

**ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**DATE 07 APRIL 2022**

**SOUTH YORKSHIRE POLICE PROGRESS REPORT TO THE IOPC OPERATION LINDEN RECOMMENDATIONS**

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF CONSTABLE**

**Purpose of the report**

Operation Linden was the name given to the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) investigation of a significant number of complaints and allegations relating to the police response to non-recent child sexual exploitation in the Rotherham area between 1997 and 2003. This report is to give an update as to the progress South Yorkshire police has made in relation to the recommendation made by the IOPC Operation Linden.

**Linden Recommendations**

Several recommendations were made, some of which directly relate to South Yorkshire police and others to other relevant bodies such as the College of Policing and Law Commission.

The recommendations that directly relate to South Yorkshire police and our response to them are included in Appendix A, but in broad terms the recommendations highlight the following themes.

**VICTIMS** - We provide quality victim care and updates inline with the rights of victims laid down in the Victim Code.

**COMMUNITIES** - Continue to build trust and confidence with local communities.

**PARTNERS** - Build strong working relationships with Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVA) and continue to improve how we collaborate with partners and effectively share information.

**OUR PEOPLE** - Ensuring our staff have regular training and their skills are up to date.

**PROCESSES** - We are complaint with Home Office Counting Rules when recording crimes related to CSE.

**VICTIMS**

Compliance with the Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) has been extensively promoted and is monitored through our performance and governance processes. We routinely audit and map the victim journey from initial contact right through to resolution and finalisation focusing on the quality of interaction with victims.

The QATT reviews (Quality Assurance Thematic Testing) features specific areas for VCOP compliance including regular meaningful victim updates that comply with and exceed the requirements laid down. These reviews are DI and DCI led, report into the Investigations Governance Group and Force Performance Days and are designed to ensure that the force provides a quality service to the public it serves.

To further enhance victim care, SYP are developing a trauma informed approach to victims, placing trauma at the centre of how we deliver a compassionate and engaged service through six key principles:

- Safety – keeping and supporting victims to feel safe
- Trust & Transparency – being clear and transparent with victims to build their trust
- Peer Support – providing victims with access to peers who are best placed to support them through shared similar experiences
- Collaboration – continue working with relevant partners to support the victim
- Empowerment – ensuring the victim is allowed to recover and move on in their life
- Humility & Responsiveness – ensuring we listen and act on feedback when we make mistakes

Some staff have received some focused training which involves developing a greater understanding of trauma and we are in the process of planning how we will educate our entire workforce in the coming months. Whilst we do this the principles of trauma are being used to develop other improvements to our service, with the development of a new victim information and support booklet which we hope to develop further to a dedicated smart phone app.

## **COMMUNITIES**

We have invested heavily in Neighbourhood policing and pride ourselves on our engagement with communities. Dedicated neighbourhood policing posts have risen from 268 in 2017 to 450 now. We make use of a raft of dedicated social media channels, use WhatsApp as well as holding face to face community meetings. These channels are used to post activity, raise awareness of issues and to request the assistance of the community in tackling all crime including CSE.

Districts have Youth Independent Advisory Groups that they run with Youth Services to engage with younger members of the community. All NPTs have monthly webchats where officers and staff can engage directly with the public. NPTs also conduct surveys which feed into local priorities. Each NPT maintains a profile on the community it serves.

Tackling CSE is a high priority for Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) who work with Children's Social Care and investigation teams to proactively tackle CSE and safeguard vulnerable children from exploitation. Intensive problem-solving work is carried out with children who are frequently reported missing and reassurance patrols take place to protect vulnerable women in the night-time economy as part of the force's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) action plan. The force is building on this work and continues to raise awareness of CSE in the community and a new campaign designed to encourage third party reporting of exploitation and suspicious activity is about to be launched.

Led by the Media Team, there will be an internal and external element of this which will have the primary aim of continuing to raise awareness for all forms of exploitation, whilst providing the public and professionals with the right information for them to become more confident in identifying and reporting concerns or incidents to the Police/Partnership. Spotting the signs, using professional curiosity and effectively responding to all reports of CSE will be the focus of the internal campaign, as well as promoting the submission of intelligence for Police and partners.

The SYP Media Team constantly review outcomes, including positive prosecutions with a view to promoting the excellent work conducted by the organisation. Not only does this send out a positive

message about what work is being done, but it is shown that this gives confidence to both victims and survivors to engage with Police and report any abuse or exploitation that has occurred.

