

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Wednesday, 22nd July, 2015

Present:- Councillor Hamilton (in the Chair); Councillors Pitchley, Ahmed, Astbury, Beaumont, The Mayor (Councillor M.Clark), Cutts, Hoddinott, Jones, Rose, Rosling, Taylor, Tweed, M. Vines and Jepson.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Currie and co-opted members Ms. J. Jones and Mr. M. Smith.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

No Declarations of Interest were made.

9. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS.

No members of the public or the press were in attendance.

10. COMMUNICATIONS.

Nothing was raised under this item.

11. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10TH JUNE, 2015.

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission meeting held on 10th June, 2015, were considered.

Councillors Currie and Rosling had both submitted their apologies for the meeting but these had not been recorded in the minutes.

Matters arising from the previous meeting would be covered in this meeting's agenda.

Resolved: - That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission be agreed as an accurate record with the addition of the two apologies for non-attendance.

12. CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION - THE WAY FORWARD FOR ROTHERHAM.

Councillor Hamilton welcomed Jean Imray, Interim Deputy Strategic Director, Children and Young People's Services Directorate, to the meeting. Jean had been invited to discuss the document of the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board entitled 'Child Sexual Exploitation: The Way Forward for Rotherham 2015 – 2018'.

Jean introduced the strategy document which was owned by the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board and had been signed off by them the previous day. The document was Rotherham's strategy for

tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) so it was deliberately written in strong terms. It was intentionally hard-hitting and straightforward about the challenges.

The document took as its starting point a quotation from Louise Casey: -

Louise Casey tells it as it is

CSE is the sexual and physical abuse, and the habitual rape of children by (mainly) men who achieve this by manipulating and gaining control over those who cannot consent to sex either by virtue of their age or their capacity.

The strategy recognised and named CSE as rape. The strategy also recognised that CSE was a form of gender based violence because a majority of the cases were male perpetrators against female victims. Rotherham needed to recognise the issues and take the correct steps to counter them.

The strategy was also clear that Rotherham Services had failed Rotherham children. Page two states: -

'We have fallen short of what should be expected in all areas. We have failed to prevent CSE. We have failed to recognise the signs, symptoms and risk factors and we have failed to educate our children, girls and boys, about the nature and benefits of healthy relationships and respect for each other. We have failed to protect children not only by the inadequacies of our responses to the plight of victims, but as adults (parents and professionals) by introducing them to benefits of the internet, mobile technology without insisting that the necessary safeguards are also in place. We have failed to ensure that justice is served, not only by failing to pursue and prosecute criminals, but also by applying processes in our courts that are designed for adults and being complacent when they clearly don't work for vulnerable abused and children.'

Jean explained that child witnesses subject to adult court processes had, at times, collapsed under the pressure of the situation and often described it as a second abuse.

Rotherham was starting to do ground breaking work in tackling CSE. It would be reassuring if, in a year or two, this was recognised when there would hopefully be sufficient evidence of success. Rotherham's Services needed to be honest and change track if the strategies were stopped becoming effective. Jean explained that the Strategy was underpinned by a delivery plan, but if it became clear that some actions were not having the desired affect it would be right to change or adjust them accordingly. Therefore, it would be important to ensure that the objectives set within strategies were monitored.

The Delivery Plan would follow 'The Way Forward' in due course as an addendum to the Strategy.

Jean referred to the information contained within the 'Rotherham CSE Profile'. Some of the data referenced could be misleading and was not telling services what they wanted to know. The data might not show enough distinction between CSE and other forms of sexual offence, for example, intra familial abuse.

Jo Abbott, Public Health Consultant – Health Protection, who was presenting in a supporting capacity alongside Jean, explained that the Strategy was to support victims as well as guide services. There was a wide range of services available for victims and survivors post abuse, and these needed to be analysed for efficiency.

Jo referred to the links between CSE Services within Rotherham to others: - Licensing, School absence, awareness raising within schools, sexual health and relationship education. These all had the aim to 'Prevent, Protect, Pursue and Provide'. Strategy documents produced by all partners needed to dovetail to ensure that victims and survivors were appropriately helped.

The Improving Lives Select Commission had had sight of the document and each section was discussed in turn and questions and comments were made.

Preface: -

Councillor Rosling asked whether the significant financial implications relating to CSE for the Council and its partners were yet known?

