

DRAFT - CHILD SEXUAL  
EXPLOITATION THE WAY  
FORWARD FOR ROTHERHAM

2015- 2018

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Contents

Preface	1
1. Definitions of Child Sexual Exploitation	5
2. Our Commitment	7
3. The Rotherham CSE Profile	9
4. Objectives and key action	11
5. Governance	16
6. Conclusion	19
7. Key Contacts	21

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## Preface

***"Child Sexual Exploitation is child abuse and it is a crime. Our efforts need to be directed towards perpetrators in order to detect, prevent and disrupt that abuse at the earliest stages as well as the prosecution of individual perpetrators to ensure that they face the full force of the criminal justice system for their vile crimes"***

Reflections on child sexual exploitation, Louise Casey March 2015

This document seeks to articulate the way in which the communities in Rotherham and the agencies that serve them will find a way forward together that will: effectively prevent Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) from happening in the first place; protect and support those who have become victims and survivors; and prosecute those who are the abusers.

If Rotherham has learned anything as a result of recent events it has been a lesson in humility and the importance of listening to children, young people & families.

In the past we know we have failed to listen to the voices of children and their families and have failed to see that Rotherham children have been being sexually, physically and mentally abused. We now recognise that we still have to find the right questions to ask, before we can know we have the right answers.

In a thematic review of CSE across the country published in November 2014, Ofsted stated that:

***"Children and young people are more effectively protected from child sexual exploitation when LSCBs have an effective strategy and action plan that supports professionals to work together and share information well"***

(Para 144)

This document begins with an agreed definition of Child Sexual Exploitation. An agreed definition is necessary so everyone has the same understanding of the issues to be tackled. However, the risk in universal definitions is that the clinical nature of them can detach the reader from the reality of the central issues.

# THE WAY FORWARD FOR ROTHERHAM

We have looked at all of the current definitions that are in use. All have their virtues, but ultimately I have listened to the comments made in one of the recent reports written about Rotherham.

Louise Casey tells it as it is.....

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

We need to understand why, in our society, there are adult men and women who believe that it is acceptable to target children for sex.

We believe that it is important that professionals working in the field of CSE refer to anyone under 18 as a child so their status is never overlooked. We owe it to all our children to understand and tackle this problem effectively to prevent them from becoming either victim or perpetrator. Both are immensely damaging to the individuals concerned and the communities in which they live. As citizens we are all affected by CSE and diminished as human beings by its existence.

It has already been established that the vast majority of abusers are men and the majority of known victims have been young women, yet we shrink from understanding CSE as another form of gender based violence. Tackling violence against women has featured on many political agendas for a number of years. The proliferation of CSE in Rotherham, and other places, is evidence that too little has been done to effect change.

An issue that has not been sufficiently addressed is one posed by Professor Alexis Jay. It concerns the myth that only white British children are victims of sexual exploitation. Any action that is taken to tackle CSE locally must ensure that children from minority ethnic backgrounds are encouraged and empowered by the statutory and voluntary sectors, and their communities, to speak out about their own experiences of abuse so they can be afforded the same right to protection and justice as others. We must continue to ask why it is so difficult for these children to come forward and how we can overcome their fear to provide what is needed to protect them. These are difficult questions to ask and there will be no easy answers.

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

# THE WAY FORWARD FOR ROTHERHAM

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 and social media 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.

Finally, children are best protected by their parents and their families. Their resilience and their sense of self-worth comes from their families. Parents and families should be empowered and enabled to offer the best care and protection they can to their children. Where agencies have corporate parenting responsibilities, the same **resilience should be instilled by and with a child's care provider.**

This document represents the start of a way forward. Some of the territory we need to cover may still be uncharted and on occasion the right direction may be unclear. Everyone concerned must have the courage to admit where mistakes may get made again in the future and learn from them. We must be open, transparent and honest to encourage improvement and innovation.

The success of the commitments set out in this document will be determined by improved outcomes: whilst specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely actions are really important, the value of any action will only be evident if it promotes better outcomes for children and young people at risk of or victim to perpetrators of CSE. The ultimate success will be achieved when CSE in Rotherham is truly a thing of the past.

