

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Friday, 12th December, 2014

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Ahmed, Currie, J. Hamilton, Middleton, Parker, Read, Sims, Vines, Watson and Wyatt.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Sansome.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C. Read asked whether he should declare a personal interest in the subject matters of this meeting's agenda, because he has a close relative who is a serving officer with the South Yorkshire Police. The Monitoring Officer replied that it was not necessary for the personal interest to be declared and that Councillor Read would be able to participate fully in the meeting.

68. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 14TH NOVEMBER 2014

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, held on 14th November, 2014 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

69. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no formal call-in requests.

70. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from the public or the press.

71. MEETING PROCEDURE - MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Parker referred to the allocation of Members' questions and asked why he had been assigned to ask question 11 (regarding the effectiveness of local authorities to deal with the child sexual exploitation agenda). Councillor Parker stated that he had not seen the question before and felt that it was 'feeble'.

The Chair referred to the process of assigning questions to the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, and reminded Members that there had been two dedicated planning sessions organised prior to the meeting, to facilitate scrutiny of the matters before the Board and the Board had agreed to submit all questions in advance so these could be sent to witnesses. All Members had had the opportunity to participate in these sessions and submit their questions.

Councillor Currie stated that he would ask question 11 during the meeting,

in his capacity as Chair of the Self Regulation Select Commission.

72. SCRUTINY OF ROTHERHAM'S PLANS TO TACKLE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Further to Minute No. 59 of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 14th November, 2014, consideration was given to the following sessions that had been incorporated as Day One.

73. EXPERIENCES FROM AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR IN ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Further to Minute No. 59 of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 14th November, 2014, Members undertook the scrutiny of Rotherham's plans to tackle child sexual exploitation, arising from the contents of the report by Professor Alexis Jay.

Session One : Experiences from and implications for the Local Government Sector in addressing the challenges of child sexual exploitation

The objectives of this session are to:-

- understand the challenges faced by Local Authorities in tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE);
- gain external perspectives on Rotherham's situation and to learn from best practice elsewhere; and
- understand the specific role that elected members can play in tackling CSE effectively.

The meeting welcomed Councillor David Simmonds (Deputy Leader of London Borough of Hillingdon), Chair of the Local Government Association Children's Board and Member of the Improvement Board of Rotherham Borough Council)

1.1 Councillor Simmonds opened by stating that Child Sexual Exploitation is not a new issue. From his personal experience, he recounted that Levi Bellfield (who was the killer of schoolgirl Milly Dowler), was a resident in Hillingdon and there were suspicions that he had been involved in the sexual exploitation of children. Whenever such traumatic events happen, it is inevitably that people are angry. As elected members, you will want to ask questions about what was known and by whom, why events happened and what was preventable.

Councillor Simmonds suggested that no-one is ever entirely on top of the issue of CSE. He gave examples of recent cases of grooming and exploitation which are consistent in practice. However, each reflected local 'unique' factors, with its own features and elements. Local authorities

around the country will also be struggling to identify and tackle CSE. Sometimes the complexity of issues is not always reflected in the media.

With regard to the specific role of scrutiny and the elected members engaged in that process, Councillor Simmonds suggested that the first set questions (for today's meeting) could be perceived as defensive because they concentrate on the things others are doing. It is important that there is recognition and understanding of the corporate parenting role of elected members and their moral and legal responsibility for the care of children. The first question should be what are we (in Rotherham) doing about this?

Therefore, how should the scrutiny elected members help to correct matters and ask the searching questions? Scrutiny members must undertake a detailed reflection on their access to sources of information (for example - Annex A performance report). Information to be obtained and shared will include Ofsted reports, reports to the Council's Executive, the agenda and reports for meetings of the Safeguarding Board (not just meetings' minutes). Scrutiny should also consider the quality of debate and the questions being asked by the Safeguarding Board's members. Scrutiny councillors ought to sit in and observe the Safeguarding Board's meetings and find out the documents which are available to examine.

Scrutiny should adopt the triangulation approach – to be able to work out what is happening, councillors need to look at the issues from three or more different perspectives. Find out who are the people responsible (for service provision and decision-making) and what are the materials and details being reported.

Councillor Simmonds concluded by stating that the child sexual exploitation issue is a considerable challenge for scrutiny and it is in everyone's wider interests for local government to help Rotherham Council.

The meeting welcomed Councillor Ralph Berry (Lead Member for Children's Services, Bradford MDC)

Councillor Berry gave a brief outline of his experience as a former probation officer and social worker. He had been an elected member for Bradford MDC for 22 years. Child safeguarding processes have recently improved and it is now understood that exploitation features across many areas, for example in forced marriages, or the abuse of people with learning disabilities. In order to scrutinise and challenge the effectiveness of local authority children's services, elected members should equip themselves with the appropriate skills and understanding; challenge consistently and learn from elsewhere (citing taxi licensing in Sheffield as an exemplar of good practice).

Bradford MDC has invested in additional support for victims of exploitation – including the families of girls and boys who have been groomed. Efforts

are being made to broaden the understanding of staff and pupils in schools; one example is the use of a stage play as a learning method. The partnership with the voluntary sector is important, because victims may prefer to obtain assistance from those services – sometimes victims don't view the state (including local authorities) as being trustworthy to talk to.

Bradford MDC, alongside the Police, is examining cases of exploitation from the past. This is termed the 'cold case' method of looking at paper records to try and find historical cases where it may be possible to bring individual perpetrators to justice. It is recognised that behaviour patterns emerge of single men using computers; people in churches; scout groups etc. Some of these cases will come to Court over next few years (many are from the same residential areas). It seems that the Courts are beginning to issue harsher sentences for exploitation offences. Very often, perpetrators have a financial motive for being involved in exploitation. In his view, race and gender (of a victim) are not the primary motivating factors for this crime. Child sexual exploitation has become a very big issue for the country as a whole (a recent conference in London had attracted representatives from all areas of the country). Tackling the problem is very costly and it is resource-intensive to have to investigate all of the issues. There is still relatively little support for victims and their families. Within the NHS, there is only a loose framework of support services and some psychology counselling services.

Questions asked by Elected Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Q1 (Councillor Currie) What definitions of child sexual exploitation are used across local authorities, what are the differences between these definitions and/or is there a shared understanding of what child sexual exploitation is?

Councillor Simmonds referred to the statutory definition published on the NSPCC website, which states that :

"Child sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed online. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the United Kingdom for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs."