Jean Imray stated that this was ongoing as demands were continuing to appear. There would come a 'steady state' point when demands and resources were known and this would form a baseline to provide a good quality service in the future. Regarding the numbers of staff, it was not just about this, it needed to be the right people of the right calibre and right skill set. It was very important to have experienced people working with children and young people involved with/at risk of CSE.

Councillor Rosling asked when the steady state would be reached?

Jean was confident that the Services involved would not need any less resourcing than they currently had plus the ability to bring in extra resources when required would be necessary. The work was resource intensive; currently there were 3 continuing operations and there was a possible fourth coming as a result of improved intelligence and identification. This was really positive, but did make it difficult to know amount of resources needed in the future.

Councillor Hoddinott said it was very welcome that Steve Ashley had

identified CSE as gender-based violence, mainly perpetuated by older males on young and vulnerable females. Were Schools part of the training and awareness strategy? What thought had been given to relationships and on-line safety?

Jean: - "We want to prevent this from happening in the first place." Recent research had presented worrying trends about the attitudes of young people to issues like hitting within relationships and consent. It was concerning that in 2015 females were not seeing themselves as equal in relationships, or seen by others to be equal. Content was needed from at least Year Six within the PSHE curriculum on the development and definition of healthy relationships.

Councillor Hoddinott asked whether all primary and secondary schools were engaged in the delivery plan?

Jean: - "No, not yet as it was not complete." Meetings would be held with Headteachers in the new school year to ask them to buy-in. The Local Authority's influence was limited but resistance was not expected. It should be part of the curriculum for all young people to talk about these issues.

Councillor Hoddinott felt that it was difficult to discuss the matters as Elected Members had not seen the delivery plan. What were the timescales?

Jean explained that the document stipulated that the discussions with schools should begin by October. Lesson timetables needed to be set in advance. It was doubtful whether it would be incorporated in the 2015/2016 school year, although it was hoped that some schools would and show other schools a positive outcomes and examples. It was hoped that the work would be embedded in school timetables from September 2016.

Jo Abbott provided reassurance that there was a lot of work already going on in schools across the Borough.

Councillor Hamilton asked when the delivery plan would be available to be viewed?

Jean explained that it was currently being checked with agencies that they were happy with the identified lead officers and timescales. It would be available within 2/3 weeks.

Councillor M. Vines referred to page 16 that dealt with the expectation on the Corporate Parent to care for their looked after child as if they were their own child. What work was taking place with care providers to ensure that they were picking up on risk?

Jean Imray explained that she would like to think that no LAC was placed

anywhere where carers were not very aware of all risks. She was confident that this was the case and carers would be picking up on the signs of risks. Children in care were amongst the most vulnerable and there were children in care in Rotherham due to CSE.

Councillor Beaumont referred to the school roll-out and asked whether parents should be engaged with? Councillor Beaumont outlined an information and education event that had been put on for parents in Maltby to get information. No parents attended this event.

Jean agreed that this was disappointing as it sounded like a perfect opportunity to engage. Work was needed to identify why no-one came and how the approach could be adapted better for next time. Schools normally wrote home to parents who could opt to not engage, or letters were not always delivered by children. There was not a one size fits all answer. Other ideas could include stands at sports days; Services needed to go to where groups of parents congregated. Parents needed to be absolutely involved in awareness raising and information sharing.

Jo Abbott explained that the Rotherham Lifestyle Survey had shown that 60% of children said they were taught about CSE in schools. All secondary schools covered issues relating to CSE. A theatre company was working in Rotherham by providing workshops and sessions addressing CSE through drama and discussion.

Jean explained that, often, children and young people did not realise they were being exploited. A lot was happening right across the community to raise awareness of CSE and of what a good, normal healthy relationship looked like.

Councillor Ahmed referred to the saying that it takes a community to raise a child and School was instrumental in this because it played such a major part in a child's life. Were there primary or secondary schools that were being particularly proactive in identifying and completing early assessments for CSE? Does the Local Authority have the resources in terms of CSE staff?

Jean Imray explained that the caseloads in the CSE Teams were very low to allow for intensive development of relationships compared to other children and young people social work teams. With the efforts that were being put in, the Services really reaped the rewards. Workers were spending hours with the young people involved and at risk of CSE, sometimes visiting them 3-6 times a week according to their needs.

The Local Authority's Early Help Offer was developing and making progress but was not where it was needed to be. Tier Two services should engage those on the periphery of CSE and schools were making referrals. Intelligence was being received and starting to create fuller pictures, including children missing from home and children missing from

education data. There was no resistance from schools in terms of their attendance at strategy meetings. Some schools had more activity due to where they were based. Jean was confident that progress was being made and that things were going in the right direction.