Stephen Ashley

Independent Chair of Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board

June 2015

# THE WAY FORWARD FOR ROTHERHAM

*'sexual exploitation is like a circle that you can never escape from'*

*'that's one of the processes of being groomed that you think its alright and normal what is happening .....none of us wanted to be in this situation and have what are supposed to have been our early years completely ruined and in my personal experience my school life ruined'*

*"I went to court I gave my evidence and they went to prison and you can read about that in the newspapers, what you didn't read is the time I collapsed before I was cross examined and was sick, the tears the nightmares, checking under the bed and in the wardrobe every night and the belief I may have done the wrong thing, as no matter what he had done I knew if I could just see him he would say sorry and it would be okay, as maybe he never meant to hurt me. I have worked with Risky Business [youth outreach] for nearly three years now and last year I understood that I had been groomed and abused, but no matter how much everyone tells me all that, no one told me how to get over him. I had loved him so much and thought he loved me too"*

The voice of Rotherham CSE Victims - 2015

## 1. Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation

- 1.1 For the purpose of clarity across partner agencies and the public Rotherham has adopted the national agreed definition of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

*"Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where the young person (or third person/s) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing and/or another/others performing on them, sexual activities."*

*"Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. "*

*"Violence, coercion and intimidation are common; involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability"*

- 1.2 A common feature of CSE is that the child or young person does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not see themselves as a victim of exploitation. No child can consent to their own exploitation.

- 1.3 Rotherham adopts the Children's Commissioner's definition of gangs and groups:

*"Gangs are a relatively durable, predominantly street-based, social group of children, young people and, not infrequently, adults who see themselves and are seen by others, as affiliates of a discrete, named group who engage in a range of criminal activity and violence identify or lay claim to territory have some form of identifying structural feature are in conflict with similar groups."*

# THE WAY FORWARD FOR ROTHERHAM

- 1.4 Child sexual exploitation by a group involves people who come together in person or online for the purpose of setting up, co-coordinating and/or taking part in the sexual exploitation of children in either an organised or opportunistic way.
- 1.5 Expanding upon the above recognised definitions, CSE in reality can refer to:
- Inappropriate, sexually exploitative relationships where the young person believes the abuser to be their boyfriend or girlfriend, perceiving him/herself to be in a casual romantic relationship with this individual
  - Groups of adults abusing children and young people, often through a **particular adult seen as a “boyfriend” by the victim of the abuse (the “party house” model)**
  - Abuse of children via the internet, which can include online grooming of children, particularly through social networking applications; and is **usually “non-contact” abuse (for example, through encouraging the child to share indecent images or streaming of sexual abuse)**
  - It can occasionally develop from online abuse into meetings offline, which can lead to contact abuse
  - Peer-on-peer exploitation, particularly by gangs and other peer groups, including sexual abuse as part of **group’s rituals or “initiation”**
  - Trafficking - where children and young people are moved away from their locality, home town or from abroad to other locations, for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

## 2. Our Commitment

- 2.1 For well over a decade, agencies in Rotherham have failed to act effectively to prevent the sexual exploitation of children and to protect young people from harm. Agencies have not reached out and supported those that have become victims of this abuse.
- 2.2 Confidence in agencies across Rotherham to safeguard children and young people has suffered immeasurably and the failure of partners across Rotherham to fulfil their duties is now a matter of national record.
- 2.3 However, as public agencies with a responsibility – legally and morally – to keep children safe, our fundamental objective is to restore confidence, in order to prevent and tackle CSE in all its forms. Children must feel safe and able to trust that **Rotherham’s public services to provide support and take** all steps within their power to halt the perpetrators and bring them to justice.
- 2.4 All partner agencies in Rotherham are wholly committed to rapid, sustained improvement - informed by the learning from the devastating failures over recent years. Only by working together with shared aims and objectives can local partners achieve improved outcomes for children, young people and their families - and all agencies in Rotherham are committed to the delivery of truly outstanding services.
- 2.5 **This ‘way forward’ document marks a fresh start for Rotherham and the multi-agency partnership response to child sexual exploitation (CSE).** The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) – in conjunction with the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) and the Rotherham Health & Wellbeing Board (HWB) – makes a promise to relentlessly pursue improvements in front line services and do all it can to prevent CSE and support the victims of this abuse.
- 2.6 Statutory guidance such as the Children Act (1989 & 2004) and Working Together (2015), as well as the recent reports of Professor Jay, the DCLG and Ofsted, give us the guidance on how to proceed. Our commitment is that:

2.7 **Rotherham will build on current momentum and work tirelessly to do everything we can, collectively, to:**

