

**COUNCIL SEMINAR
21st July, 2015**

Present:- Councillor (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor M.Clark) Councillors Ahmed, Atkin, Beaumont, Beck, Buckley, Burton, and Currie.

TACKLING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION - UPDATE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS.

Councillor C. Read, Leader of the Council, thanked the Elected Members in attendance and welcomed four Officers to the meeting. The Officers in attendance were: -

- Ian Thomas, Strategic Director, Children and Young People's Services Directorate;
- Superintendent Jason Harwin, South Yorkshire Police;
- Detective Inspector Matt Fenwick, South Yorkshire Police;
- Lee Miles, National Crime Agency.

The seminar was split into three sections and each agency – CYPS, South Yorkshire Police and the National Crime Agency – would provide information on their efforts to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation. Elected Members were asked to put their questions at the end of the presentations.

Ian Thomas presented first and covered the actions of Children and Young People's Services.

- New governance arrangements were well embedded. Governance must be about committing to actions;
- Restoring confidence of Members;
- Monitoring Local Safeguarding Children Board;
- CSE Adult Survivors Multi-Agency Programme Board
- Moral obligation to support survivors;
- Working closely with the police and health;
- CSE Commissioner Board.

Ian described that the team in the past had been broken. It had 86 cases, there was a lack of management oversight and was dangerous. Remedial actions had been taken and it now had a much smaller caseload to oversee. The team was dealing with the most high risk cases.

- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Panel;
- Hotspots;
- Getting to terms with CSE and grooming, particularly with the advent of social media;

- Does not replace core child protection procedures, in addition to;
- CSE Early Help and Prevention;
- Heralded as best practice based on early intervention and prevention;
- Fundraising £240k, Eric Pickles agreed £250k over 2 years. Barnardo's, DfE, KPMG – massive coup. Grateful and represents the best in terms of a public/private partnership. Child protection issue, not a lifestyle choice;
- Other partners were Giving Real Opportunities to Women (GROW) and the NSPCC;
- CSE Champions – information and training.

Superintendent Jason Harwin detailed the outcomes of Operation Clover which had been marshalled in relation to the issues raised in the Jay Report. Seven individuals had been charged with 95 offences and there may be further charges to be brought. Trials would begin in December, 2015.

Lee Miles, National Crime Agency, spoke about Operation Stovewood, which was unparalleled in size. It was led by a Chief Officer and Lee was his deputy. The Operation was staffed by Senior Investigating Officers with managers, deputies and staff below them.

A written briefing note had been prepared for Members and other stakeholders to share and take away they wished. A balance needed to be struck between openness and transparency, and operational matters which needed to be kept confidential to not compromise proceedings. Lee could not go into detail at this stage.

Stage One – Six month activity summary: -

- Began in December, 2014;
- Establishment of the investigation;
- Review of relevant South Yorkshire investigations for local and national learning;
- Information gathering;
- Partnership working and safeguarding arrangements.

Stage Two – next steps: -

- Information gathering and analysis;
- Identification, reading, indexing, assessing;
- Transfer into electronic format;
- Prioritisation of investigations;
- Suspects who may be active;
- Those believed to have caused the most harm in the past;
- Other suspects.

Stovewood would be victim focused and offender drive.

Whilst there were other operational names of operations that were ongoing, everything sat under Stovewood.

- Funded by South Yorkshire Police;
- The NCA had their own governance structure and was accountable to the Chief Constable and the PCC;
- The NCA had the co-ordinating role across the current Operations.

What Stovewood was not investigating: -

- Police misconduct – as and when any issues relating to conduct matters were come across they were referred to the appropriate body;
- Other professional misconduct;
- Past failings in investigations or safeguarding duties;
- Stovewood was intended to investigate once as a combined effort.

Summary of the NCA's activity: -

Stage One – December 2014 – 4 key outcomes were achieved: -

- Quality assure all actions and activities – Review of relevant SY investigations;
- Risky Business files – transfer to electronic format and onto national police system. This involved handling 100,000 documents in 47 different crates and boxes. So far, the team had indexed about a third resulting in 3,300 actions and lines of enquiry;
- In addition, there were 37 boxes of safeguarding records. These were being scanned electronically and will be scrutinised for actions.

Lee Miles reiterated the NCA's commitment to working in a methodical and measured way as all stakeholders wanted the Operation to be successful and only need to be conducted once. The Jay Report's figure of 1,400 victims was thought to be accurate. Most of these victims were now adults. Partnership co-operation to be able to work with that amount of victims was significant.

