

26 January 2017

**An overview of Child Sexual Exploitation and the Response by the
Walsall Partnership**

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr R Burley – Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and Education

Executive Summary:

This report provides an overview of the issue of child sexual exploitation, including the national and regional response activity around this significant priority for the Council and the wider partnership. It outlines the response to this issue in Walsall, led by the Walsall Children's Safeguarding Board (WSCB).

Reason for scrutiny:

The report was requested by Members of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Panel to enable them to fulfil their key responsibility and duties in holding the Council and its Partners to account for its work in preventing and protecting children and young people from harm through CSE in Walsall. This report builds on previous reports on CSE presented to Scrutiny on 14 October 2014, 15 April 2015 and 22 November 2016.

Recommendations:

That:

- Scrutiny notes and supports the contents of the report and the current activity to protect Walsall children and young people from the risk of child sexual exploitation, to pursue perpetrators and to disrupt their activities, including through prosecution.
- Scrutiny challenges the partnership on the outcomes for children and young people in Walsall in relation to preventing and protecting against child sexual exploitation.

Background papers:

The following reports provide an overview into the issues of CSE nationally and regionally.

- Working Together to Safeguard Children A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, March 2013

- 'If only someone had listened': the Office of the Children's Commissioner inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups report, November 2013
- The Jay Report: Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham August 2014
- The Sexual Exploitation of Children: It Couldn't Happen Here, Could It? A thematic report by Ofsted, November 2014
- The Louise Casey Report of an Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, February 2015
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation across the West Midlands Assessment, 18 March 2015
- Tackling Child Exploitation Her Majesty's Government March 2015
- Time to Listen – a joined up response to child sexual exploitation and missing children September 2016
- Quarterly Regional Report West Midlands 1st Quarter 2016-17

Resource and legal considerations:

Responding to children at risk of significant harm is a statutory duty placed on local authority Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services, LSCB Chairs and senior managers within organisations who commission and provide services for children and families, including social workers and professionals from health services, adult services, the police, Academy Trusts, education and the voluntary and community sector who have contact with children and families.

The resources required to respond to this statutory requirement come from within the existing resources across the partnership of organisations working in Walsall to protect vulnerable children and those at risk of harm.

Citizen impact:

The effective delivery of high quality services to protect children and young people from significant harm, including the risk of child sexual exploitation has a direct impact on the welfare and well being of children and young people in Walsall. It directly links to the corporate priority to Improve Health and Wellbeing and the Children's Services objective that all children in Walsall are safe and supported.

Environmental impact:

There is no environmental impact

Performance management:

The performance of the partnership in successfully supporting children and young people at risk of child sexual exploitation, prosecuting offenders and the promotion of disruption activity is monitored by the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board at every meeting.

Equality Implications:

The co-ordinated provision of services designed to address the protection of children and the disruption and prosecution of activities by adults provides specific support for those children and young people who are at risk of significant harm. This includes those protected characteristics of gender, disability, race and religion.

Consultation:

This report has been prepared collaboratively between Walsall Children's Service Social Care, the Independent Chair of Walsall Safeguarding Children Board and Phillipa Cresswell, Regional Strategic CSE Coordinator.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of abuse where children receive something – such as accommodation, drugs, affection, gifts or money – in ‘exchange’ for sexual activity. Often the victim is groomed into believing the abuser cares for them.

It is child abuse, involving the child being forced, coerced or intimidated. The child or young person is a victim. It is not an informed choice and the child may not be aware that they are being abused. In varying degrees CSE includes sexual, emotional and physical abuse and neglect. It is not the child’s fault.

CSE can happen to any child or young person no matter what their background, culture or where they live. The child and young people experience additional vulnerabilities, for example being looked after or episodes of missing education or from home. There are many different methods and approaches to sexually exploit children and young people. It can be undertaken by an individual, peers, groups or gangs. The problem is not a new one, but it is being considered in a different and more high profile way.

- 1.2 There is no specific criminal offence of child sexual exploitation and legal redress is via prosecution for a range of other offences, including rape, statutory rape, trafficking offences and child abduction. Some Local Authorities have successfully used the civil court process to obtain injunctions preventing named individuals from approaching vulnerable children. This has the merit of being able to progress through Court without the victim having to make a statement to the Police.

2. The National Response

- 2.1 There is currently no national strategy in relation to CSE although there have been a number of enquiries and reports into the challenge that CSE poses in keeping children and young people safe. These include:

- ‘If only someone had listened’: the Office of the Children’s Commissioner inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups report in November 2013
- The Jay Report: Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, August 2014
- The Sexual Exploitation of Children: It Couldn’t Happen Here, Could It? A thematic report by Ofsted, November 2014
- The Louise Casey Report of an Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, February 2015

- 2.2 In March 2015 the Government published its ‘Tackling child sexual exploitation’ report, a cross-government action plan. This included a commitment to delivering a new system of multi-agency inspections to be carried out by Ofsted, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation) known as Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI’s) with a thematic deep dive element.

