

**COUNCIL SEMINAR
22nd September, 2015**

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Ahmed, Alam, Astbury, Atkin, Beaumont, Beck, Elliot, Ellis, Evans, Fleming, Godfrey, Gosling, Hamilton, Hoddinott, Hughes, Jepson, Khan, The Mayor (Councillor M.Clark), Mallinder, McNeely, Parker, Price, Reeder, Robinson, Rushforth, Russell, Sansome, Sims, Smith, Taylor, Tweed, C. Vines, M. Vines, Wallis, Watson, Wyatt and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Currie, Pitchley and Rose.

TACKLING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION - FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR.

Councillor C. Read, Leader of the Council, thanked all of those in attendance. He welcomed Ian Thomas and Jason Harwin to the seminar. This seminar was a follow-on from the previous seminar held on 21st July. It had been arranged to allow more time for Member questions which had not been asked the first time.

Jason Harwin provided an update on Operation Clover since 21st July when it was reported that there had been 7 arrests for 90 offences. Since then a further individual had been arrested. The total was 8 arrests for 110 offences. The cases had an expected trial date of December.

Councillor Wallis asked about improvements within the service to respond to CSE? The Council had been criticised for partnership working. This issue was wider than just the Council.

Ian Thomas explained about the use of 'CSE Champions'. This was being monitored and would be rolled out to wider council staff and Elected Members in due course.

There were independent investigations taking place through the National Crime Agency that may identify a vulnerability now, including crimes and victims needing support.

Councillor Parker referred to an incident that would be covered in the press in the coming days.

Jason Harwin was aware of this incident, mentioned in the Jay Report. He would report back as part a Stovewood update.

Councillor C. Vines knew that the MASH was up and running and fully operational. He asked whether it would 'speak' to the other ones in South Yorkshire?

Councillor Wallis further to Councillor Parker's question, there had been a Freedom of Information request implicating a number of RMBC Officers.

Ian Thomas explained that the Council had commissioned solicitors to look at potential failings of senior council officers on failure to protect vulnerable people.

He explained that the MASH had been open since 1st April, 2015 and was working well; a better multi-agency response was being evidenced including strategy improvements and better outcomes from ensuing action. The MASH would refer and share information with any local authority.

Councillor Hoddinott asked about multi-agency response. What interventions were available to children suffering from exploitation? What was the quality and were we lacking in any areas?

Ian explained information sharing protocols and the memorandum of understanding. There were five live Operations and current CSE issues today. It was not just about historical issues that took place between 1997-2013, there are live issues today. It was assessed that there were 78 children at risk of CSE/ experiencing CSE.

There was a 'MARAP' where any practitioner with any concern could refer cases to. The Panel would review the risk and put the necessary arrangements in place.

Jason explained that joint visit of police and social care, including Barnardo's, took place. Strategy meeting covered what we would do as a joint service. Operations taking place took a significant amount of resources. Gold operational command met every 4 weeks on consequence management, including a high level of scrutiny. What was important was that the right outcome for the individual. Processes needed to go at the pace of the individual. Victimless prosecution was also being explored.

Ian explained how buddying was being looked at and considered. Some perpetrators were under 18. They were also seen as victims and Section 47 assessments undertaken on them.

Councillor Hoddinott asked about therapeutic support, buddies. What can we do to offer support? There were concerns about mental health services' capacity.

Ian explained that support for children was undertaken on a case-by-case basis. Plans were made for individual children. We were not there yet in having a broad range of interventions but were working with the CCG to provide this. The University of Salford were conducting a needs analysis to inform tender.

Councillor Read explained that a seminar was planned on 20th October about post-abuse support.

Councillor Alam asked if we were 'future-proofing' the work that we are doing in relation to mental health, BME, hard to reach and seldom heard. Are we supporting them?

Jason Harwin explained that this had been identified as a gap. Schools were so so important as they were in regular contact with the majority of our young people.

Ian Thomas had been meeting with marginalised groups and had recently met with REMA and Apna Haq. The Council had a partnership with Rape Crisis. The University of Salford had also met with marginalised groups and providers to inform their assessment.

Ian also explained that Councillor Wallis' work and promotion about issues relating to consent and lack of understanding of consent had been really important and the views provided had been taken on board by researchers.