Stage Two – Information gathering and analysis and prioritisation of investigations along with victim support (including engagement and management), lessons learned and information sharing arrangements.

Stovewood priorities: -

- Single bid to the Home Office;
- A quote from a survivor of CSE stated: 'Operation Stovewood is making a difference and tells the rapists there is nowhere to hide. There's no hiding place for them now that we, the victims and survivors, are coming out of the shadows to speak up';
- What does success look like? - victim satisfaction, criminal justice outcomes and public confidence.

Lee Miles referred to the leaflets that were available outlining the work of Operation Stovewood.

Superintendent Jason Harwin and Detective Inspector Matt Fenwick provided their presentation on the work of South Yorkshire Police: -

Between 01.06.14 – 31.05.15 1,779 child protection referrals were received. 194 (11%) were relating to CSE. Referrals could be for obvious abuse, or for concerns. Comparing Rotherham's referral data to South Yorkshire referrals did not suggest that CSE was any bigger of an issue in Rotherham compared to any other areas in South Yorkshire.

The crimes involved in CSE had seen an increase of 61% in the last 12-months. It was not possible to compare with other parts of the country. Detective Inspector Matt Fenwick explained that the number of operation names did not necessarily reflect number of investigations. As investigations progressed and widened enough they would become an operation and given an operation name.

Matt Fenwick explained the other types of disruption work that was undertaken. These could not be reported within CSE countering reports.

CSE is child abuse and it was not always right to publicise any outcomes as the often involved children, as both victims and offenders.

A stakeholder's briefing would be provided.

Matt Fenwick explained how victim-less prosecutions were used. Criminal justice agencies did pursue these if the victim would not/could not be involved using forensic and CCTV evidence, for example.

33 Abduction Notices had been served in Rotherham. Ten notices for people at risk of sexual harm were going through process.

Between 1st July 2014 – 30th June 2015, 14 offenders had been charged, 3 reported on summons and 1 caution. This was not including Operation Clover.

Prosecutions took 20 months to reach a conclusion, on average.

Operation Makesafe was working with hoteliers, interchanges, transport providers and so on to raise awareness.

'Spot the Signs in South Yorkshire Say Something' was another awareness raising and education initiative.

Human Tracking Offences could also be relevant to CSE convictions.

Matt Fenwick referred to feedback from victims and survivors who were saying that they were finally being listened to. A twitter account led by victims in the local area was regularly stating that it was better to work with the Police now. This was really positive.

Victim profile was of known victims. There was under-reporting from minority communities relating to CSE.

Overall: -

- CSE represented 11% overall demand, meaning that there were lots of other demands also to be addressed;
- 72% of CSE referrals come from the Police;
- Offender profile – 83% were White European females in Rotherham;
- 13-14 was the average age;
- Secondary age was too late to start awareness raising.

Questions followed the Agencies' presentations. The following questions were asked: -

Councillor Currie asked whether the Rotherham LSCB could include a young person representative. Some agencies could let down others. Could the Local Authority support prevention through better planning, such as not locating services for children in known hotspots?

Councillor Reynolds thanked the representatives for their time and the presentations. A recent report covered on TV had shown that of 28 cases, only 2 had been judged as fit for purpose. Others needed more work or were poor. How did this contrast with the up-beat presentation given today?

Councillor McNeely asked about what would happen if the perpetrator was a parent. How would this be logged and responded to?

Answers: -

Ian Thomas explained that the Steve Ashley, the Chair of the Rotherham LSCB, had resigned as he felt he had taken the Board as far as he could, along with personal reasons. The position would be advertised for nationally and the postholder would work for around two days per week.

It was not typical to have a young person on the LSCB but work was taking place to replicate a shadow LSCB of young people. This would feed into the main Board and give young people the opportunity to be involved in outcomes.

A School Representative would sit on the LSCB for the first time and there would be a Rotherham Schools' Form representative on the Children's Trust. Schools were clear that they were a critical part of the solution. The overall mood was changing.

Salford University was undertaking a needs assessment on the prevalence of CSE and needs of minority communities.

Superintendent Jason Harwin explained that the HMIC inspection was in April 2015. The files that were audited were from the previous twelve months' and some from before the Jay report. There was only going to be one result and that was that the work was not good enough. Every month the Police and other agencies were getting stronger and better. There was additional staff, additional training to work alongside other services, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub was allowing more timely assessment. A re-visit from HMIC for a de-brief was able to evidence that the Police were in a lot better position since April, 2015. The next report would be in February, 2016 and in the meantime the Police would ensure they were stopping current offences and prosecuting.