Councillor Simmonds explained that children may be placed in exploitative situations, there is online grooming and children are coerced into sexual activity. However, definitions are not always useful. The scale of exploitation is very considerable and is evidenced by the extent of organised crime, as well as the number of prosecutions now happening. Rotherham Councillors should ask themselves "which of the elements of

the definition are happening in Rotherham and what are you doing about it ?”

Q2 (Councillor Sims) What are your personal reflections on what has happened in Rotherham and are there any lessons for local authorities to be learned from this experience, for local government in general and social care in particular?

Councillor Berry replied that, after reading the report by Professor Alexis Jay, he had found himself upset by the scale of inaction – he emphasised that he was upset for the whole of local government and it was not just criticism of Rotherham Council. The response has to be to ask difficult questions about the role played by elected members. There is a clear need to ratchet up the training for elected members. Bradford Council has 90 members, 900 looked after children and a population of half a million people. Councillors have a considerable responsibility. The Alexis Jay report infers that leadership was not working properly in Rotherham. Bradford has the hub system of regular meetings of care professionals, happening every day, to track every case. Councils must take leadership and safeguarding seriously. There are other local authority models from which to learn useful practices (eg: Slough, Doncaster). All members know what is happening in their communities and they must be the eyes and ears of these areas and be prepared to challenge inappropriate actions or attitudes within communities. The lesson is to keep it simple and straightforward. All children have to have the same level of protection. The top level officers must be well-experienced, especially the Director of Children’s Services and the Chair of the Safeguarding Board. Try and learn from others and share best practice. The systemic failure must go broader than the local authority. The Crown Prosecution Service and the Police must be involved. The Police practices of investigation are much better today than they were ten years ago.

Councillor Simmonds stated that the lessons to be learned are relatively simple – there must be systems in place to keep children safe, but elected members must ensure that all of the relevant people are doing the things they are supposed to be doing. The identification of a problem will come from the GPs or the Police or the local authority, who must all pick up on their shared responsibilities. This means that one or more of those three will pick up on the problem, ensuring that the problem case is not missed. Rotherham has to get this system in place - and elected members must ask “how do I know this system is happening and is effective ?” He suggested that regular Member briefing should take place, combined with their day-to-day observations of service delivery in their communities. Members may also want to have more regular meetings with social workers and with the Police. Both individually and collectively, elected members must have to reflect, so that they know what is happening. The system is often picking up on a problem when it is too late to act effectively. Councillors have to learn the lessons and make sure things as bad as this do not happen again.

Q3 (Councillor Read) To paraphrase the Home Affairs Select Committee, this is a crime that can happen anywhere, but in terms of support to victims and prosecution of offenders it is still a postcode lottery. What are your views on this? Do you think there is any reason to believe there are unique circumstances in Rotherham or is it similar to many other authorities in the country? Councillor Read referred to grooming taking place on the street (as described in Professor Jay's report) and questioned whether there were any current cases happening elsewhere.

Councillor Berry considered that there is a post code lottery and prosecution cases are now coming to Court. There is some good work taking place with the Children's Society (eg: the hand-in-hand project) and with other voluntary sector groups, which have legitimacy. Court staff may be able to provide some assistance with regard to support services. The Council should press for assistance via the mental health services. Councils should have good contacts with their local third sector agencies to be able to work effectively on the provision of support services. Some trends can be noticed in communities. Safeguarding has now improved and, for example, the movements of children in care are tracked. In other examples, perpetrators will prey on Eastern European girls, Asian girls and on people with learning disabilities. It is society's wider problem. Australia, for example, has organised a national enquiry about this type of exploitation.

Councillor Simmonds agreed that the provision of support for victims of sexual exploitation, as well as the incidence of prosecution of offenders, are indeed both a post code lottery. Furthermore, having accountability for prosecutions makes the role of elected members more important. The initial Police response is often "no, we will not do anything". It is difficult to avoid the feeling that the Police do not like having to admit the existence of a CSE problem "on their patch". So, elected members must have the role of asking that tough question - "is there the right threshold in our area to be able to move a case forward to prosecution?" He also affirmed that there are good examples of victims receiving counselling and support after a successful prosecution; however he made the point that early intervention and prevention would lead to better outcomes.

Q4 (Councillor Watson) From a Local Government Association perspective, which authority stands out as an example of good practice in tackling child sexual exploitation and why? Is there a local authority that stands out in its work with looked after children in this field?

Councillor Simmonds replied that no local authority would place itself on pedestal and say that it has CSE cracked. You can never be sure because CSE takes different forms around the country. He gave examples of children trafficked through Heathrow airport and on-line exploitation of children, demonstrating that child sexual exploitation can have a very wide geographical spread. There are cases in Oxfordshire,

Rochdale, East Yorkshire and North Yorkshire which also illustrate this point. So, find out from elected members elsewhere and ask them to tell you which practices give them confidence that the CSE problem is being solved.

Councillor Berry explained that local authorities must customise good practice to fit their own local circumstances in their areas and districts. High quality Personal, Health, Social and Economic (PHSE) education in schools is essential, so that young people learn about social matters and appropriate relationships. Parents ought to be involved as well, as much as possible, an approach which is known to be effective. He gave an example of a case being investigated after a pupil had made a disclosure of information during a class lesson in school, which eventually lead to a conviction. Schools therefore have a central role in solving the problem. Previously, it had been difficult to persuade head teachers to come to safeguarding conferences - but they all come to them now. Schools are taking CSE issues very seriously now. The Police will assign their best up-and-coming officers to safeguarding cases, enabling them to gain valuable experience in these investigations.

Q5 (Councillor C Vines) The recent thematic inspection of local authorities regarding CSE suggested that senior leaders and elected members 'have to show the political and moral courage to confront and tackle CSE wherever and however it occurs'. What do you think this entails? The Ofsted thematic inspection highlights that in some local authorities, Local Safeguarding Boards were not routinely holding all partners to account. What are your thoughts about how we can "guard the guardians"?

Councillor Berry described the 'Challenge Panel' system at Bradford Council, which involved a high level of challenge between the various agencies. A forthcoming case will involve learning from hindsight. It is important to learn as much as possible from the caseload, rather than simply trying to brand someone or some organisation as the scapegoat. The Chairs of the Safeguarding Boards must be rigorous, challenging people who are prepared to ask harsh questions. Sometimes it is necessary to deconstruct or demolish an issue or case and then rebuild it. There is no room for complacency. We have a duty to be aware of our lack of knowledge of certain things. Councils must engage in hard discussions with all sectors of the community. Years ago, the Bradford taxi drivers were not very forthcoming, but they are much better now. More and more people want to be involved in the CSE investigations. It is known that youngsters from Bradford are being taken on routes to other areas which have bad CSE records.