A worker who spoke Eastern European languages was proving very valuable in connecting to Rotherham's new and emerging communities.

Councillor Russell said she felt as though she had de ja vu. Officers today had attended her scrutiny panel where all in attendance spoke about partnerships and Gold command was mentioned. This is a repeat of what I heard before. Why has it taken so long for things to come together? You tweeted it afterwards – it was a long meeting, a strong scrutiny review. I am glad that it is happening now, but at what a big price.

Jason explained that teams were new and additional resources had been put into place. We need to rebuild the partnerships. Some prosecutions took twenty months from start to finish. We were not going to see quick results. We need to share with the public to show we take seriously and do get results.

Councillor Ahmed spoke about the importance of working with parents in partnership. She asked whether there were any partners not engaging/where there are concerns?

Comic Relief had highlighted huge gaps where there were children with disabilities. Were services confident that children could be identified?

Ian referred to the Haringey judgement where information was shared unlawfully. Information could only be shared without consent where there was significant risk of harm. All workers were very aware and trained in this. Ofsted had found compliance overall with some gaps.

There were not many dissenters with partnership working. The Children's Trust was being re-established and the will was there. A Barnardo's project was starting later in the year – raising awareness, pathways and working in schools.

Councillor Ahmed asked whether schools were submitting more FCAFs and escalations to Tiers 3 and 4. Are universal service partners referring?

Ian explained that there was a long way to go to embed early help. It was not currently embedded. There were 235 FCAFs in place. This was where a universal agency took responsibility for actions with a family, often preventing Social Care becoming involved. In the past, schools had seen little value in completing a 13 page assessment. Services were moving to a slimmer version. Barnsley had 13,000 and Sheffield had 7,500 FCAFs in place.

Councillor Atkin referred to a profile that had been sent in 2014 showing offences by postcode and ethnicity. It showed that there were cases 'out in the sticks'. Can this be refreshed? It would be useful for new Members.

Jason confirmed that there was an annual refresh.

Councillor Atkin raised concerns about how SNTs were working. There appeared to be less people meeting less often?

Jason Harwin explained how policing had been deployed, including the use of technology to ensure that police spent less time in stations and more time in localities. The best eyes are those in local communities.

Councillor Clark asked about post-abuse support, including alcohol and drug abuse support.

Jason explained that this was a Public Health responsibility and demand and capacity would need to be monitored.

Councillor C. Vines spoke about a conference for Women Against Grooming that he had attended. He had found it informative and upsetting. Ingrid Lee and the Police and Crime Commissioner had also attended. Were there any plans to engage with these people and work with them in the future?

Councillor Read confirmed that yes, a big piece of work on post abuse support and what is needed was ongoing. Factoring in victim and survivors' voice was important.

Jason shared information about the Survivor and Victims' Panel and the massive amount of learning that was taking place on not getting things right first time. It was important that if individuals were part of an ongoing investigation that agencies were not coaching them.

Councillor Hamilton asked about the Prevent Strategy.

Jason Harwin outlined 'Make Safe'. South Yorkshire Police had received 46 referrals from hotels. These had resulted in 7 arrests. Without the community training these calls would not have been received.

Councillor Hamilton was concerned that the promotional material could be stigmatising Rotherham. It was important to promote the convictions.

Jason Harwin agreed that convictions would be publicised.

Councillor Wallis felt that it was really important that the Police were let get on with their job. Court Cases collapsing because external pressure was being put on them to speed them up would be awful for the brave and patient victims.

Councillor McNeely referred to the recent coverage of Apna Haq's contract. She asked which other providers were available with the same level of expertise?

Councillor Ellis felt that schools were pivotal and asked whether they were all on board? She shared an example of Area Assembly work that had not been successful.

Ian explained that, through a tendering process, Apna Haq had lost the contract for housing support. A rescue package to 31st March, 2016, had been offered when they get Big Lottery Funding through VAR.

There were no dissenting voices in schools. If Ian saw that any schools were backtracking he would raise it with the appropriate governing body.

Councillor Read thanked all for attending and their contribution to the discussion. He explained that the seminar on commissioning support for CSE victims and survivors would be held on Tuesday 20th October, 2015.

Resolved: - That the information shared be noted.