- **Prevent** children and young people from becoming sexually exploited through effective leadership, governance and a wider culture embedded within organisations that recognise the root causes of CSE ,the signs and risk indicators and do all they can to tackle them
- **Protect** children and young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation as well as those who are already victims and survivors
- **Pursue**, relentlessly, perpetrators of child sexual exploitation, leading to prosecutions of those responsible, and ensure there is effective risk management of perpetrators in the community
- **Provide support** for survivors of CSE, ensuring their needs are met
- **Ensure the participation** of all children and young people at risk of or experiencing CSE, as well as their families and communities, to ensure that their voices as well as the voices of survivors are heard and responded to

2.8 The achievement of these outcomes will be tracked by use of a smart, multi - agency delivery plan.



# THE WAY FORWARD FOR ROTHERHAM

- 3.3 The number of offenders, including suspects, were mainly White (68%); 24% were Asian; 5% were from other BME communities; and 3% of offenders were female
- 3.4 **The 'inappropriate age relationship' was the most common type of CSE prosecuted (26%), with 'internet' at 19%. From the number of CSE prosecutions, 11% were 'organised group' CSE, 7.6% 'grooming of an adult to gain access to a child' and 7.5% 'lone perpetrator'.**
- 3.5 The average time from referral to prosecution is 20 months. Across Rotherham, 71 CSE crimes have been recorded from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014: the majority of these relate to under-16 sexual activity or rape, with 10% related to the rape of under-13 year olds.
- 3.6 **Wider context and comparisons**
- 3.6.1 Comparison with statistical neighbours, for a range of indicators selected for their relevance to CSE, indicates that a larger proportion of young people in Rotherham are more vulnerable than in similar towns and areas.
- 3.6.2 This points to the acknowledged need for all partners to work on these outcomes to ensure that all young people in Rotherham can step confidently into their lives taking up all the opportunities available and able to seek help if they are subject to exploitation. This will be taken forward through all aspects of the Rotherham partnership.
- 3.6.3 Rates of **children identified as 'in need' and on child protection plans** are also high when compared to the national average.
- 3.6.4 A more positive context for young people in Rotherham is that teenage conceptions are at an all-time low, including rates for under-16s; and children in the borough perform well in terms of educational attainment.
- 3.6.5 Nevertheless, outcomes at present for young people in Rotherham are poor and in urgent need of more effective, joined-up, multi-agency responses.

## 4.Objectives and key actions

- 4.1 The following section sets out the work that needs to be undertaken; much of which is underway. Each objective has a small number of actions that will need to be delivered to secure success. To support these actions we have a multiagency delivery plan. This will be an evolving document subject to continuous review, revision and improvement. It will contain actions that are required immediately, in the medium term and in the longer term. This recognises that the work will not be complete until child sexual exploitation has been stopped. It also recognises that we do not have all the answers and that we need to learn from our own experiences, from the experiences of other places and from current research.
- 4.2 We will refresh our knowledge locally, regionally and nationally to ensure that we are meeting the needs of Rotherham residents. We are clear, however, about the overall objectives we are seeking to achieve.
- 4.3 The overall objectives of the work to be undertaken are outlined in more detail in the remaining paragraphs of this section, with each section linked to a different priority outcome.
- 4.4 **We will prevent children and young people from becoming sexually exploited through effective leadership, governance and a wider culture embedded within organisations that recognise the root causes of CSE ,the signs and risk indicators and do all they can to tackle them. We will know this is in place when:**
- 4.4.1 Partner organisations establish a clear view of the CSE profile in the borough to ensure that the Health & Wellbeing Board undertake informed commissioning of service provision.
- 4.4.2 The public understand the signs and symptoms of CSE and raise concerns early, alerting statutory services where necessary. Awareness campaigns include a clear message that CSE is a crime and will not be tolerated.
- 4.4.3 **Intelligence, including 'soft' intelligence, about historic and current incidence and risk of CSE is timely, shared between agencies and treated with respect.**

- 4.4.4 All children and young people in Rotherham understand what healthy, respectful relationships are and can recognise that the damage and the dangers caused by sexual bullying and exploitation (including on line) to both victim and perpetrator.
  - 4.4.5 Potential perpetrators (children and adults) are identified early in a range of settings, including schools, youth clubs, young offender institutions and prisons.
  - 4.4.6 Organisational leadership and governance creates a culture in Rotherham where the causes, signs and symptoms of CSE are understood and identified and responded to quickly, effectively and with a determination to do the right thing in response.
  - 4.4.7 All partners recognise the diversity of all communities in Rotherham and ensure services are responsive to need.
- 4.5 **We protect children and young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation, as well as those who are already victims and survivors. We will know this is in place when:**
- 4.5.1 The right multi-agency and social care services are in place to meet the needs of children at risk from CSE.
  - 4.5.2 Hotspots within the borough that are particular areas of vulnerability will have increased levels of activity by agencies.
  - 4.5.3 Particular attention is given to children known to be most vulnerable. Including those who have been sexually abused or neglected within the family environment.
  - 4.5.4 Victims of CSE and their families are supported with interventions that enhance the potential for a child or young person to stay safe within their family and community.
  - 4.5.5 Services are developed that enable easy and sensitive access to protection and justice for victims from black and ethnic minority groups.