Councillor Simmonds stated that there is no such thing as a daft question. There is sometimes a conspiracy of silence amongst officers. Elected members have to challenge the professionals. Don't rely on the fact that a strategy may be in place – councillors must check what is actually

happening. Do we know what the guardians are doing ? Do the social workers actually visit the children ? Are the records being properly kept ? Do the children's homes inspections happen properly ? Are there Section 11 (Children Act 2004) audits of safeguarding standards ? Be rigorous. Councillors have to find out what is going on (the good and the bad) so that you can be more confident about your Council's safeguarding services.

Q6 What do you think is the role for local councillors in tackling Child Sexual Exploitation? What information should they be accessing on a regular basis and what questions should they be asking?

Response – these issues have already been discussed during consideration of the first five questions.

Q7 (Councillor Jane Hamilton) Specifically, what do you think are the challenges for executive members and conversely for scrutiny members?

Councillor Simmonds said "how do you know what is happening ?" When something goes wrong, the whole safeguarding system is dragged through the mire. Sources of information must be consistent with each other. Ultimately, there should be all-party debate of CSE, conducted properly, so as to bring rigour to the accountability for the process. If the Local Children Safeguarding Board reckons that the situation is bad and the Lead Member for Children's Services thinks all is well, then there is a problem - so scrutiny must dig deep to find out the true state of affairs. If a councillor is unfamiliar with children's services, do not always accept all of the officer advice. That is the time to ask the simple, dumb questions. There must be a sense of ownership of the questions being asked by elected members. You can ask whatever questions you wish.

Councillor Berry referred to the immense pressures on budgets for adult social care and for children's services. It's easy to be caught up in the accountability spaghetti of the Local Children Safeguarding Board, the Executive Cabinet, Ofsted and central Government Departments. To whom is the Local Children Safeguarding Board (LSCB) accountable ? It seems there ought to be a tidier way of doing things. The LSCB importantly has to be independent and the attendance of representatives of all agencies has to be regular and consistent.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board requested that written answers should be provided to the questions (numbered 8 to 13 inclusive) which were not able to be asked within the time available. The questions are:-

Q8 Bradford MDC has recently gone through an OFSTED inspection and your interagency hub was cited as working well – can you take us through how this works?

Q9 The Ofsted report suggests that the absence of statutory reporting arrangements in relation to disruption and prosecution, undermines the ability to monitor activity and provide critical challenge. What are your views on this and what could these arrangements look like?

Q10 Clearly schools have an important role in safeguarding; given the pressure on curriculum how can we better link in with PSHE teaching in schools? Given the dilution in the relationship between schools and local authorities, how can we keep schools on board?

Q11 What are your views on how effectively local authorities are resourced to deal with this agenda?

Q12 What are your views on the need for a national framework for dealing with Child Sexual Exploitation? Similar to that developed for tackling domestic abuse.

Q13 Are other areas commissioning reviews or reports similar to that commissioned by RMBC from Professor Jay? What approaches are being taken across the country?

74. SCRUTINY OF CURRENT SERVICES AND ACTION PLANS TO ADDRESS CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN ROTHERHAM

Session two: Scrutiny of current services and action plans to address Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham

The objectives are to:-

- ensure the action plan is robust and fit for purpose
- ensure governance processes are in place for monitoring its delivery
- determine whether the action plan is guiding effective improvement in practice

The following persons were welcomed to the meeting:-

- Steve Ashley, Chair of the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Jane Parfremment, Director of Safeguarding, RMBC
- Phil Morris – Business Manager (Safeguarding), RMBC
- Jason Harwin, Rotherham District Commander, South Yorkshire Police
- Detective Superintendent Matt Fenwick, South Yorkshire Police
- Assistant Chief Constable Ingrid Lee, South Yorkshire Police
- Catherine Hall (Rotherham CCG – Head of Safeguarding)
- Chris Prewitt (RDASH - Head of Quality and Standards)
- Samantha Davis (Nurse - RDASH)
- Tracey McErlains-Burns (Chief Nurse - Rotherham Foundation Trust)
- Councillor Christine Beaumont, Cabinet Member for Children's

- Services, RMBC
- Warren Carratt – Service Manager, Strategy Standards and Early Help, RMBC

Comments from Steve Ashley, Chair of the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board

Steve Ashley commented that the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has placed child sexual exploitation as a priority within its business plan. The LSCB has established a sub-group specifically tasked to consider the issues of child sexual exploitation. This sub-group deals with both strategic matters and with issues happening 'on the ground'. The District Commander of the South Yorkshire Police in Rotherham, Jason Harwin, has been the Chair of this sub-group, although that role will be assumed by Steve Ashley in January 2015. The reason is that it is essential that the sub-group has an independent overview, to be able to hold all agencies to account (and not to have a Chair who works for any one of those agencies). The action plan, prepared by the sub-group, is a substantial document (copies of the document can be made available for members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board). The action plan is based upon the contents of the sub-group's strategy document and its progress is reviewed every month. There is a 'Silver group' (of officers) which deals with all of the actions and their progress. The action plan has grown in size considerably during the last year, in response to recommendations from national bodies and also from local reports etc. The growth of the action plan itself needs review and will have to be honed down to a more manageable size. There will be a sub-group meeting next week (December 2014) to review priorities and identify new priorities.

All of the agencies have reviewed the way they deal with child sexual exploitation and that factor is reflected in the action plan. Previously, the practicality has been that District Commander Jason Harwin has meetings lasting three hours during which all agencies are held to account. This is a difficult task. But the strategy being used does fit all of the national guidance and Rotherham practice will continue in that way. All agencies are provided with copies of the minutes of sub group meetings (via the agenda of full LSCB Board meetings) and the agencies have the opportunity of questioning the contents of those minutes. Overall, some good progress has been made in the last twelve months.

During the following section of the meeting, Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (and other Members in attendance) asked questions of the officers present.

Q1 (Councillor Hunter) Any of the CSE victims that got sexually transmitted diseases would have been treated by GU Med. Is it possible that their strict confidential measures on sharing information actually helped condemn the victims instead of protecting them? Was there any

reporting to the Local Children Safeguarding Board ?

Tracey McErlains-Burns replied that the GU Medicine service provides a confidential service. There is contact with professional colleagues whenever a CSE case crops up and information is shared between professional colleagues. It is important to develop confidence in the service. Together with the Medical Director, we will find an appropriate route for information sharing and this will leave the clinician with the time to get on with dealing with case and treating the person. It is necessary to develop information sharing (and keeping confidentiality), but it can be a lengthy, time-consuming process.

