

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Wednesday, 10th June, 2015

Present:- Councillor J. Hamilton (in the Chair); Councillors Pitchley, Ahmed, Burton, Cutts, Hoddinott, Jones, Rose and Turner.

Apologies for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor M.Clark), Councillors Beaumont, The Mayor (Councillor M.Clark), Taylor, Tweed and M. Vines.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

2. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no members of the public and press present.

3. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications to report.

4. NOMINATIONS TO THE HEALTH, WELFARE AND SAFETY PANEL

Resolved:- That Councillor J. Hamilton represent the Improving Lives Select Commission on the Health, Welfare and Safety Panel for the 2015/16 Municipal Year with Councillor Rose as substitute.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28TH JANUARY, 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th January, 2015, were noted.

6. UPDATE AND BRIEFING ON PLANS TO TACKLE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

The Chair welcomed Jean Imray, Interim Deputy Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services, to the meeting. Jean gave an overview of the work that had taken place to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation:-

Redevelopment of the Joint Child Sexual Exploitation Team

The challenges faced by the original CSE team of the Council were outlined in some detail and it was explained to Members that the Team's remit had been unclear and also the level of expertise in the Team not sufficient due to the complexities it faced

The Service had since been disbanded. A Head of Service had been brought in to take responsibility for the operational level of service and an experienced Team Manager in CSE and important in Safeguarding Child

protection cases. The Team had been gradually built to ensure the right skill set. Whilst this process had been taking place, other areas of Social Care had been managing the existing CSE work.

The Team was now in a position to take on new work and there was a new Operation involving a number of young people in Rotherham and a number of districts.

It was still in the early stages at present but already the differences that had been made to the conduct of the investigation could be seen. There was a very clear command structure i.e. the Police command structure (Gold Group) which included a Police Superintendent and a Senior Investigating Officer and met on a weekly basis. Under the Gold Group was the Silver Group which was a more operational group on the day-to-day work.

The new Team also had a qualified Social Worker, an unqualified Social Worker post from Barnados and a Health Worker who was really important in terms of engaging young people and giving sexual health/contraception advice and responding to any of the victim's worries and concerns because of the experience they had had. There was also a wide range of work ongoing to identify those young people who were at high risk because of their additional vulnerabilities e.g. children missing from school/care, having access to drugs/alcohol, witnessed in certain places etc.

Barnardos; Assertive Outreach Hub

Work was taking place with Barnardos to identify funding streams to develop this Service which would assist agencies to access the "high risk" group which was not available currently. The Hub would be very active in terms of leaving the premises and getting onto the streets and finding the young people who were at risk and working with/encouraging them to come into the centre and allow agencies to support them. It would be a very important component to the CSE portfolio that would help agencies get to grips and tackle the problems.

Multi-Agency Risk Panel

Whilst waiting for the Barnardos' Hub to come on line, this was 1 of the things being used to identify, not just vulnerable individual young people, but also high risk areas where people may be gathering such as the Interchange, train station, parks. Whoever had concerns in the community, either about individual young people or high risk areas, all agencies worked together to make sure the right activity was targeting those areas in terms of observation, targeting particular offenders and diverting people from high risk behaviours. It would consider individual young people such as those that had been missing on repeated occasions and fit the profile of at risk of CSE.

CSE Strategy

A Strategy entitled "Way Forward" was being developed which set out the

way forward for partnership in order to tackle all aspects of CSE from those activities that needed to be undertaken in order to:-

prevent it happening in the first place;
 activities and services that needed to be available in order to successfully protect children;
 activities that everyone needed to be involved in to ensure successful prosecutions were secured;
 support to victims and survivors both current and historical.

Underneath the 4 key areas would be a whole raft of actions, some of which would be quite high level but also some very basic, that needed to be done in order to improve. There would be an action plan which would hopefully capture everything required to have the greatest impact. Each action would have a timeline attached to it, ranging from immediate effect and aspirational.

Police Activity

Recent arrests had been made by South Yorkshire Police. The Council had been involved in the investigations even though they related to historical cases. It was hoped they would lead to successful prosecutions and important to ensure the public understood that the door was not closed on the pursuit of bringing perpetrators to account.

Children's Services

A lot of work was taking place on all fronts of Children's Services in Rotherham. It had been badly broken and it would take quite a long time to put back together of which CSE was 1 aspect. It was really important that the improvements that were made on solid foundations that avoided the prospect of the Service making progress and then going backwards. The improvement journey took 3-5 years.