Op Makesafe is the national response to raising awareness of child sexual and criminal exploitation to the hotel and leisure industry. It focuses on ensuring that people working within these sectors are aware of the warning signs of CSE/CCE and know to how and when to report concerns to Police. SYP has an Op Makesafe SPOC and is a prominent member of the Op Makesafe National Working Group.

All Districts have plans in place to partake in Op Makesafe activity during 2022. Rotherham District has recently conducted a test purchase operation at local hotels to test compliance and knowledge of the process.

## **PARTNERS**

South Yorkshire Police are working hard to enhance engagement with the ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor) service and collaborate with them to improve its service provision to victims. The Rape and Serious Sexual Assault (RASSO) force lead is the single point of contact with the service managers within the ISVA services across all areas of South Yorkshire and regular contact is maintained. The ISVA managers attend the quarterly partnership RASSO Steering Group meeting which is aimed at improving standards and service provision.

South Yorkshire Police have recently established a specialist cadre of front-line officers who have received additional training on the initial response to rape and serious sexual offences reports. Three training events took place in December with further events planned for early 2022. Representatives from the ISVA service were keen to be involved in the training and on each training day, ISVAs delivered an input to attendees. This focussed on what the service could offer, the importance of initial and ongoing victim contact and regular liaison with the ISVA, particularly at key stages of the investigation.

The inputs have been so well received that the long-term plan is to extend the training provision across the force to ensure that all staff understand the ISVA role and how they can assist in providing support to victims. Planned CPD events and supervisor training throughout 2022-23 will also be used to embed the role of the ISVA service.

The RASSO Force lead has recently refreshed the South Yorkshire Police RASSO delivery plan which incorporates planned surveys and victim feedback through ISVAs for the force to continuously improve our service to victims. The first survey has taken place throughout December and January 2022 and we will use this feedback to enhance our service provision through training and CPD events and through scrutiny at local level with district RASSO Champions.

Rotherham have a weekly Child Exploitation Tactical Group (CETG) in place. This is an intelligence led meeting where Police and partners attend to review all new and ongoing intelligence submissions, with a view to identifying and understanding the risks and concerns, along with any safeguarding, evidential or disruption opportunities. Information is shared and actions and plans are identified to mitigate/eliminate risks or create further intelligence development avenues. Missing children deemed to be at risk of exploitation are also considered during this process. Partners who attend the CETG include – Police, Children’s Social Care, Health, Youth Offending Services, Barnardo’s, Local Authority CSE Teams, Housing, Licensing, ASB Officers.

All four Districts have a monthly Child Exploitation Subgroup Meeting, which falls out of the Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships. In Rotherham this is known as a Child Exploitation Delivery Group. Here strategic decisions are taken with regards to the delivery of child exploitation across the partnership, which are reported back to the LSCPB for sign off.

SYP and our partners have embedded and tested multi-agency processes for any child identified as being subjected to or at risk of exploitation, as per 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018'. This can take the form of a multi-agency Section 47 (child at risk if significant harm) Strategy meeting, Child Protection Conference or referral to MACE – Multi-Agency Child Exploitation meeting. All four Local Authorities have Child Exploitation Teams which work closely with Police to identify, safeguard and support victims.

The primary mechanism for multi-agency oversight on cases involving Child Exploitation is the MACE process. This is a national framework and is embedded across all four Districts of South Yorkshire. All Districts hold a weekly MACE which is well attended by multi-agency professionals, including Education, Health, Social Care, Police, Probation, Youth Crime Prevention, Youth Offending Services and Psychological services. Children most at risk of exploitation are referred into the MACE process, which includes children subjected to both CSE and/or CCE. Action relating to safeguarding, diversion, prevention, and additional support are outcomes from MACE, which is a victim focussed process.

## **OUR PEOPLE**

South Yorkshire Police has been continuously working to develop and improve detective skills and training for a number of years. There is a national detective shortage and significant work is ongoing to encourage officers to join the detective career pathway. The force has increased the number of Specialist Child Abuse Investigation Development Programme (SCAIDP) trained and accredited detectives in force. There has also been a real focus on investing in the support available for the development of detective skills through the crime training department.

In 2018 / 2019 a detective training course was developed in conjunction with Sheffield University and delivered to police staff Investigating Officers, many of whom were posted to Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) teams. In addition to SCAIDP, as part of its Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) improvement plan, the force is planning to deliver the College of Policing SSAIDP (Specialist Sexual Assault Investigation Development Programme) training course to detectives involved in the investigation of rape and serious sexual offences.