Q2 (Councillor C Vines) Risky Business supported 319 girls on either a one-to-one or group work basis over an 18 months period from April 2004 until October 2005. What action has been taken in regard to this number of known victims? How many of the perpetrators have been arrested and charged?

Detective Superintendent Matt Fenwick stated that the Police were unsure that 319 was the precise number of girls, nor had Professor Alexis Jay revealed how she had arrived at that number. The Police will work with partners to try and identify the precise number of victims. Already, with regard to the perpetrators, the Police have examined the files held by Risky Business and will be undertaking research into the background of people whose names are found in those files. On 25 November 2014, the Police also received a list of names from former employees of Risky Business. We are checking for any duplication in the two lists of names. In addition, much work is being undertaken on historical cases. The Police now have in place Operation Clover (187 victims) and Operation Mark (another 96 victims). These two Operations will benefit from a multi-agency approach, with the Police working alongside social care staff, third sector voluntary organisations and some former employees of Risky Business so that we are able to identify specific individual perpetrators. To date, some arrests have been made and individuals placed on bail. Further investigations are happening, too.

Q3 (Councillor Cowles) The section on perpetrators mentioned an Asian family involved with taxi firms and identified 50 people, 45 of whom were Asian, 4 white and 1 African-Caribbean. Why have these people not yet been arrested?

Detective Superintendent Matt Fenwick stated that the Police have read through the files and have compiled a list of names of potential victims and suspected perpetrators. There is examination of any action taken in the past, as well as assessment of the action which could be taken against perpetrators in the future. The Police have held discussions with Professor Alexis Jay about the cases she has identified in her report to assess if there are opportunities for further action. The Police have in place Operation Meadow, an overarching operation which allows the Police time to scope the various issues involved in the investigation of the

crime of child sexual exploitation.

Assistant Chief Constable Ingrid Lee stated that all aspects of the issues within Professor Alexis Jay's report will be examined and will be cross-referenced into Police Operations Clover and Mark. The South Yorkshire Police are engaging with other agencies and will look at issues of alleged misconduct in public office, both in terms of local authority personnel and Police personnel.

Q4 (Councillor Cowles) Who owns the Improvement and Delivery action plan 2014-15 and who is responsible for monitoring its actions? The document has target dates and some actions have substantially missed their target dates. There is much criticism of the RAG (red-amber-green) rating and the lack of retrospective action to bring the actions back on track. Senior people (in the organisation) just seem to permit the delays and the action plan is not being monitored with any rigour. It needs to be looked at more critically and find out why everything is running late.

Steve Ashley replied by saying that the Rotherham LSCB owns the Improvement and Delivery action plan and all agencies are responsible for delivery (via the CSE sub group of the LSCB). Many actions are continuing issues and there is a spectrum of where the success of any individual action may sit (in terms of an action's RAG rating). The RAG rating method is prescriptive and very often it is a matter of opinion as to which colour should apply to an action at one time. The usual interpretation of a "Green" rating, for example, is that that specific action may be continuing (and therefore has not yet been completed). Experience now shows us that a case is often never completed and that there will always be more work to do. The LSCB is satisfied that action plan has the correct governance in place. As LSCB Chair, I will be taking over as independent Chair of the CSE sub group, so that the sub group Chair official position does not belong to one of the agencies, whereby the agencies may be in position of having to hold themselves to account. The RAG method of rating and any individual action's RAG status should be treated cautiously.

District Commander Jason Harwin stated that much reactive work is happening at moment. Agencies need to be proactive, at first, so as to stop things (ie: more exploitation) happening. An individual action's target date may actually be a review date. The Improvement and Delivery action plan was intended initially just for internal use by the agencies. However, the document now needs to be shown to the public as visible evidence of progress and so that there is transparency.

Councillor David Simmonds added that he thought both this question and the answers to it were very good. Mr. Ashley has said that he is now responsible and he is confident that targets will be met and the difficulty of the various issues within the action plan are known. Therefore, as the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, you must ask

yourselves this question : “do you now have greater confidence that this matter is being dealt with properly ?”

Questions specifically about the Improvement and Delivery action plan are listed below:-

Action Plan (AP) ref 1.01 (Councillor Read) – Why is the vision and purpose still not clear? Do all partners understand the role they play in achieving this vision?

Steve Ashley replied by posing this question : “is there a one sentence vision for CSE and do we articulate it ... and am I happy that the strategy is laid out properly ? The agencies have developed a strategy of three strands of objectives and the action plan. There is not yet a single, simple strap line, but do we actually need to produce one.

Councillor Read further asked .. “is there a single partnership vision ? “

Divisional Commander Jason Harwin stated that it is a matter of terminology and that we do have a clear strategy and an action plan. We (the agencies) are here to prevent people becoming victims in the first place, to support those people who have been exploited and to bring perpetrators to justice. It is essential for the agencies to be more outward-facing to the public.

Steve Ashley offered the view that the first objective is an over-arching one and could stand as the vision of this partnership of agencies. If it is helpful to Members of the Borough Council, the partner agencies could come up with a single vision.

AP ref 1.10 (Councillor Currie) – What is the progress on the development of a single line of accountability for the work of the team? Will a single manager be appointed?

Steve Ashley explained that the LSCB pulls together collectively all of the agencies which are responsible. No single agency has overall control. All agencies have to work effectively together under my (S Ashley) chairmanship of the Local Children Safeguarding Board. Agencies are satisfied that there is a strong governance structure and a good action plan.

Jane Parfremment referred to the single line of management control and that Professor Alexis Jay’s report does not say what the responsibilities of this management control should be. I have made a clear statement of purpose for what we do about CSE victim support and help for families. It is still in draft form and we will consult on its wording with all agencies. There will be management control to oversee the activity of all social care staff, the Police etc. The co-ordinator and team managers have a role

here. In Rotherham, there is a multitude of other activity, historical investigations, all holding the Council to account. In consultation with partner agencies, the Council needs strategic leadership to pull all of the elements together and to answer questions on the way everything is to be linked together. The appointed person must be someone with good credibility and will have to be a good leader across the partner agencies. Consultation has taken place with Malcolm Newsam (Children's Commissioner) and interviews have been held. The appointed person, Suzanne King, will begin work on Wednesday next week, 17 December 2014 (part-time) and will begin work on a full-time basis in the New Year. The Council requires that additional capacity.

AP ref 1.14 (Councillor C Vines) Who is the body responsible for the scrutiny of the LSCB?

