

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	19th June, 2013
3.	Title:	Home Affairs Select Committee – Child Sexual Exploitation and the response to Localised Grooming
4.	Programme Area:	Children and Young People’s Services

5. **Summary:**

The Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) published its report ‘Child Sexual Exploitation and the response to localised grooming on Monday, 10th June. The Chief Executive and the Strategic Director of Children and Young People’s Services were called to give evidence to the HASC on the 8th January. Tackling the sexual exploitation of children and young people remains the highest priority for Rotherham Borough Council. We welcome the Select Committee report as a body of evidence and advice that can be used by local authorities around the Country to improve their response to these horrific crimes.

6. **Recommendations:**

- (i) **That Cabinet welcomes the findings of the HASC and the opportunity to improve our response to child sexual exploitation.**
- (ii) **That a detailed report on our self-assessment against the recommendations from the HASC report be brought to Cabinet on the 3rd July.**

7. Proposals and Details:

In June 2012 the HASC started taking this evidence on the issue of localised (or on-street) grooming. The HASC heard evidence from witnesses about the Council's approach and performance which generally covered the period between 2003 and 2009. A period during which we fully acknowledge that our services should have been stronger. One of the witnesses had been sexually exploited in Rotherham in 2003.

In 2007, Rotherham had its first conviction for sexual exploitation which saw the perpetrator receive an indeterminate sentence for at least 5 years. This was for crimes against young men.

In 2010, the outcome of Operation Central in Rotherham, saw 5 men were sentenced for 34 years between them for sexual exploitation offences against young Rotherham girls.

In January 2011, Barnardo's published a report entitled 'Puppet on a String' which looked at child sexual exploitation. The report noted a worrying trend that child sexual exploitation was becoming more sophisticated.

In June 2011, a thematic assessment (which Rotherham contributed to) by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) highlighted the growing awareness of the issue of localised grooming – 'however there have been comparatively few prosecutions, and there is a general lack of knowledge of grooming and sexual exploitation in the UK and the threats posed to children and young people'.

In 2011, the outcome of Operation Czar in Rotherham, where 15 men were arrested for sexual exploitation offences but the Crown Prosecution Service would not progress due to the 'credibility' of the witnesses.

In 2012, further national reports were produced including the Office of the Children's Commissioner interim report into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (CSEGG). Rotherham contributed to the CSEGG report.

8. Finance:

Our response to the Select Committee findings will be met from existing resources. Cabinet should note an additional £50k had been secured for the work of the CSE team from SRP managed funds from the Police and Crime Commissioner. These funds are for 3 years.

9. Risks and Uncertainties:

The publication of the Select Committee report has rightly made the Council and its partners re-assess the effectiveness of our response to child sexual exploitation. Failure to continually improve our services will mean children and young people are not afforded a comprehensive and quality service.

We will continue to maintain our focus on early intervention and prevention activity, but we also believe that our strengthened multi agency working must lead to enhanced disclosure and evidence gathering, investigations and ultimately prosecutions by the Police. We fully acknowledge the deterrent effect that successful prosecutions can bring.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications:

One of the recommendations from the Select Committee is that Ofsted should inspect Children's Services in relation to CSE before December 2013. We welcome this opportunity.

11. Background Papers and Consultation:

House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 'Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming' 10th June, 2013.

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