- 4.5.6 Statutory and regulatory powers across the partnership are fully utilised to ensure that children and young people at risk of or suffering CSE are protected quickly and effectively.
- 4.5.7 Services are designed to be accessible and responsive to the needs of children and young people so that trust can be developed and they can feel they are getting the help they need.
- 4.5.8 Agencies provide an effective response when children go missing in line with the locally agreed protocol.
- 4.5.9 Looked After Children receive a service that meets the statutory requirements and have an up to date care plan that takes into account their specific vulnerabilities.
- 4.6 **We will pursue, relentlessly, perpetrators of child sexual exploitation, leading to prosecutions of those responsible, and ensure there is effective risk management of perpetrators in the community. We will know this is in place when:**
  - 4.6.1 Law enforcement and statutory agencies provide a prompt first line response to calls for help or reports that a crime may have been committed.
  - 4.6.2 The necessary command structures will be put in place to oversee complex investigations and key meetings will be attended as appropriate by senior officers and managers from the relevant agencies.
  - 4.6.3 The time and necessary resources will be committed so that perpetrators of CSE are arrested, successfully prosecuted, convicted and deterred from reoffending. Resources will include the police officers and CPS and prosecuting lawyers with the requisite skills and knowledge to manage the complexity of interviewing victims and suspects concerning disturbing sexual matters.
  - 4.6.4 The National Probation Service and South Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company will work together to effectively manage perpetrators offering appropriate intervention to reduce re-offending.

4.7 **We will provide support for survivors of CSE, ensuring their needs are met. We will know this is in place when:**

4.7.1 The physical, psychological and emotional damage that is caused by CSE is understood and recognized. Victims and survivors have access to a wide range of support and aftercare from more specialist services, which will be clear and easy to access. This will include timely access to mental health services where required.

4.7.2 Services commissioned to support victims and their families are informed by what they want and need and are provided by specialists with the requisite skills, experience and leadership in the field of sexual violence.

4.7.3 Victims and survivors are supported beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, particularly when have additional vulnerabilities such as learning disability or are care leavers.

4.7.4 Services are developed and sustained where children, young people and families are able to access the right support directly themselves; or be identified by professionals or within the community and offered the right support at the time when it is needed.

4.8 **We will value the participation of young people at risk of or experiencing CSE, as well as their families and communities, to ensure they are heard and responded to. We will know this is in place when:**

4.8.1 The views of children and young people, their families and communities are so vitally important that they must sought at all points throughout service provision, to assure agencies that lessons have been and continue to be learned.

4.8.2 We will know that we are being effective in engaging with children and young people when there is evidence that their views and experiences and that of their families has influenced the development of services and the

quality of responses. This will include the views and experience of adult survivors of CSE.

- 4.8.3 While we will develop victim participation groups and develop the means by which we can capture feedback it is a clearly stated expectation that the views of young people are integral to all the developments listed above and those that will be developed in the future.
- 4.8.4 We will ensure that we engage with and include small to medium sized organisations, with strong connections to the local community, and which support victims and survivors to participate in shaping service delivery, take up volunteering opportunities and engage with local policy development.