Steve Ashley stated that there is no over-riding, single scrutiny body. All partner agencies have their own scrutiny processes. As LSCB Chair, I have oversight and I am accountable to the Chief Executive of the Borough Council. If there is a complaint about my role, the RMBC Chief Executive will deal with that.

Councillor C Vines further commented that he is unhappy that the LSCB as a whole does not seem to be subject to adequate scrutiny.

Steve Ashley replied that the Chair of the Borough Council's Improvement Board is to scrutinise the LSCB in the future.

Councillor David Simmonds referred Members to the Department for Education document entitled "Working Together". Local authority members should satisfy themselves that there are adequate scrutiny arrangements. Why not attend LSCB meetings as observers? There are a number of ways in which the scrutiny process can happen.

AP ref 2.03 (Councillor Sims) Has training and development activity made a difference and what has been the impact on practice and outcomes? Which agencies have accessed the multi-agency training? There is particular interest in the health partner agencies and the way in which they identify training needs.

Catherine Hall (NHS) referred to the extensive amount of staff training which has taken place during the last few months. Training is usually geared to the needs of professional bodies (eg: midwives). Safeguarding colleagues have assisted in training as well. All staff, receptionists, colleagues in GP surgeries are being trained (with specific GP training). NHS Rotherham is now evaluating the delivery of that training so that staff understand issues, especially how they may contact people (eg: senior managers; partner agencies) about CSE and also of the need to report historical cases which they may uncover. We are also looking at additional training and the effects on victims of CSE, to find out why young people

might go back into an abusive situation and suffer repeated abuse. This latter issue requires psychological help and advice.

Councillor Sims asked about the levels of take-up of training.

Catherine Hall (NHS) could not quote exact figures, but stated that it is the intention of the Clinical Commissioning Group to have 100% take-up of training by staff. Catherine herself will assess training providers and the role they play. The data on take-up of training by the GP practices will be available for Members.

Steve Ashley commented that it is important to assess how much difference the training actually makes. We have done the post-training audit of effectiveness of the provision. The LSCB requires training to happen and all agencies have their own specific packages. Also, the LSCB will assess the amount of training as part of its performance management regime. This aspect is very relevant in terms of Health Services, as they have a number of different levels of training. Significant financial investment is being made in training and Ofsted has already made positive comments about this aspect of the Rotherham agencies' response to the Professor Alexis Jay report.

Warren Carratt stated that the LSCB Board receives quarterly reports on training, which can be shared with elected members. One example is the e-learning package. Citizens (general public) also have access to e-learning and approximately 2,500 local residents have gained access to that training since April 2014.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board requested that this data about the take-up of training should be shared with Members.

Warren Carratt continued by explaining the need to increase appropriate referrals and investigations of the training being given. Most of the feedback received is that working practices will improve because of training. It will take time to assess the effect of this training and there will be monitoring of progress over the next six months. The CSE sub group of the LSCB will be involved in this monitoring process.

Jane Parfremment referred to the training assessment report of eight local authorities (of which Rotherham Council was one). The CSE training in Rotherham has been termed "very useful" and has been effective in reaching the less obvious people and places, such as hotel receptionists. One example is of a hotel guest being caught in the act of exploitation, resulting in other perpetrators leaving the premises because their criminal activities had successfully been disrupted.

AP ref 2.06 (Councillor Steele) - what involvement is there with local schools and how are the Education Welfare Service working with them

around children missing from education?

Steve Ashley referred to the training provided for designated lead officers within the Education Welfare Service. Training can be targeted, for example, specifically for the lead/senior staff of special schools and for the governors of special schools. Lead teachers in the “healthy schools” project will have training; there is also more e-learning and the take-up of training is monitored

Councillor Currie questioned why the education partners were not attending today’s meeting.

Jane Parfremment stated that she was representing the Education Service today.

Members asked about CSE awareness-raising sessions and Jane Parfremment stated that, wherever possible, such sessions will be provided and will involve actual experiences without causing discomfort for any participant.

AP ref 3.03 (Councillor Steele) – Can you provide more information on engagement with parents and how this is done?

Jane Parfremment referred to the amount of voluntary sector learning taking place and every effort is being made to try and involve parents as much as possible. Some 1,100 parents have completed the e-learning package developed for parents and carers. The Parenting Worker has a specific role to work with parents of children at risk, concentrating upon the way in which parents may help and also involve the Police to report concerns (eg: saving clothing for use of DNA in identifying perpetrators). It is important that parents are confident in helping the Police.

District Commander Jason Harwin stated that the Police has commissioned funding for specific work with GROW (Giving Real Opportunities to Women) and this work is continuing. Whenever the Police receive information from parents, it is almost always very useful and it is equally important that parents are able to receive the correct level of support throughout the traumatic period of an investigation.

AP ref 3.05 (Councillor Jane Hamilton) - Actions in this section are not specific yet it is rated green – can you provide more detail on this and why it is rated green?

Steve Ashley stated that actions will be listed as ‘green’ because it represents continuing work which has begun and progress is being made, even though the action is not yet complete. We are uncertain as to whether the RAG rating system is always helpful and appropriate.

Jane Parfremment confirmed that the ‘green’ rating often indicates that

more work is required for the action point. Sometimes perpetrators change tactics and the action must continue (eg: perpetrators move away from hotels and onto the grooming of young people in fast food outlets). Agencies have to use continuous intelligence to make sure that actions are live and are being progressed correctly.

AP ref 3.06 (Councillor Sims) – This action has slipped so how is it being dealt with? How is work to engage ethnic minority communities being taken forward? The action date has been moved from May 2015 to November 2015.

Steve Ashley reported that the LSCB has received criticism for its lack of community engagement. It is imperative that the LSCB does begin effective community engagement. The LSCB will make use of a task and finish group to identify that the LSCB itself is engaging properly with all aspects/sectors of the community and not just with self-appointed people. The difficulty of this task is properly acknowledged by the LSCB and, as a consequence of the criticism received, it will be a priority of the LSCB.

Jane Parfremment stated that the dates have slipped (May to November 2015) because, whilst the May 2015 target was being achieved, the action has been re-assessed as a fresh priority, with a consequent revision to the new, later target date. In terms of community engagement, we have made contact with the Eastwood (Rotherham) community and officers have attended the Roma forum meetings. But we felt that the action plan for community engagement was altogether insufficient and we therefore need more time to complete the additional actions relating to this action point.

District Commander Jason Harwin stated that agencies are endeavouring to ensure that we do the right thing and, because we are public services, it is our daily business to engage with communities. That is important, even though some communities themselves resist our attempts at engagement. The Police have re-launched the system of any initiatives/investigations being post-code based, to ensure the accurate collection of information relevant to specific areas/districts. The Police also uses the Crime Stoppers to try and obtain as much information as possible which can be fed into the investigation of cases.

