

**Summary Sheet**

**Council Report**

**Title**

CSE and Missing Children

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Ian Thomas

**Report Author(s)**

Vicky Schofield – Head of First Response

**Ward(s) Affected**

All

**Recommendations**

To note the information provided.

**List of Appendices Included**

Brief data – CSE and Missing for Children in Care

**Background Papers**

None

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None

**Council Approval Required**

No

## **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

### **1. Summary**

This report sets out the process, practice and current activity in relation to CSE and Missing issues for children in care.

### **2. Background**

The history and context with regard to CSE in Rotherham is well understood. .

Since 2015 huge change has taken place across children's services and specifically in relation to the way in which CSE is identified and addressed in the borough.

### **Operational Arrangements**

Missing and CSE issues for children in Rotherham are supported by the multi-agency Evolve Team. Evolve has within it, Police, RMBC Social Workers, Barnardos Social Care Workers and a CSE Nurse. RMBC Return Home Interviewers have also recently joined the team so that the CSE and Missing functions are managed in the same place and overseen by the same Manager. The Team is jointly managed on a day to day basis by the Detective Sergeant and Social Work Team Manager. Multi-agency governance arrangements are in place to drive the collective work of the team.

Missing Children are referred in line with the RLSCB Procedure in this regard, by South Yorkshire Police through the Children's MASH and records created such that Evolve and case holding Social Workers are notified of all missing incidents. The attached process map shows the relative functions of both Return Home Interviewers and case holding Social Workers.

CSE is identified by the use of indicators and screening tools across social care services and the partnership. The Evolve Team lead a multi-agency risk assessment at the point that CSE is thought to be an issue for a child (including children in care). The Team provided direct support to children and advice to the broader service in these cases, aimed at reducing risk and achieving disruption / prosecution of offenders.

### **3. Current Position**

Our data and qualitative knowledge of Rotherham's Children in Care tells us that we have a complex cohort of older young people, some of who have very significant, entrenched needs, that have arisen over a long period of time. Often these children have suffered sustained abuse or neglect of their needs and as such, now need extra help in order to be safe and remain stable in placements.

This means that some of Rotherham's children in care are more susceptible to the risks of being exploited, and are more often missing from placement than would be expected. That said, our current practice in this regard appears to be successful in identifying risks and in reducing missing episodes. During our recent inspection, this area of our practice was commented on positively.

### **Missing Children**

There are a number of children who regularly have missing episodes. Much work has been done with case holding Social Workers of late about the impact of children being missing and the potential for this to be reflective of other risks for them. Our review of practice in this area tells us that practice is improving, we now better understand the reasons why children go missing, and have information on files that helps us to find them when they do. Children's overarching assessments and care plans now routinely include information about the risks presented from children going missing and it is more usual for us to find creative ways of engaging children positively to prevent missing episodes.

The current data relating to missing children shows a declining number of missing episodes for some of our most vulnerable children. When children go missing, they are offered Return Home Interviews and in the vast majority of cases these are carried out in line with statutory guidance (72 hours of the child being found). Our performance in this regard is good and far exceeds the performance of most other local authorities.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

We have had an increasing number of children for whom CSE is thought to be a likelihood in recent months, this is understood within the service to be linked to better practice around identification.

Audits of practice show that we are better at understanding and addressing this risk and that the work of the Evolve Team is helping others to develop their practice in this regard.

Direct work with children is helping to develop their resilience and confidence in talking about what has happened to them or who they are spending time with. This has resulted in a clear impact for some children, in risk reduction and prosecution or disruption activity in relation to offenders. This was noted by inspectors.

## **4. Key Issues**

- Rotherham has a cohort of young people who have complex needs and are vulnerable to CSE and Missing episodes.
- This presents challenges in terms of placement stability and risk management;
- The processes we have in place currently have been identified by inspectors as working well to identify and reduce vulnerability, but we need to understand and acknowledge that sometimes these complex

issues take some considerable time to impact on with individual children;

- Multi-agency work is key in this area, partnership arrangements are in place (both operationally and strategically) and are increasingly effective;
- Though numbers of children thought to be at risk of CSE have increased, this is related to better identification and address of the issue. Numbers of missing children are reducing in recent months.

## **5. Options considered and recommended proposal**

Both CSE and Missing children functions have action plans in place in relation to future work. Data sets are in place as well as quality assurance arrangements. Plans are to embed a multi-agency quality assurance process (in addition to the current single agency audits) to tell us about how we can more effectively address these issues across the partnership.

There are plans to embed joint supervision at regular intervals between CSE Social Workers and case holding Social Workers across the organisation.

## **6. Accountable Officer(s)**

Vicky Schofield  
Head of Service  
First Response  
8<sup>th</sup> December 2017