Discussion then ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- **Had the recent arrests been a direct result of the intervention work that had gone in recently or from previous work?**
 The recent arrests represented an Operation that had been in train for 18-24 months and pre-dated the work that had started following publication of the Jay report
- **How do we scrutinise the plans to tackle CSE?**
- **What is the extent of the profile of CSE in our local area now and how do we know that?**
 Unfortunately CSE was still going on but no more than in any other local authority area. Although there was a lot of awareness raising with regard to victims, there had not been much about raising awareness of perpetrators. This needed to be tackled as part of the "prevention" arm of the Strategy

- **Were potential victims getting younger than stated in the Jay report? Were we looking at primary school children or still secondary children and was it still a Town Centre issue?**
There was no intelligence to suggest that the profile of victims were getting younger. The hot spots had probably changed because there had been some targeted activity together with the work on Licensing. As the Services developed it would result in better intelligence
- **What work was the Authority doing with Universal Services (Health, Schools, GPs etc.) that were involved with young people? If a young person that was frequently absent from school were the services linking together? What was the Authority doing to ensure that young people that did not meet green, amber red and not deemed at risk according to what the Services considered as at risk?**
The Rotherham Safeguarding Board had conducted an enormous amount of awareness raising and workshops and there had been a series of awareness raising and talking to schools, health colleagues and other agencies about how to access the Multi-Agency Risk Panel which had recently held its first meeting. The Panel was where low level intelligence would be fed into so all the pieces of the jigsaw could be joined up. The Authority received all the information on any child that went missing in Rotherham which was then screened to see whether or not they were at risk. If repeated at a maximum of 2/3 times, the case would be picked up by CSE Services. The current cases had not been as a result of a young person coming forward and revealing what had happened to them but had been as a result of the preventative work. The young people concerned were very resistant and did not see themselves as victims but were now working with agencies to support them and revealing what had happened. The Assertive Outreach Team would provide increased intelligence and development of the work
- **What are the numbers of cases presented to the Multi-Agency Risk Panel?**
It was thought to be approximately 10 but it was not just about individual cases but also about intelligence, the activities of potential perpetrators and hotspots. By identifying those hotspots, sharing the information and looking more closely at an area, you could identify more potential vulnerable young people at risk and then direct them to the right support at whatever level was required
- **What therapeutic support was being provided by RDaSH?**
There was insufficient support in place currently nor a wide enough range. Work was being carried out and RDaSH had suggested how they could increase the provision available
- **Was the funding for the additional Psychotherapist extended beyond March, 2015?**
It was thought that it had

- **Was Riverside House the most suitable location for the Multi-Agency Support Hub given the ethos of hot desking?**

The Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH) was the Authority's new front door. It was acknowledged that it was less than perfect accommodation and prevented the necessary improvements being made but consideration was being given to alternative accommodation.

It was not known where the Assertive Outreach Team would be based but it would not be in Riverside

- **Would the recently agreed intelligence post be that similar to the post in Bradford? Their postholder identified areas and fed reports into the Police**

It had been identified that the building of the cases around the suspects absolutely relied increasingly on the use of the research and intelligence and the Police were committed to that. It would not be possible to secure successful prosecutions without that base

- **Were the information sharing protocols between South Yorkshire Police and the Council working?**

There were no concerns at the moment and the extent of the joint working was improving on a daily basis. It had been difficult for the Police as well as the Council because of the amount of scrutiny they had been under but both parties had reiterated that if you wanted things to be different you had to do things differently or there would be the same results. There was a very clear Command structure which voluntary sector partners were also part of

Recent statements from South Yorkshire Police referred to partnership working with the Council and the language used reflected those statements

- **Now that the staffing levels had been built up, how did we keep those staff members?**

Part of the wider improvement journey had to include a Recruitment and Retention Strategy so that good staff were recruited and stayed. It was normal to lose some staff and it was healthy because it could become very inward looking but you did not want people to leave because they were dissatisfied. It would be difficult for a period of time to recruit, particularly Managers, whilst people waited to see what developments/improvements were made. Managers were on the front line of Safeguarding Children Services and potential employees would be cautious about coming to Rotherham. The Strategy and recruitment campaign had to clearly state what was being done, that there was access to good training, would be paid a competitive rate, good management etc.

- **Was there a Joint Investigation Team working protocol?**

Since publication of the Jay report, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub had been developed which was the new front door so when someone contacted Children's Social Care the Multi-Agency Team would deal with the enquiry.

Due to the development of the MASH, which included the Police, the processes and procedures had been re-written. In terms of development of CSE Services, because there were joint investigations that took place regarding physical abuse, child abuse etc, the CSE team did not have a separate joint working protocol but there was a Memorandum of Understanding which sat under the roles and responsibilities of the Police and the Council.

- **It was 9 months on from the Jay report, Commissioner Newsam had been in Rotherham for 8 months as had the Interim Strategic Director of Children's and Young Peoples Services, and it was quite frustrating to hear some of the issues that had been raised before e.g. therapeutic support by RDaSH in 2013, MASH in 2012 and being told that might have to wait a little longer**

With regard to the issue of accommodation, in part it was due to the success of the MASH and the additional posts. It was not a question of it not working but that it had outgrown its accommodation.