AP ref 3.09 (Councillor Currie) – There is no update on this item, what is being done, who are the community leaders and how are they identified? District Commander Jason Harwin stated that, again it is our daily business. We must have a continuous and sustainable process of community engagement. Some of the newer communities have cultural challenges (eg: marriage at age 14 years) and these are issues which have to be addressed by the agencies. The Police sometimes recruit officers from the communities, in order to help our understanding of issues.

Jane Parfremment stated that agencies have to be creative and work with

communities. There was an example of staff being approached, at an event for the 'Standing Together' campaign, by Asian woman community leader. The issue was about Asian girls not having the confidence or trust to speak to anyone within the statutory agencies. Eventually, we found a way of giving this lady some arms-length support, using her community role and standing to develop the confidence of young Asian girls to report the issues to the agencies. It is known that often, the workers themselves are reluctant to engage. There needs to be a way of increasing confidence overall in community engagement.

AP ref 4.02 (Councillor Wyatt) – In terms of intelligence from NHS partners, the Jay report makes little reference to this but there should have been information from A&E, Sexual Health services, general admissions, GPs or community pharmacy. How can we ensure this information is shared moving forward? Where is the intelligence available from these NHS services? Is there a system failure? Does it relate to confidentiality? We have seen better services made available for victims of domestic violence, so is it possible to make the same improvement for the victims of child sexual exploitation?

Tracey McErlains-Burns stated that the level of training and awareness is still evolutionary. During the last week of August (the time at which the report by Professor Alexis Jay was published), 500 front-line health workers participated in awareness training about identifying the signs and triggers of CSE and how to share that intelligence appropriately with other agencies. There will be more training provided in the future. It is important that colleagues have the confidence to report things they see and hear and the agencies have to rely on that. In addition, Health Service staff will have to adhere to their own individual professional standards. There is inter-agency training, eg: Police Superintendent Paul McCurrie has spoken to leaders of the nursing service. There is much awareness-raising amongst staff. The NHS Trust will be continuing with this training provision.

Samantha Davis (RDASH) stated that RDASH will ask direct questions of its service users. Sometimes, individual cases may involve uncovering historical issues (of abuse) for some of the people involved.

Catherine Hall (NHS) stated that, as at November 2014, the GPs training and GPs staff training have involved some 600 people, concerning the issues of CSE and awareness raising. We are developing a smart-phone App which will assist in the provision of training.

AP ref 4.03 (Councillor Watson) – with regard to return interviews from Safe@Last, why don't 85% take these up and for those that do, how are they followed up? What happens with the information?

Jane Parfremment stated that Safe@Last is an independent organisation contracted to carry out return interviews for children who have gone

missing, as soon as they come back. In the past, perhaps not enough of these interviews have taken place, perhaps because the specification was not clear enough. The Council has reviewed the interviewing contract specification and some of the interviews, so that we can develop an understanding of the reasons why children go missing. There is also increased awareness of the range of issues which may cause significant harm to children and young people; eg: bullying and online bullying. Agencies must know how best to support vulnerable youngsters so that they are not tempted to go missing. Regional meetings of the South Yorkshire local authorities are taking place in order to consider these issues. A new contract for the return interviews, which has an improved specification, will begin in April 2015 and will operate on a South Yorkshire-wide basis. Possibly, the previous contract did not make things clear to Safe@Last exactly what was required from that organisation.

AP ref 4.07 (Councillor Currie) – Can you give members assurances that risk assessments are up to date, if so why has it gone down to amber? Where is the data analysis that supports this? Is the data being shared by the various partner agencies ?

Steve Ashley stated that there has been regular auditing of the risk assessments during the past year. The LSCB is unhappy with some of the quality of the risk assessments, found during these audits and the LSCB is less happy with what has happened. Every CSE case that comes in (to the agencies) will henceforth have continuous assessment. Considerable funding has been contributed by partner agencies so that a great deal more work may happen in respect of the risk assessment process. The LSCB is looking forward to next year's scrutiny of this issue, to be able to see and examine how much improvement will have been made on the risk assessments.

Jane Parfremment stated that Members must have confidence in me (Jane Parfremment) being honest (in giving this answer). There is no bespoke tool available which will accurately assess risk. For any individual CSE case, the risk level will and does change suddenly overnight. The existence of good, solid multi-agency practices around these vulnerable young people will give all of you confidence (in the systems). The use of the multi-agency scoring process has been revised and amended to allow professionals to alter scores, as the scores have sometimes been based on other, non-numeric assessments. This revision has prompted everyone to think about the various factors which are affecting children and young people. Of 103 CSE cases, 80 risk assessments are now up-to-date and the remaining 23 are continuing and will be updated within ten days' time. These figures are acceptable, but we need to have better basic practice in place, so that the risk assessment process is as strong as possible.

Steve Ashley reported that, one year ago, the use of the numerical risk assessments was not good and the practitioners had no faith in that method. Now, it has become a worthwhile tool to use. However, the LSCB

must check all of those 103 individual cases so that we are sure that the work being done is relevant and appropriate. The assessments must check issues such as : “ when will each milestone be reached?”, “is there counselling and support provided?”. This is currently a sub-standard area of work which the LSCB is actively improving. The appointment of Jane Parfremment has brought a fresh approach which is “blunt and to-the-point” – and this is an approach which is bringing improvements. There is much more still to be done. It is a very difficult area of work to have to deal with. As Chair of the LSCB, I expect to be held to account for this (area of work).

Councillor Read commented that the progress of the risk assessments is an important aspect of CSE to be re-visited by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

AP ref 4.08 (Councillor Read) – Reference to the numeric scoring tool – is this working and if not why?

Members noted that this question has already been answered, within the AP ref 4.07 issue above.

AP ref 5.06 (Councillor Read) – With regard to the out-of-authority checklist – is this new and is it working? Jay recommendation 3 refers to use of out of authority placements. Ofsted tell us that; "Young people places further away because of their vulnerability to CSE do not always have sufficiently well-developed safety plans, risk assessments or robust responses to further incidents of concern." This seems a slightly different point to those addressed in the action plan. What steps are the council taking to address this and how will we know if it has been successful?