Councillor Pitchley referred to theatre groups working in schools and was aware that they had worked with Year Six pupils in her own area. Feedback had been very positive. Year Eight was quite late to be starting with awareness raising. She had heard positive responses from Year Six children that had taken part.

Councillor Beaumont stated that children were in school for 38 weeks a year / 6 hours a day. The major influences were outside of the school. A previous education psychologist pilot in the East Dene area worked with Year Five pupils and their parents. The group had been selected as potentially being at risk. The learning was good but it was only a small pilot.

Jean agreed that funding and resources were crucial and there were lots of pilots out there. However, the work needed to be year in year out to tackle and defeat CSE. Investment in prevention would be far smaller than the costs of addressing CSE and prosecuting offenders.

Definitions of Child Sexual Exploitation: -

Councillor Rose was aware that the definition was the shared national definition and quoted by Louise Casey. However, survivors were vulnerable way beyond age of 18, often due to special educational needs.

Jean agreed that the national guidance only covered those under the age of 18 but it was true and sad that vulnerable adults were also targeted. Furthermore, vulnerable children often became vulnerable adults.

Our Commitment: -

Councillor Pitchley asked whether partner agencies were committed. What impact had the very recent HMIC and CQC reports had?

Jean felt that as they had only been released yesterday it was hard to say yet. There had been rapid progress to now. Inspections were always backward looking and the fieldwork that these inspection reports had been based on were not current. It was possible to evidence progress since June, 2015.

Councillor Pitchley asked about the public impact the negative inspection reports were having? The public needed evidence before they could begin to believe that services were decent.

Jean stated that this could come through the completion of the actions identified in the delivery plan and when young people and survivors said that they were happy and that they were supported and their issues were being resolved. Victims and survivors had reported that historically they were fending for themselves. Jean was taking encouragement from the progress that was being made and hoped that the negative publicity from the inspections based on old fieldwork would not disrupt the recent progress that continued to be made.

Councillor Pitchley commended the style of the report; it was accessible and easy to read and should reassure the public. The content was very clear and she thanked the authors for this.

Councillor Hoddinott commented as highlighted in the Casey and Jay Reports that the assurances had been given in the past to Councillors that services and agencies were working well together; following the publication of the critical CQC and HMIC reports, how could Councillors have confidence that partnership working was effective.

Councillor Hoddinott asked how honest and challenging conversations took place between agencies within the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board on issues like performance, capacity and capability?

Jean confirmed that this would happen, but specific instances related to individuals would only be addressed by and within the individual agency. There had been lots of challenging conversations taking place between agencies relating to CSE issues and they would continue to be addressed as they arose. Although meetings could be uncomfortable all agencies were committed to ending with a resolution. The current risk assessment tool was one example of robust multi-agency discussion and, eventual, resolution.

Councillor Pitchley referred to the protocol whereby pharmacists could provide emergency contraception to young people if they made a referral to the Integrated Youth Support Service. A child or young person had to agree to work with the Service. What could be done to make the protocol more robust?

Jo Abbott agreed to discuss this issue outside of the meeting as it did not directly come under the remit of this strategy document. There were different pathways for different ages. Where a child was definitely under-age, pharmacists would make an appropriate referral.

Councillor Ahmed referred to the assessment tools that professionals such as GPs used following reports of self-harming, for example. Was this happening? Universal services were key partners in the work to tackle CSE.

Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser and Member Development, asked that this question be made when the operational plans were considered at

a future meeting.

The Rotherham CSE Profile: -

Councillor Beaumont referred to section 3.6.4 stating that teenage conceptions were at an all-time low. However, she was aware of local spikes and wondered whether this was due to the loss of Early Help facilities lost over two-years ago.

Councillor Hoddinott asked whether there would be a current CSE profile that identified hotspots available for the September meeting.

Jean explained that a scorecard was currently being developed and would be available in September. This would enable tracking as the months went on.

Councillor M. Vines asked about the extent of the issues within eastern European communities. Cultural traditions were different and marriages could take place at the age of 14.

Jean Imray explained that as soon as a child entered the UK they became subject to the full application of UK laws. The UK law would not recognise the marriage and Services would become involved where necessary.

Objectives and key action: -

Councillor Pitchley asked about how the available help was being raised with victims and survivors.