- 2.3 The first of these deep dive elements considered child sexual exploitation and children who go missing. This resulted in the publication of ‘Time to Listen’ in September 2016.

- 2.4 Five Local Authorities were inspected between February and June 2016 and a range of key learning identified including:
- strategic goals must be clearly identified, understood and agreed across agencies, which also must commit resources to tackle child sexual exploitation
 - the need for all partners to share information and intelligence to fully understand the local patterns of child sexual exploitation, to disrupt and deter perpetrators and to identify, help and protect children
 - the need for a better understanding about why children go missing at an individual and a strategic level if agencies are to do more to protect them
 - the fact that children benefit from being able to build a relationship with one trusted individual and being actively involved in decisions about their lives
- 2.5 The Walsall response to the publication of the Jay Report in August 2014 has previously been reported to Scrutiny (14 October 2014 and 15 April 2015) and assurance provided as far as is reasonably possible with the information available as provided by each agency that there are no known historic or long standing issues relating to CSE that have not been brought to the attention of the appropriate Authorities.

3. The Regional Response

- 3.1 As part of the regional work on Preventing Violence against Vulnerable People (PVVP), a Regional CSE co-ordinator has been in post since August 2015 with an Implementation Officer being appointed in October 2015. Both posts form part of the PVVP programme which also benefits from a programme manager. The CSE posts are hosted by Solihull MBC and report into the Director of Children's Services. Funding for these posts is on a partnership basis across the 7 Local Authorities who form the West Midlands Police force area and the West Midlands Police (WMP). The initial funding period is for a fixed term period until 2017. The delivery of the regional CSE co-ordinator work plan is overseen by the PVVP Board and reports are provided to the West Midlands Metropolitan Leaders Board.
- 3.2 This collaborative approach to work across the region has enabled the collection of data which has been consistently collected on a quarterly basis across the region. This is published online by each of the LSCBs and WMP. At the end of Q1 2016 (April –June) there were a total of 1085 children with identified CSE risk indicators across the West Midlands region; of those 90 were awaiting assessment and may or may not be at risk of CSE following full assessment. There has been a consistent increase in numbers identified, although the rate of increase slowed for the first time last quarter. Across the region there is evidence of a consistent increase in the number of children who show a reduction in the level of risk. Local Authorities shared their best practice of "what works" regionally. Consideration of 'hidden' groups and communities e.g. boys, new arrivals, has also supported the development of greater understanding across the region. Overall the response across the region is yielding some positive results in that more children are being identified earlier and that those at the highest level of risk are reducing as we intervene effectively and as early as possible.

- 3.3 A CSE newsletter is also published quarterly to give all professionals across the partnership a snapshot of regional successes and national updates in relation to CSE. This is sent to all regional CSE leads for wider distribution.
- 3.4 The 7 Local Authorities and West Midlands Police also contributed to a regional communications and marketing budget. This year's activities have included a number of press releases and, following consultation with young people a campaign using targeted digital advertising to target young people through popular gaming, social media apps and websites.
- 3.5 This is supported by high profile social media accounts (Facebook, twitter and Instagram) that are used to share key developments and best practice in the field and build professional networks.
- 3.6 The impact figures for the campaign have shown an impressive increase in traffic to the website ~ www.seeme-hearme.org.uk including returning and new visitors and length of visits. The website itself has had a refresh and is up to date with key resources and information including the most recently developed licensing leaflet which has been printed and shared with CSE co-ordinators and local partnerships teams for delivery to licensed premises.
- 3.7 Bespoke training has been developed and delivered according to local need and in line with national and regional priorities, including: training in chairing Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation meetings (MASE meetings), Trafficking and the use of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), general CSE awareness raising for hotels and taxi drivers. Walsall Team Managers have also received a briefing on chairing MASE meetings.
- 3.8 A Regional Young Person's Event, hosted and supported by Walsall Youth Service, took place on 11th March which was a day of learning and discussion for young people across the region. This consultation is being fed into an on-going piece of work with schools and the voluntary sector to develop a CSE resource for primary aged children to tackle the unacceptable attitudes and behaviours that fuel violence and exploitation.
- 3.9 The regional programme is keen to explore the opportunities for peer reviews following the Local Government Association Peer Diagnostic in Walsall in August; a proposal is now going back to the Children's Improvement Board to consider roll out across the rest of the region.
- 3.10 The learning from the JTAI inspections has been shared across the region and led to the development of a self-assessment tool for LSCB CSE strategic sub groups. The plan is that those who wish to participate in piloting these will do so before the end of the year.
- 3.11 The age group of 16 to 18+ has been identified as a challenge for professionals, with a sense that these children can be left unsupported once they turn 18. An expression of interest has been put to the DfE innovation fund that will facilitate a research project into the outcomes for this cohort; this will assist the region in developing an appropriate response at service delivery level. In the meantime work is underway to develop regional guidance on a pathway between children's and

adults that will require sign off through the various governance frameworks including Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults Boards.