Jane Parfremment reiterated that it is important to have confidence in the system. It may be the case that past practice has been to choose the out-of-authority placement much too quickly. It is sometimes a false assumption that children are safer when they are at a distance from their home area. The local support services should be good enough to assist them and the Police will know the local area and any troubles within it. We can track a child/young person's history of going missing and, for example, if that young person has a problem with misuse of substances. The agencies' skills capacity and usage of resources is being assessed. Agencies must have the confidence and support staff must have confidence to provide assistance to these vulnerable youngsters. One of the Council's residential units is undergoing a change of purpose so as to be able to provide support for young people who have complex needs.

There will continue to be a need for out-of-authority placements. The checklist is there to help us make sure we comply with the new national guidance (issued in July 2014) and agencies must also make better use of our commissioning processes. The Police are developing intelligence about the way in which CSE perpetrators are targeting the children's residential homes. The Council is also providing support services for the looked after children; eg: the head teacher of the Virtual School will

assess the availability of the best school place for a looked after child. A small number of children continue to have out-of-authority placements.

At this point in the meeting's proceedings, the Chair Councillor Steele asked that written responses be provided for any question which time did not allow to be asked at today's meeting – a deadline of Tuesday 16 December 2014 was agreed for receipt of all of those responses.

AP ref 6.02 (Councillor Sims) – What is the progress on the Data Analyst post, how is it working? What is progress on the IT system?

District Commander Jason Harwin stated that the South Yorkshire Police have a dedicated ICT analyst within their team. Some excellent work is happening. The information and data mapping provides us with better intelligence about CSE perpetrators and victims, which will assist future investigations. Funding for the ICT analyst has been provided by the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner for three years. There are also specialist analysts who are examining information available from beyond South Yorkshire, to help with the overall picture of the CSE issues.

AP ref 7.03 (Councillor Ahmed) – There is much conflicting information about the profile of offenders, specifically relating to ethnicity, please explain the real situation.

Detective Superintendent Matt Fenwick referred to the analyst's work which has helped the Police assess information on both CSE offenders and victims. Offender profiling has been completed in detail during October and November 2014. There are known offenders from these ethnic origins : White British, Asian, Pakistani, Eastern European and there are three offenders whose exact ethnic origin is still unknown. Most of the offenders are male, although two are female.

The following section refers to questions asked specifically about the Improvement and Delivery Action Plan

Q1. (Councillor C Vines) What assurances do we have that information is not being covered up, as it would appear to the layman that nothing much has happened since the report was published?

Steve Ashley that Rotherham Council finds itself under a huge spotlight and no other local authority has had this extent of external scrutiny. There have been several inspections of the Council and its partners imposed at short notice (eg: Ofsted; Independent Police Commission) as well as internal reviews. People are working tirelessly to put things right. It is our task to move forward under the scrutiny of the Children's Services

Improvement Board. Nothing is being covered up.

Councillor David Simmonds agreed that Rotherham has had the most ever scrutiny of a local authority. But, he continued, there is no substitute for a Council's own internal scrutiny, as long as the necessary systems and processes are properly in place. There was a wealth of opportunities in Rotherham to report effectively, but it appears that the dots were not joined up. Councillors have to ask questions and look at things and make sure that you are confident yourselves that nothing is being hidden.

Assistant Chief Constable Ingrid Lee referred to meetings with Professor Alexis Jay and other people who have contributed to her CSE report. There have been fifteen referrals to the Independent Police Commission, peer reviews, South Yorkshire Police staff have undertaken reviews at other Police forces and the investigation of historical cases is continuing. A seminar for all of the South Yorkshire Police districts, about CSE, has taken place and the Police will try and ensure good practice and consistency across the whole County. The Police also arranged a seminar for Rotherham Borough Councillors. There has been a review of public protection provision (involving 305 staff). The joint team approach is now in place at the Council's Riverside House. There has been the launch of the "Spot the Signs" campaign, encouraging victims to come forward. Police 'Operation Make Safe' has begun. An expert in CSE investigations, a Detective Inspector from the Thames Valley Police, has been seconded to provide assistance to the South Yorkshire Police. Relevant legislative provisions are being used in Police investigations : including the Risk of Sexual Harm Order; anti-trafficking legislation. Currently, there are 45 ongoing CSE investigations in Rotherham.

Jane Parfremment stated that an extensive amount of work is being done and that there is a huge desire to change things and improve. If there is a perception that nothing is being done, then we need to communicate our progress much better to the outside world. There is much hard work taking place across all agencies.

Q4. (Councillor Read) The Alexis Jay Report will have re-opened painful memories for many people who were victims of CSE, many of whom we as an institution will be aware of. What proactive steps have the council and its partners taken to offer support to these people?

Steve Ashley stated that the LSCB does not itself commission support. At a recent meeting of the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board, the Council's Director of Public Health has been asked to list the amount of support which is already available for victims and to state the way in which the Council's allocation of £120,000 for victims will be used. A telephone help-line is being established as well. Meetings have been held with Councillors Doyle and Beaumont and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the new Director of Public Health is to be appointed. Work has begun on this and a Joint Group will be set up, with a jointly agreed plan established to monitor what is being done. One of area of

difficulty is being able to truly establish the size of the problem, the number of people/victims affected and the resources required.

Jane Parfremment stated that the document “the needs analysis of the safeguarding required” (and its terms of reference) is available for circulation. This document will help us to produce a base of evidence which in turn is used to attract resources. The CSE sub group (of the LSCB) has resources allocated until 31 March 2015 and the LSCB will agree to commit further resources to 30 June 2015, which will ensure that the work on the support for victims will make progress.

Councillor Read asked about the identification of the victims of the historical CSE cases.

Samantha Davis (RDASH) stated that RDASH will check with its clients as to whether there are any historic abuse issue to be dealt with.

Steve Ashley pointed out that agencies do realise that some people may not wish to be approached about support, nor would they wish to receive any help. Often, it just requires the people/victims themselves to come forward and seek support. Again, there is much work for us to be doing with regard to victim support.

The Chair, Councillor Steele brought the morning’s proceedings to a close by thanking everyone for their contributions. He reiterated the requirement for written responses to the questions which had not been asked at the meeting.

75. SESSION THREE - IMPLICATIONS FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCIES IN ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.

Councillors Ahmed and Wootton did not attend the afternoon session.

Councillors Finnie and Reynolds did attend the afternoon session.

The objectives for this session were: -

- To secure effective partnerships for the future;
- To determine new processes, how embedded and how successful they are;
- Focus on the action plan for the future – for Rotherham.

The Criminal Justice Agency representatives in attendance were: -

- Jason Harwin, Chief Superintendent, South Yorkshire Police;
- Matt Fenwick, Detective Superintendent, South Yorkshire Police;
- Ingrid Lee, Assistant Chief Constable, South Yorkshire Police;
- Barbara Petchey, Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor;
- Michelle Buttery, Chief Executive and Solicitor, Office of the Police

and Crime Commissioner;

- Alan Billings, South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner.