Jean explained that this document had been to victims and survivors group/s which was one of the reasons why it was circulated late. Currently raising awareness was restricted because there were not sufficient resources to meet needs. The Local Authority was being proactive about creating a commissioning programme with the voice of victims at its heart. It would ensure there was synergy and avoid duplication. Jean explained about the Barnardo's Outreach Hub. Currently there were more support services in place for adults than for children. The Women's Refuge Service was providing services for adults and children affected. The Women's Counselling Service and Rape Crisis was providing support for victims of rape. The Local Authority did not think that there was enough of the correct provision to form a menu of services.

Councillor Pitchley about a timeframe for the setting up of the resources needed?

Jo Abbott referred to the 'Spot the Signs' posters available to raise public awareness. Partner websites existed with useful links to resources. The commissioning needs assessment would influence which services were commissioned.

Councillor Rose knew learning disabled and physically disabled survivors who felt they had fallen through the cracks and were not getting any services.

Jean Imray: - "I won't dispute that". There is currently a national shortage of provision. Linda Harper would be looking at commissioning services for where there were gaps in provision.

Councillor Hoddinott wanted to see victims and survivors at the heart of services and asked whether the mechanisms were in place to get the funding to support this?

Jean spoke about the commissioning strategy which included working with charities and bid writing.

Jo Abbott referred to user forums and the use of victim data to create contracts.

Councillor Hamilton asked about the views of survivors on this report?

Jean confirmed that victims' opinions had been incorporated and changes made in response to their comments. The Service did have to filter these and explained to the individuals involved any reasons why their comments had not been taken on board.

Governance: -

Councillor Pitchley referred to the diagram of the people involved in this document and work. So many meetings were taking place to facilitate it: - "how do we prevent this from being a talking shop?"

Jean agreed that the document illustrates how much activity there was. A lot of the same people were on the same groups. Operational grounds represented the command structure largely led by the police. Support to victims was being provided on a weekly, if not daily, basis. The key people were attending.

Councillor Pitchley had counted 14 branches. How often did the meetings happen? Whilst professionals were at a meeting they were not getting work done on the front line. Where and when were the actions happening?

Jean explained that it document represented just one element of the children's social care agenda. The Service would ensure that the meetings and forums were productive and a good use of time. The current management team and Commissioners were mindful that meetings had to be productive.

Councillor Hoddinott could not find any mention of the Improving Lives

Select Commission. "Where is our role in scrutinising and ensuring that important things are being implemented?"

Jean: - "It is crucial that there is robust scrutiny of everything we do towards safeguarding; the more the better." The role of the Improving Lives Select Commission in asking questions was a useful one. "I go away and find out the answer." The Improving Lives Select Commission should continue to ask what was happening and continue to be demanding and robust.

Conclusion: -

Councillor Hamilton asked where the Services' pressure points were?

Jean felt that it was in the nature of not knowing what each next week held. Operations took place regularly and brought intense activity for social workers and partner agencies. This could happen again and again and was the nature of any work at the sharp end. The Council had been fantastic in making resources available to ensure work was high quality.

Councillor Hamilton asked which area had seen the most progress?

Jean said that it was the areas below the surface. Rotherham had had a whole other layer of things happening, including the loss of senior staff and the Jay Report and research for the Casey Report in the period August to November, 2014. Since January, 2015, onwards an awful lot of work on setting the foundations right to create a solid base had been happening upon which to build sustained improvement.

Councillor Hamilton thanked Jean and Jo for their attendance and contribution to the discussion and answering the range of questions made.

Caroline Webb, listed the next steps for the Improving Lives Select Commission: -

- To receive and consider the Delivery Plan when it was finalised;
- To consider the 'hot spot' information when it was finalised;
- To consider and contribute to the discussion around the needs assessment and commissioning strategy;
- That the omission of the Improving Lives Select Commission in the governance arrangements of the report considered at this meeting be corrected;
- Further strands that members of the Improving Lives Select Commission wanted to consider at an early meeting were awareness raising in primary schools, support for vulnerable adults and the transition between Children and Adults' Services between the ages of 18-25.

Resolved: - (1) That the strategy document 'Child Sexual Exploitation –

The Way Forward for Rotherham 2015/2018' be received and its content be noted.

(2) That future meetings of the Improving Lives Select Commission continue to monitor the issues reported including the documents due to be published in the coming months.

13. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING: -

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on Wednesday 9th September, 2015, to start at 1.30 p.m. in the Rotherham Town Hall.