the partnership worked with neighbouring local authorities the DCI (Public Protection, Child Abuse) stated that information was regularly shared and intelligence gathered, this was available on a national police database. The DCI (Criminal Exploitation) stated that the police shared information between forces on missing children. The Head of Safeguarding reassured Members that when dealing with Walsall children, the connection was made with neighbouring areas to build a full picture of the situation and this was a constant conversation.

The Chief Executive (Street Teams) stated that she had worked for the organisation for 18 years and that the partnerships were stronger and wider than ever.

The Independent Chair of Children's Safeguarding Board stated that the partnership faced complex challenges. The partnership were on a journey to tackle broader child exploitation and referral pathways needed to be further embedded, however this was also the case in other local authorities. The Committee were advised that the system was established in safeguarding children at risk in their home but it was not so well established at safeguarding children at risk from outside of the family.

The Interim Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children (Walsall CCG) and Head of Safeguarding (Walsall Healthcare Trust) addressed the Committee. The Committee were advised that the partnership had successfully won a bid, which would provide expertise to support work safeguarding children. It was stressed that this successful bid did not provide additional funding to the partnership but experts who worked alongside the team.

Members were informed that an exploitation hub was in development and this was being worked on collectively. In addition, at the Hospital, a safeguarding nurse now completes a daily walk of the wards and this has assisted greatly in identifying potential cases. This made safeguarding visible and had made a difference to identification of safeguarding concerns.

The Committee were informed that there was not a service offer for those children at medium to high risk of exploitation. DCI (Public Protection - Child Abuse) informed Members that if the child was a victim of any sexual exploitation or if they were trafficked there were services in place to support them.

A discussion on disruption activity was held, police representatives informed the committee that successes could be found in prosecutions for related offences that were not necessarily trafficking. Partners were asked what was done in schools to educate the community. The Committee were informed that lots of work took place at both a primary and secondary level to support the curriculum.

Members asked if therapeutic support was provided to children exposed to exploitation. In response, they were advised that there was a sexual assault service, which provided counselling. However, it was stressed that supporting children's mental health was important and generally more needed to be done. A Member also asked how effective the partnership were at engaging the workforce to respond to the issue of exploitation. The Independent Chair stated that there was a training offer for CSE and there was work ongoing to equip the workforce to deal with all types of exploitation. Street Teams also described their offer in terms of training days to address the shortfall in criminal exploitation. It was also noted that the Barnardos charity also ran training.

The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) stated that the partnership had an engaged workforce, and that it was important to provide frontline staff with the tools to do the job. The profile of a child who is at risk of exploitation is understood, it was stressed that the world was changing and that this required the workforce to work differently.

In drawing the item to a conclusion the Chair asked the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Board if she was happy with partnership working in Walsall. She stated that the partnership had demonstrated the ability to have constructive conversations, the pace of work needed to be increased to meet key priorities. The revised arrangements for the safeguarding partnership would also create an equal partnership. The revised arrangements would also include an operational group.

The Chair thanked all Partners for giving up their time to attend the meeting.

46/19 Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

With the agreement of the Committee the Chair deferred consideration of item 7 to the next meeting.

Resolved

That the report 'Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub' be deferred until the next meeting due to be held on Monday 9th March 2020.

47/19 Areas of Focus

The areas of focus 2019/20 was noted.

48/19 Forward Plans

The forward plans were noted.

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Monday 9th March 2020. There being no further business the meeting terminated at 7.45 p.m.

Signed:

Date: