

Cabinet – 24 June 2015

Child Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator – Permanently Funded Post

Portfolio: Councillor Hughes, Care and Safeguarding

Related portfolios: Councillor Andrew, Economy, Infrastructure and Development

Service: Children's Services

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary

- 1.1 On 14 April 2014 Children's Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel received a report which provided overview of the issue of child sexual exploitation, including the national and regional response activity around this significant priority. It outlined the response to this issue in Walsall, led by the Walsall Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB).
- 1.2 Children's Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel requested that Cabinet consider establishing the Child Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator's post on a permanent full time basis. The post is currently fixed term for one year, ending 31 March 2016. The funding is currently provided by a grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner made available via the Community Safety Partnership.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet adopts the recommendation and creates a permanent, full time post of Child Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 Members requested that officers provided a report to April's Children's Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel which provided an overview of the issues relating to CSE and the national, regional and Walsall response. Members requested the report to enable them to fulfil their key responsibility and duties in holding the Council and its partners to account for their work in protecting

children and young people from harm through Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

- 3.2 The report built on previous reports presented in October 2014 and provided an overview of the issue of child sexual exploitation, including the national and regional response activity to address this significant priority. It outlined the response to this issue in Walsall, led by the Walsall Children's Safeguarding Board.
- 3.3 There is considerable work across the region to protect young people from harm through sexual exploitation and Walsall is an active participant and contributor in this regional work. It has been important to work regionally to effectively understand the scale of CSE and the inter-relationships across the region. The seven West Midlands Councils, working together with West Midlands Police and Barnados have established a regional framework which sets out the functions, processes and a proposed structure that will assist the safeguarding of children and young people from CSE.
- 3.4 The West Midlands Metropolitan Area Child Sexual Exploitation Framework incorporates the 'See Me Hear Me' framework first laid out in the November 2013 report of the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

The overarching aim of this framework is to ensure that child sexual exploitation is responded to as a child protection and safeguarding issue as stated in the Working Together guidance on child sexual exploitation (DCSF, 2009).

- 3.5 In common with the wider West Midlands partnership, and other Local Authorities, Walsall has established a fixed term post of Child Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator. This role is designed to support an effective multi-agency response to the prevention, identification and disruption of child sexual exploitation. This includes providing specialist advice and support to the wider children's workforce, developing policy and practice, developing and maintaining a database and identifying unmet needs which are then brought to the attention of the LSCB.
- 3.6 The current post is time limited for 12 months and will cease in March 2016. It is funded via a grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner made available to Walsall via the Community Safety Partnership.
- 3.7 Members of Children's Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel recommended that Cabinet continue to fund the post of Child Sexual Exploitation Coordinator after the initial fixed term contract expires.

4. Council priorities

- 4.1 Providing a co-ordinated and coherent response to the threat posed by child sexual exploitation is entirely consistent with Walsall's Corporate Plan 2015 - 2019

'Shaping a Fairer Future'; specifically it links directly to the priority to promote health and well being.

- 4.2 The co-ordination and execution of successful local disruption activity in any locally identified 'hot spots' will also contribute to the Corporate priority relating to improving educational achievements as children and young people who are victims of child sexual exploitation are also frequently those who miss school.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 In March 2015, HM Government published *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation* in which it laid out actions the Government intends to take in response to the Jay Report and the Casey Report. These include:

- a new national Whistleblowing portal;
- the creation of a national taskforce and a centre of expertise to support areas deemed to be struggling to get their response right;
- consultation on an extension of a new offence of 'wilful neglect' to children's social care and education officers and elected members
- ensuring that every police force prioritises child sexual abuse by giving it the status of a national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement.

- 5.2 Those who exploit children sexually do not confine their activity to a single borough and both children and perpetrators travel across borough boundaries. Working collaboratively across the West Midlands region ensures both better protection of children and allows intelligence regarding perpetrators and locations to be shared which improves disruption activity.

- 5.3 There is no specific budget attached to this proposal and a budget will need to be set within an annual budget setting cycle through the realignment of resources.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The post of Child Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator is a fixed term post for a duration of 12 months, currently due to cease in March 2016. The full year costs for this post is circa £34k. Funding for this post is currently secured via a £40k grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner made available to Walsall via the Community Safety Partnership. This grant funds both the identified post along with additional expenditure required to support the officer in post, e.g. training materials and travel.

- 6.2 The grant is currently confirmed for the financial year 2015/16, however there is no committed funding in place going forward. Consideration and decisions of

future funding will not be known via the Community Safety Partnership until January 2016.

- 6.3 In the event no further grant funding is secured, as per the recommendations of this report, Walsall will continue with the post of Child Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator beyond 2015-16. Funding for the post will be found from within the Children's Directorate budget and will be included in the Directorate's future budget planning.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The principal regulatory framework for responding to children at risk of significant harm is found in The Children Act 1989.

- 7.2 Further statutory guidance is found in Section 13 of the Children Act 2004 which sets out roles for individual organisations and key elements of effective local arrangements for safeguarding and which places a statutory duty on local authority Chief Executives and Directors of Children's to ensure robust safeguarding arrangements for children within their area.

8. Property implications

There are no property implications in this report

9. Health and wellbeing implications

- 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 Promote Health and Wellbeing and the Children's Services objective that all children in Walsall are safe and supported.

- Providing a co-ordinated response to children and young people at risk of child sexual exploitation is consistent with the Marmot Principles previously approved by Cabinet on 24 September 2012 which include giving every child the best start in life and enabling children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives.

10. Staffing implications

The current post holder is employed on a 12 month fixed term contract and is

currently expecting to leave the Council's employment at the end of March 2016.

11. Equality implications

Children and young people experiencing or at risk of being sexually exploited are among some of the most vulnerable Walsall citizens. Such exploitation can happen to any child or young person no matter what their background, culture or where they live. 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.

12. Consultation

Walsall's response to child sexual exploitation is a collaborative approach between Walsall Children's Social care, West Midlands Police, Walsall Safeguarding Children Board, Walsall Health Care Trust and the voluntary sector. The provision of a permanent, full time co-ordinator role is one which all partners support.

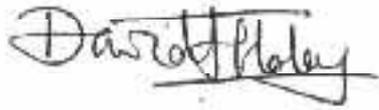
Background papers

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

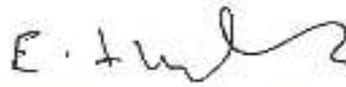
- Working Together to Safeguard Children A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, March 2013
- 'If only someone had listened': the Office of the Children's Commissioner inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups report, November 2013
- The Jay 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
- An overview of Child Sexual Exploitation and the response by the Walsall Safeguarding Children's Board to this issue Walsall Children's Scrutiny and Performance Board April 2015

Author

Carol Boughton
Head of Safeguarding, Children's Services
☎ 655848
✉ carol.boughton@walsall.gov.uk



David Haley
Executive Director
5 June 2015



Councillor Eddie Hughes
Portfolio Holder
15 June 2015