

Item 16 – FINAL MOTION – ONGOING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN ROTHERHAM (as agreed by Council 10 November 2021)

This Council notes:

- For many years Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Rotherham was serious and widespread, but largely ignored by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) and South Yorkshire Police (SYP).
- Since 2014, progress has been made on many issues related to CSE, including improvements in taxi licensing.
- However, children continue to be sexually exploited in Rotherham, the model used by organised criminals has changed, with CSE linking into Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), and private vehicles being used.
- In the six months since the local elections, Councillors have passed community gathered intelligence to RMBC and SYP regarding possible grooming and CSE in numerous locations in the Borough, including Wath, Rawmarsh, Greasbrough, Clifton, and Eastwood.
- That many of the actions requested by the Conservative Group are already activities underway under the terms of Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership's Strategy to Tackle and Prevent Child Exploitation, which was considered by the Council's Cabinet in October 2019.

Therefore, we ask that the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership considers the following proposed actions in light of the current strategy, and any further evidence provided by the Conservative Group or others, and reports back to councillors within 3 months on any changes, amendments to that strategy or additional activities that may be appropriate in order to maintain the highest quality of services and child protection activity:

- Acknowledges that the true scale of CSE in Rotherham is not and cannot be known at present due to reactive policies and under-reporting, and that CSE may be occurring on the same scale as in the past.
- Deliver, as a matter of urgency, proper, detailed, in-person training to Council staff and Council contractors who are in regular contact with members of the public or who work out in our communities, so that they can recognise grooming, and suspicious activities that may indicate CSE.
- Launch a comprehensive public information campaign to likewise help members of the public recognise behaviours, activities, and other signs which may indicate CSE.

- Review and improve internal procedures for handling reports and intelligence that may indicate CSE, with clear actions to be taken, deadlines for those actions, designated people responsible for taking them, and a clear escalation procedure.
- Gather and record intelligence that may or does indicate CSE in a joined-up way, including cross referencing reports to build a fuller picture, working with expert partners in the third sector to gather intelligence, and sharing all intelligence with the police.
- Takes a proactive approach to CSE, identifying and supporting children at risk and identifying people who may be perpetrators, whilst recognising that the criminal model used by perpetrators is likely to continue changing as the authorities act.
- Proactively target known and potential CSE hot spots, including but not limited to hotels, the night-time economy, parks, and gangs engaged in Child Criminal Exploitation and county lines drug dealing.
- Develop an 'exit strategy' to support children to leave CSE, and continually review the strategy to ensure that it is effective.
- Review the Council's whistleblowing policy and give consideration to improving protections for people who believe they are whistleblowing, protecting their jobs and pensions, and providing a specialist independent person to whistleblow to.
- Ensure that RMBC's and SYP's work on CSE is properly scrutinised through the appropriate committees of elected members, including regular, detailed updates and regular reviews of scrutiny arrangements to ensure that they are robust.
- Give a full and unreserved apology to survivors for Council failings that extended their abuse and continue to make their recoveries difficult.
- Look at ways to improve support for survivors of CSE, with the understanding that distrust and animosity towards the Council means that for many survivors, services that are as distant and as independent as possible from the Council would be most helpful, and that due to the life-long challenges many survivors face, support needs to be individualised and long-term.
- Put pressure on South Yorkshire Police to likewise recognise that CSE is a major and continuing problem in Rotherham and elsewhere in South Yorkshire, and likewise improve their response to reports and begin to proactively target known and potential perpetrators, locations, and victims.