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## 5. Governance

- 5.1 For this approach to be successful all partners need to play an active and effective part in completing the actions within the delivery plan to ensure that we achieve the defined outcomes.
- 5.2 The Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board has the statutory responsibility to monitor, scrutinise and challenge all services individually and collectively on their performance in responding to child sexual exploitation, and in conjunction with the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services will ensure the successful implementation of this multi - agency strategy.
- 5.3 The Independent Chair of the RLSCB will chair the LSCB CSE Sub-Group and will hold partners to account to track progress on the delivery plan and ensure implementation is achieved to required timescales.
- 5.4 In exercising this responsibility, the LSCB will also conduct regular quality assurance of **the effectiveness of Board partners' responses to child sexual exploitation and include this in the LSCB's annual report;** there will be a quarterly audit of multiagency practice by the LSCB. This will include an analysis of how agencies have used their data to promote service improvement for vulnerable children and families, including in respect of sexual abuse. It will be an expectation that any judgement about the quality and effectiveness of CSE services will take account of the extent to which the participation and engagement of children, young people and their families can be evidenced. Ultimately, the focus of any LSCB audit or review work will be the evaluation of outcomes for children.
- 5.5 In addition, the key statutory bodies of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Safer Rotherham Partnership will receive, scrutinise and challenge regular reports about prevalence, trends and practice on CSE. By this means there can be reassurance that the Rotherham Commissioners, Elected Members and senior leaders are able to articulate an awareness and understanding of CSE **and the levels of risk faced by Rotherham's children and young people.** That analysis of available information and intelligence can be used to inform strategic planning across the partnerships.

# THE WAY FORWARD FOR ROTHERHAM

- 5.6 As part of **the council's restructuring of Children and Young People's Services** in January 2015, a dedicated, senior position has been established with responsibility for the management of a multi-agency CSE service. A multi-agency risk panel (MARP) has also been developed, ensuring that there are appropriate responses across to CSE across partnerships.
- 5.7 The Commissioners, appointed to the Council by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Secretary of State for Education, will have a key role in driving the improvement of Rotherham Council as a whole and influencing the ways in which partner agencies engage with Council services and respond collectively to the **needs of Rotherham's citizens**.
- 5.8 **The Children's Social Care Commissioner** has the lead responsibility for **improving the Council's strategic** and operational response to child sexual exploitation. He is also the Chair of the Children and Young **People's Improvement Board** which will hold the LSCB to account for progress on the **Children's Improvement programme**.
- 5.9 **The Commissioner for Children's Social Care will** has clearly articulated his **priorities for Children's Services in Rotherham**. **He states that the service will** ensure that:
- Children will grow up in a safe environment. A creative strategy will be delivered that includes prevention, detection, and high quality care alongside a robust enforcement approach.
  - There will be **good, reliable children's care services, well managed within** agreed resources.
  - Survivors of child sexual abuse or exploitation will have access to a good range of multi-agency support services.
- 5.10 The three work streams will be supported by three related boards:

## 5.10.1 **CYPS Improvement Board**

**This Board is chaired by the Commissioner for Children's Social Care** and includes senior officers from the Council, the Advisory Cabinet Member for **Children and Young People's Services**, Department for Education and partner agencies. The role of the Board is to support and monitor progress on the

**Children's Improvement programme and offer scrutiny and challenge.** This Board meets monthly and has agreed terms of reference.

## 5.10.2 **CSE Strategic Board**

**This Board is chaired by the Commissioner for Children's Social Care** and will meet monthly to **co-ordinate the Council's strategic and operational response** to Child Sexual Exploitation. It will ensure the four key work streams are coordinated and adequately resourced and progressing satisfactorily and in line **with Commissioner's expectations.**

## 5.10.3 **Support for Adult Survivors**

This Board will be chaired by the Director of Public Health from July 2015. It is currently chaired by the Interim Director of Adults Services and is a multi-agency group comprising of commissioners and providers of services for survivors of Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Sexual Abuse. It ensures that a coherent range of effective services are commissioned and delivered effectively in Rotherham.

- 5.11 As executive powers are restored to locally elected members, there may be changes to this governance model which provides for effective oversight and scrutiny.
- 5.12 The following diagram outlines the governance model in pictorial format. The purple boxes represent key statutory bodies which the LSCB will hold to account through **"peer" challenge and engagement.** The blue boxes represent operational/tactical panels and resources. The orange boxes reflect LSCB structures/governance. The black boxes are commissioner led fora.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This document represents a partnership approach to improving the multiagency response to CSE in Rotherham. It puts a requirement on all agencies to be ambitious for swift improvements; show tenacity in their realisation of this ambition; and to prioritise the voice of victims, children and their families.