- 3.12 The pursuit of offenders is a regional priority and The West Midlands Regional Framework Disruption Toolkit is a valuable tool to support operational practice and decision making. It will be re-launched at a regional event on the 18th November where we have a series of expert speakers coming to talk to us about best practice in relation to pursuit and disruption with a focus on 16 – 18 year olds.
- 3.13 The region is very aware of the vulnerability of our response to missing children. We have a regional missing group led by the Regional CSE co-ordinator and Head of Public Protection Unit at WMP. This group has met twice and there is a work plan to develop a regional procedure, respond to cross border placements and out of area notifications and consider how to develop the regional response going forward.
- 3.14 Ongoing regional priorities are:
- systematic implementation of the framework; focus will be workforce development, CMOG, MASE, assessment tools.
 - continue to develop a system wide response to CSE through the work with Public Health but also; West Midlands Fire Service, Ambulance Service, Pharmacies.
 - continue to develop the response to identified gaps in Service: rising 18s and transition, missing, work with parents and carers, boys, learning disability, work with offenders, abused recruiters, cross border working and information sharing, e- safety & PSHE.
- 3.15 Walsall is fully engaged and an active participant in the regional work. As a result the impact for Walsall is:
- a structured process for indentifying risk
 - an improved ability to work effectively across West Midlands Local Authority boarders
 - the opportunity to learn from best practice elsewhere within the West Midlands
 - an opportunity to share our best practice, specifically in relation to working with boys

4. The Local Response

Organisational Practice

- 4.1 Since February 2015 Walsall has benefited from a dedicated CSE Police investigation team. The team focuses on progressing CSE investigations; an additional detective is dedicated to identifying and implementing covert opportunities to bring CSE offenders to justice.
- 4.2 The CSE Co-ordinator is now employed directly by the Local Authority following a motion by Walsall Council to ensure that the post, previously grant funded on a 12month basis was mainstreamed as a permanent post.
- 4.3 The Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Operations Group (CMOG) continues to meet on a monthly basis and reports to the strategic Child Exploitation and Missing

Committee (CMEC) of the Walsall Children's Safeguarding Board. In Walsall the CMOG is well supported by partners from across the wider children's partnership and includes representatives from the police, social care, the youth offending team, early help and licensing.

- 4.4 CMOG focuses on perpetrators, both those identified by name and those known only by nicknames or who are not yet named and locations, logging information which is used to:
- identify locations and organisations where additional training may support better identification and protection of children and young people
 - identify locations in order that workers have an understanding of those areas to be aware of when directly working with children and young people
 - support police intelligence gathering to assist in West Midlands Police investigations
- 4.5 Where partners have intelligence relating to children from other Authorities being found in Walsall this information is shared across Local Authority boundaries as appropriate.
- 4.6 Every individual child who is assessed as being at serious (high) or significant (medium) risk of harm from CSE is the subject of a multi agency sexual exploitation meeting (MASE). The child or young person and their parents and carers are invited to attend with those professionals who are working with that child or young person. This meeting discusses how best to protect the child, sharing information and intelligence and is designed to identify specific actions relating to the exploitation this child experiencing. These meetings are attended by the police, child, parents or carer, social worker, school, health and any other professional who can share information and offer support. A clear plan of action is put in place to protect the child and this becomes the responsibility of a named professional to ensure the actions are delivered and the intended impact is achieved.
- 4.7 In the last Quarter (October to December 2016) the risks faced by 16 young people reduced following intervention. This includes 4 young people whose risk reduced from the highest level (serious risk) and 2 whose risk reduced from significant risk.
- 4.8 Walsall also recognises the link between children who go missing and the risk that going missing exposes the child to with regard to sexual exploitation and training is currently being delivered to staff across Children's Services to strengthen understand of this issue, the risks posed and develop skills in intervention strategies to reduce the risk.
- 4.9 In Walsall during the period April 2015 –March 2016 196 children were reported as missing and referred for an independent return interview. The Statutory Guidance issued by the DfE in January 2014 is that once found the child must be offered an independent return interview to be carried out within 72hrs of their return to their home or care setting by someone not involved in caring for the child.
- 4.10 For children in Walsall these interviews are carried out by Street Teams, a Walsall based registered charity which undertakes independent return interviews with children in Walsall. All return interviews include an assessment of the risk to the child of becoming a victim of CSE and copies of the return interviews are provided to children's social care. This information forms an important part of the overall

assessment of risk of CSE and the subsequent plans to mitigate the risks to the child or young person.