The Multi-Agency Referral Panel had only met last month for the first time and it was having an impact. A report could be submitted showing the first month's activity but it may be better to wait 6 months in order to get a better trajectory and picture of how it was working.

The performance data would show that a difference had been made. In January, 2015, there had been a large number of children's assessments out of timescale i.e. 45 days. Currently there were only 9 cases out of time. There was a performance meeting that afternoon where Managers would be expected to account for why their assessments were out of timescale. On a weekly basis every exception was looked at child level. That was really good performance management activity which was significantly different from what happened previously. The tangible evidence of improvement which had had an impact on the work could be demonstrated through the performance data

However, an absolute reassurance could not be given that the quality of the assessments was where it should be because that took longer and was a more complex piece of work

- **There were still concerns that information was not being shared and assurance was sought that that was not the case**

The present CSE Service was not the finished article and there was not enough therapeutic support. Progress had not been made as swiftly as hoped due to not having the right people in place. However, Cambridge Police had seconded a very experienced Officer to

support South Yorkshire Police and, together with the CSE Manager, would start to be seen

- **Could peer mentoring with other authorities be built into the long term strategy? There was a danger when the Council reached “Good” staff may be headhunted by other authorities facing similar difficulties?**
- **With regard to quality data performance, had there been a thorough assessment with regard to quality? It had been raised previously about Members being involved in the auditing of case files as part of the scrutiny process**

There were 2 auditors to the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Board and 3 dedicated auditors in Children Social Care. A monthly audit system was to be introduced whereby every Manager audited at least 1/2 cases a month including Commissioner Newsam, the Interim Director of Children’s and Young Peoples Services, Interim Deputy Director of Children and Young Peoples Services and the Director of Safeguarding Children and Families. Provided the governance arrangements could be satisfied, Members with the appropriate skills would be welcomed

Checks were made that every child had a Plan and up-to-date assessment. The audit system was then used to gain a greater understanding of the quality of the work.

- **What could be learnt from the audit and what actions came out of that?**

The report had not been published as yet. What had been found was the same as stated in the reports by Ofsted, Jay and Casey i.e. there were some good people trying to operate in a very broken system. Between 2008-13 it had been very hard to recognise a straight forward Child Protection pathway; there were no strategy meetings, no assessments, no conferences on time – all illustrating really poor practice. There had been a remarkable absence of senior management oversight in the cases with no involvement of anyone more senior than a Team Manager even if it had been a Looked After Child. The recommendations would reflect the Improvement Plan

- **Was there effective management oversight now in terms of supervision of these cases?**

The CSE Team that was being built had experienced people and experienced managers who were getting the level of supervision they required. The Service was also looking to access some additional external emotional support for both the Police and Social Workers to ensure they would be looked after and provide good staff care because of the nature of their work

Work was taking place on ensuring everyone received regular supervision in a way they had not previously. Not all Managers were

able to deliver that standard of supervision so they would receive training and support. Supervision was part of the audit process and a judgement made on its quality. It should include reflective supervision and not just a record of actions so there was still work to do to raise the quality. It was essential and receiving a lot of attention

- **It was disappointing that the Multi-Agency Risk Panel had only met once. What had happened in the last 9 months?**

It was acknowledged that between September, 2014-January, 2015 it appeared that very little had happened but it took time to get things in motion and to get the right people into positions; things would accelerate now

- **Are you confident that all the Social Work Teams are operating properly? Were there any weak links or Teams further down the road to improvement?**

The Social Work Teams were at different stages of improvement with some working more effectively than others but this was to be addressed.

Within the Teams there would be differences due to the mix of skills and expertise. Weekly performance meetings would expose any weak spots as well as daily scrutiny to ascertain which staff members required improvement plans.

- **What was the turnover of staff in Children's Social Care?**

There was certainly a much higher degree of agency staff than Rotherham had been accustomed to due to the extra approved posts and agency staff filling them. There had been some turnover of staff for a variety of reasons, however, there had been a lot of interest in the work of the CSE Team and approaches made professionals elsewhere in the country. Area Team Managers were at a premium and were so hard to find and it would take a long time to recruit the right calibre. The situation in Rotherham was not peculiar

It was the agency market that was preventing local authorities building their workforce in the way they needed to. It was a national problem

Jean was thanked for her attendance and presentation.

Resolved:- (1) That the presentation be noted.

(2) That a work programme now be devised for Improving Lives, based on the discussions that had taken place and that the next meeting focus on the new CSE Strategy and delivery plan.

7. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a further meeting of the Select Commission be held on Wednesday, 22nd July, 2015, commencing at 1.30 p.m.