The force has recently worked with the NSPCC, the College of Policing, and the National Police Chief's Council lead on child protection to develop a bespoke child protection training course called Child Matters. This is being delivered to all front-line police officers and police staff.

Crime training have delivered several Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training events over the last year. These are delivered through Bitesize Training videos and a Wednesday Webinar. Bespoke CPD masterclass events for Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) investigators are now scheduled on a 6 monthly basis. The first of these events took place in March 2022 and included presentations from Operation Hydrant on national best practice. Further CSE related CPD events for the wider workforce are in development as part of the forces plans around trauma training and the vulnerability campaign referenced earlier in this report.

## **PROCESS**

Crime Data Accuracy (CDA) is a high priority for the force and performance is monitored through regular meetings chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable (Crime). In the 2018 inspection on CDA, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) found that the force performance on the recording of rape was a high 95% compliance rate. The report highlighted this as being a 'credit to the force'. South Yorkshire Police continues to develop and improve its CDA compliance and recent work in this area includes a peer review by the Force Crime Registrar from West Yorkshire Police, significant audit work around PVP teams and Local referral Units and targeted training and internal communications designed to address identified areas for improvement. In the most recent CDA audit on recorded crimes for Protecting Vulnerable People, a 95% compliance rate was achieved which would put the force in the 'good' category. Development work is also ongoing with the Force Control Room and Force Crime Bureau and the CDA Hub to ensure that all crimes (including CSE) are recorded accurately and in a timely manner in accordance with the Home Office Counting rules. Crime Data Accuracy performance is monitored through the CDA Gold Group, Force Performance Days and Quarterly Performance Reviews and forms an integral part of our Qualitative Auditing and Thematic Testing work.

## **NEXT STEPS**

In addition to the findings and recommendations of the Linden Report a number of challenges remain.

The application of CSE keywords continues to be a challenge. This is a national issue, which is mostly due to the subjective nature of the CSE definition. Nationally the NPCC Group Based CSE Offending Group is looking at this issue with a view to producing guidance at a point in the future. In the meantime, audits are taking place along with training delivered by the Force Thematic Lead to reduce the impact of this issue.

Online offending continues to present challenges to Police and Partners. Due to the nature of offending, in that it mostly takes place behind closed bedroom doors and out of the sight of parents/carers, this will inevitably be vastly under reported. Online offending is an intelligence gap for SYP and requires officers to be professionally curious when engaging with children. This is a national issue, and the Home Office are fully aware of the challenges. Legislation around tech companies is currently being reviewed to place a burden on them to reduce this occurring.

The securing of orders (Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (SHPOs) and Sexual Risk Orders (SROs)) continues to be a challenge. Due to the relatively low prosecution rates for CSE offenders, this reduces the prospect of obtaining SHPOs on conviction. Whilst SROs have been obtained, these are relatively low in number, primarily due to the high threshold required for applications to succeed. This is a national issue, not just bespoke to SYP.

Following the recommendations made by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), forces are being asked to collect data on all known or suspected CSE cases involving groups or networks. This creates a challenge for all forces including SYP, as we currently don't have a search facility or keyword that will easily capture this data on our current system. SYP's Strategic Delivery Unit are currently reviewing systems to identify a resolution to this, which is also compounded by the ongoing CSE keyword issue as mentioned, due to the subjective nature of the CSE definition.

SYP continues to promote positive outcomes through successful prosecutions and convictions. This is proven to give victims and survivors more confidence to report their own abuse. In addition to this,

SYP conduct regular victim surveys and receive national updates about how they can improve engagement with victims/survivors. Training and CPD for officers and staff ensure knowledge and awareness and SYP maintains close working relationships with partners to tackle this together. Whilst continual improvement is sought to improve the overall response to CSE, including outcomes, challenges still exist especially with regards to victim engagement for those who are actually going through the exploitation.

In 2021 out of the 336 outcomes applied, there were 30 that resulted in a charge/summons and 1 in a caution (alternative offence). This shows clearly the challenges that exist in SYP and elsewhere in obtaining positive outcomes.

Our CSE Delivery Plan is designed to tackle these ongoing challenges and drive ongoing improvement activity that encapsulates the Linden recommendations and will further strengthen the forces position outlined in this report.

South Yorkshire Police is committed to do everything possible in conjunction with our partners to tackle CSE offending, to identify emerging issues as they arise and to continue to learn and improve our response so that children are safeguarded.

**Chief Officer Lead:** Deputy Chief Constable Tim Forber

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**END**

## Appendix A

- SYP 10 recommendation Operation Linden
- SYP 28A recommendation and response record Operation Linden