Chief Inspector Matt Fenwick explained about the orders that could be granted stopping suspected offenders associating with young people. Familial child abuse was not the same thing as CSE. Other types of abuse equated to around 90% of and also needed to be responded to and prevented.

Councillor Reynolds thanked the Officers for their clarification. Members of the public did not get to hear this sort of information and often had to rely on media sound bites.

Councillor Eliot asked what would need to be put in place so that children were safe from these people; what could be done for the rehabilitation of offenders.

Councillor C. Vines referred to the references of in the HMIC report about care homes. Were these Rotherham care homes? Commissioner Newsam's report had considered run away children. Could it be said that frontline police were being trained in responding to CSE but were not putting it into practice.

Councillor Sansome asked about the re-structuring tool and how it would impact on the Police's ability to track people down and the different types of information that can and cannot be released.

Answers: -

Superintendent Jason Harwin spoke about risk assessments and how they were used to stop offending.

Ian Thomas referred to the age-range of offenders. Some were children who needed support and prevent future re-offending. He also spoke about how the Police linked in to discussions about supporting children and young people who had run away at the Improvement Board. A key piece of work was to address this. Return interviews looked at why the event had happened and any relevant service development issues.

All front line staff had had training and were clear about the expectations on them.

Matt Fenwick outlined the restructure figures. The Public Protection Unit had been centralised and included 180 staff. There had been investment in the PPU and as of September, 2015, there would be 326 staff. The PPU was not solely charge with CSE, but also domestic abuse, child protection, so-called 'honour-based' violence and Female Genital Mutilation.

Ian Thomas confirmed that the Local Authority was incredibly vigilant around all care homes and was working to ensure there was an ethos to protect looked after children like our own children. Children who went missing was a real issue for the Local Authority. Jean Imray was leading on a new protocol for the Directorate. The function had been brought in-house to the Integrated Youth Support Service as the previous completion rate was only 48%. Return interviews would also be quality assured.

Councillor Hoddinott referred to the Operation Stovewood workshop that had taken place on the previous day and asked what work was being done with the voluntary and third sector? What about funding for voluntary organisations?

Councillor Pitchley asked whether alleged offenders were monitored in the twenty months their cases took to get to Court?

Councillor Wallis asked about the time lag between gathering and disseminating evidence in inspections. The HMIC report did imply quite strongly that South Yorkshire Police were yet to fully implement the recommendations of the 2014 and 2015 reviews. What was the progress and timetable? She was encouraged about all partners comments about the importance of recognising consent. Police Scotland had unveiled a hard-hitting campaign on the issues of consent. Could this be done here?

Answers: -

Lee Miles explained how there was a strategic co-ordination group with representatives from the voluntary sector. A single-bid across all agencies would be used to support the PPU to provide an Offer from the National Crime Agency. This was considered necessary to support the running and success of the PPU. The Home Office had confirmed they understood the rationale for this approach.

Jason Harwin noted the multitude of action plans, including governance arrangements. There were longer timeframes due to complexity of the required actions. Jason committed to returning to speak about this, but confirmed that it would not happen quickly.

Ian Thomas explained that the issue of consent was a real problem partly due to a lack of understanding between communities on what it was. PSHE lessons needed to cover this. Easy access to porn was unhelpful as it reinforced unhelpful boundaries.

Matt Fenwick said that South Yorkshire Police was always looking at what other police forces were doing for good practice. Frank discussions were needed on difficult and taboo subjects and these subjects should not be seen as something for other people to sort out.

Jason Harwin described the different levels of bail that existed whilst an alleged offender was awaiting trial. The Police had an intelligence briefing every week to monitor the situation and do everything possible to monitor offenders within the law. Plans involved other partners to monitor.

Matt Fenwick agreed that in certain levels of bail it was not permitted to take an individual's passport. Conditions on bail could be agreed by the Courts.

Councillor Read thanked the representatives for attending and their informative presentations and contributions to the discussion.

It was felt that there were still further questions to be raised that there was not time to raise today. Councillor Read said that there would be the opportunity to raise questions at meetings of the Improving Lives Select Commission.

It was agreed that a further Elected Member question-led session would be held in September, 2015.

Resolved: - That the information shared be noted.