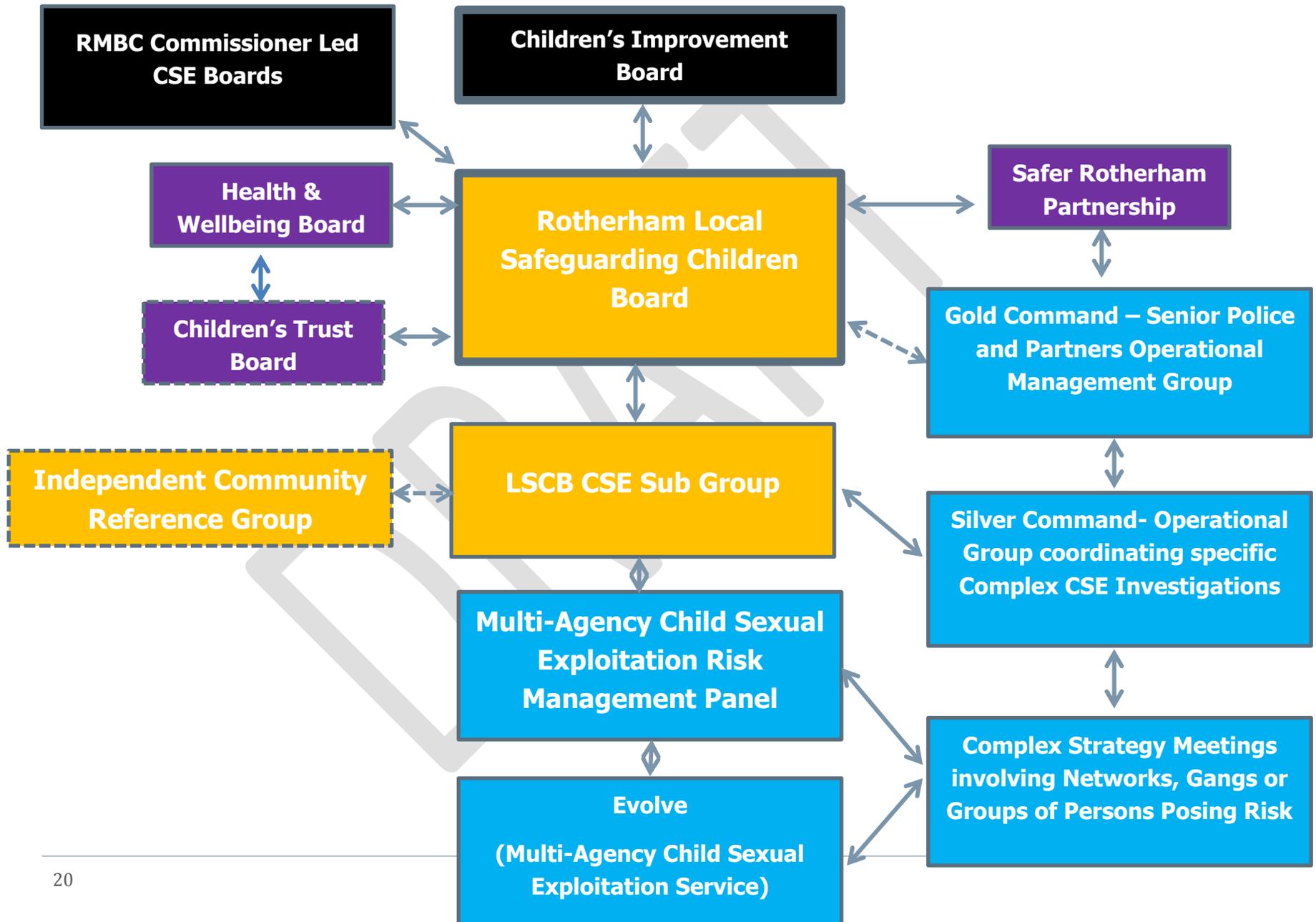
Stephen Ashley

Independent Chair – Rotherham **Local Safeguarding Children's Board**

June 2015

DRAFT

# THE WAY FORWARD FOR ROTHERHAM



## 7. Key contacts and information

- **Children's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)** – 01709 823987 (or 01709 336080 after 5:30pm or weekends)
- LSCB website - [www.rotherham.gov.uk/safeguarding](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/safeguarding)
- Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) website - [www.rscb.org.uk](http://www.rscb.org.uk)
- LSCB policies, procedures and practice guidance – [www.rotherhamscb.proceduresonline.com/index.htm](http://www.rotherhamscb.proceduresonline.com/index.htm)
- Support for victims of CSE (confidential, free-phone helpline) - 0800 7319 256; or email [rotherhamcse-support@NSPCC.org.uk](mailto:rotherhamcse-support@NSPCC.org.uk)
- **'Rotherham Standing Together Against Child Sexual Exploitation'** website and links to further sources of help and advice – [www.rotherhamstandingtogether.org.uk/rst/help](http://www.rotherhamstandingtogether.org.uk/rst/help)