Members of Scrutiny have previously discussed the work currently taking place in Walsall and across the Region to enhance our response to ensuring that those looked after children placed Out of Borough in ensuring that there is a return interview conducted if they go missing.

4.11 We know that in Walsall:

- 61% of reported missing children are female
- missing children are most likely to be in the 14-16 range
- 71% of reported missing children are of White UK heritage

Two thirds of the children who went missing during 2015-2016 were known to Children's Services and 27% of those were looked after children.

Strategic Response

4.12 Co-ordinating an effective response to child sexual exploitation and children and young people who go missing across the Borough remains a priority for the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) in the 2016-17 Business Plan.

4.13 As part of this response the Board commissioned a Local Government Association Peer diagnostic into the response to CSE across the Borough. This took place between 1st and 5th July 2016.

4.14 The final report has been received and the following strengths and areas for development were identified:

Strengths:

- there is a good prevention service in Walsall that demonstrated case activity helping young being exploited
- young people and parents are routinely invited to MACE meetings
- through CMEG and CMOG there is evidence of casework assisting children and young people and targeting perpetrators demonstrating effective multi agency working between Police, the local authority and other partners
- training is a strength in Walsall this includes: how to identify warning signs of CSE, how to report concerns, how to safeguard and how to prevent. The training is well evaluated with very positive feedback
- impressive training of elected members
- clear evidence of all schools, including faith schools, accessing training
- the regional tool kit is known and used with a good resource pack available for partners via the LSCB website.
- there is information for young people available via the LSCB website

The diagnostic also identified the following key areas for further development:

- the Walsall Safeguarding Children Boards takes on the leadership of the coordination of the CSE agenda including challenge and accountability across the partnership
- a coherent strategic plan driven by data and effective data analysis is developed and cross referenced to the work of the various strategic boards that hold CSE

as a priority area e.g. Health and Well-being Board, Children & Young People's Partnership

- data quality issues need to be addressed and data analysis needs further development. This includes data for service planning as well as to evidence impact
- ensure that there is consistent frontline practice and management oversight in relation to CSE
- implement effective quality assurance of CSE including systematic consideration of feedback from children, families and carers
- service delivery planning should incorporate the complexity and dynamics of CSE and acknowledge the need to ensure enduring therapeutic support to children and young people as well as support for their families/ carers

A Partnership Development day was held on 14 November in response to the outcomes of the peer review, facilitated by a national lead on CSE.

A full delivery plan is being developed based on the areas for development already known to enable good practice to be improved further and the recommendations to be addressed. Implementation of this plan will be monitored via the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board.

- 4.15 Members of Scrutiny will be aware from previous discussions of the decision taken by Licensing Committee that all taxi drivers in Walsall will undertake training on a range of safeguarding issues including signs and response to possible sexual exploitation. The programme will commence on 9 February and will enable drivers to help be the 'eyes and ears' across our community and further support the identification of any locations of concern.
- 4.16 Training remains a strength across the partnership with 94% of attendees reporting that their knowledge and skill set had improved as a result of their attendance. All agencies in Walsall have promoted attendance and in the year 2015/16 the take up was as follows:
- Education staff 35%
 - Social care staff (adult workers; children's workers, including residential staff) 44%
 - Health care staff 21%

Current Known Size of the challenge in Walsall

- 4.17 The Quarter 3 data, covering the period October-December 2016 identified 130 young people who were identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation. Of these, 4 are at the highest level of risk. 82 are young people known in the previous quarter and 16 are children whose risk of exploitation has reduced since the previous quarter. The number of young people identified as at risk or potentially at risk of sexual exploitation represents the number of situations where risk has been identified enabling social workers, early help workers and partners to work proactively with these young people to increase their understanding of what is happening to them and reduce the risks they face.

The increase from last quarter is the result of increased awareness and understanding of CSE amongst practitioners translating into more CSE screening which in turn is generating more referrals. Specifically this has resulted in an increase in referrals in relation to children at lower levels of risk.

- 4.18 There is a strong working relationship with the West Midlands Police in supporting young people to break the cycle of their abuse and information regarding locations of concern are shared in order that those working with children and young people can consider this when children or young people share information about their activities.

5 Next Steps

- 5.1 Walsall Safeguarding Children Board continues to provide leadership in this area. Partners across Walsall have made significant progress in embedding processes and practice that will enable children and young people who are at risk of or are being sexually exploited to be identified and supported. Processes are also in place to identify and deal with offenders.
- 5.2 The Safeguarding Board will also oversee and monitor the implementation of the Partnership Delivery Plan arising out of the LGA Peer Diagnostic and deliver the recommendations.
- 5.3 Work to understand why children go missing and further strengthen our individual response to these children continues to be developed as this will improve our strategic knowledge and response.