Questions were asked by members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to determine the preparedness of the criminal justice agencies to respond to CSE in Rotherham.

Councillor Wyatt asked: What do you see as the principle barriers in delivering services to tackle CSE?

The Assistant Chief Constable explained that the issues were much bigger than solely focussing on CSE, it was more relevant to speak about how the whole picture of Child Abuse would be tackled. A much greater focus on prevention would be the key to protecting children from harm. Prevention could not be measured. South Yorkshire Police would ensure it continued to do everything possible to encourage people to come forward and be confident to come forward to report these crimes.

It was also important to attract staff into key posts who genuinely cared and were passionate about what they do. This included staff skilled in working with the internet and other technology that made abuse 'hidden'.

South Yorkshire Police could not focus on any specific community or group as these crimes were not just committed by one group. Focussing on only one would prevent the Police from seeing things taking place in other areas.

The budgets of the Police and Voluntary Sectors were shrinking. This could impact on victim and perpetrator programmes.

Better use and development of shared IT systems would remove a lot of barriers.

The Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor referred to public confidence in the criminal justice system as being key. Successful prosecutions were cyclic in that they meant it was more likely that victims or members of the public would be confident to come forward. There were high levels of passion and commitment in the Services. The CPS Lawyers were extremely dedicated, hardworking and committed. Positive news stories should be shared to get the message out there to celebrate successes.

Councillor Steele: What work takes place between the key agencies to maximise the potential for successful prosecutions?

The Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor saw this as critical for successful outcomes. However, this work was not in the public domain. Agencies spoke together all of the time to constantly share information. This enabled the CPS to know the amount of casework coming forward and give them the ability to ask for further resources if necessary. Work

relating to child abuse was always prioritised. Casework could be lengthy: a lawyer had worked for two-years' full-time on a recent case before it came to court. The 'Gold' meetings that took place were multi-agency.

The Court Service ensured that victims and witnesses were able to give their best evidence through support and the use of special measures where possible, such as giving evidence to Court via a live DVD link so they did not have to physically attend the Court.

The Detective Superintendent outlined how the interactions between the agencies worked very strongly. In the past they had been very isolated. The Multi-Agency Support Hub at Riverside House represented completely co-located teams, including the voluntary and charity sector. Weekly multi-agency meeting chaired by a Deputy Superintendent were held. Cases relating to CSE and sexual crimes were difficult to prosecute for a number of reasons. Victims did not always see themselves as victims. In some cases, disruption activities relating to corollary activities including drug and motoring offences would be pursued.

Councillor Currie asked: How is the victim supported throughout the process, in particular, through the commissioning of support packages?

The Detective Superintendent described the role of the Adult and Childrens' SARC, which were units and organisations that managed victim support and arranged pathways for guidance, counselling, independent advocacy and victim support. This happened regardless of whether a case went to court, or not.

The Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor spoke about the role of intermediaries to provide children with the help they needed to present the best evidence, and ensure that they could understand and answer questions. The care of witnesses was deeply embedded into Services using the 'No Witness, No Justice' campaign.

The Police and Crime Commissioner explained his role as taking a step back to review provision. He shared concern for victims and wanted to look at how it felt for the victim in reality. The PCC was consulting on victims' needs, where there were gaps in provision and where things were not working properly. An amount of £235k was available for organisations providing a range of things. The Police and Crime Commissioner was looking, as part of his role, at whether the right organisations were being supported to do the right sort of things.

Councillor J. Hamilton asked: What work takes place with front line officers to secure the necessary evidence?

The Chief Superintendent spoke about the protocols that existed within

South Yorkshire Police from the first contact by a victim, to identify and ensure the case was managed properly. Training had been provided on getting the best evidence through working with witnesses and forensic examinations. Daily briefings took place within the Force on hotspots, victims and disruption plans.

He stated that South Yorkshire Police was serious about learning; it dealt with CSE on a daily basis and briefings were provided on what was working. The Force took part in Peer Reviews on sharing practice. Scrutiny took place on a daily basis – and in his view, the majority of the time South Yorkshire Police got it right. It was important to recognise successes and ensure the Force was challenged to learn better. A pilot training programme for Sergeants was undertaken over a three-day period and tested their decision making on case studies on CSE. This had been recognised nationally as good practice and had been cascaded across the country.

Councillor Sims asked: How is all of this reflected in the Action Plan?

The Chief Superintendent explained that the Action Plan had been written to ensure that South Yorkshire Police were not just reacting but ‘so what’, including are we identifying those responsible and pursuing through the courts?.

There were a number of Action Plans and these had been collated into one single Action Plan that the Force referred to.

Councillor Read asked a supplementary question on the action plan and information provided by Sargent Taff that said no current cases that fitted the media-portrayed stereotype (e.g. Asian Males 25+) (Section 7).

The Chief Superintendent explained that there were current offenders matching the profile of Asian Males aged 25+ and charges had been brought.

The Detective Superintendent explained the role of the VASOR Unit that constituted the local Violent and Sex Offender Register. The current split was 50/50 between violent and sex offenders and 260 VASOR were resident in Rotherham. They were managed in the community and had stringent conditions and monitoring applied to them. None of the offenders under VASOR met the profile outlined above.

The following questions were asked directly to the Police and Crime Commissioner:

Councillor Read asked: How do you hold the Chief Constable to account to be sure he delivers on the commitments in the action

plan?

The Police and Crime Commissioner outlined his meetings with groups across all of South Yorkshire. A Conference on ending Violence Against Women and Girls had taken place in the Sheffield Town Hall and had been over-subscribed. At the conference, victims of child abuse and domestic abuse were present to give their stories. Absorbing this sort of information from victims of crime enabled the Police and Crime Commissioner to have honest and frank discussions with the Chief Constable, including the availability of resources.

His role was to check that the things that were said to be happening were translated into action and happening on the ground. It also included having an honest and frank discussion about levels of resourcing available and performance.

The Chief Executive and Solicitor for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed her support for the Action Plans; referring to the Briefing Note submitted to the meeting. Success was defined by victims' feelings about the service they were receiving. The Police and Crime Commissioner had an overview of a huge area; including the Criminal Justice Board and CSE forum. The role of the Police and Crime Commissioner was unprecedented and enabled him to seek out the enablers and components of what success looked like in this area.

Councillor J. Hamilton asked: What resources have been targeted at tackling CSE and what are your plans for the future as, surely, a long-term plan needs to be in place?

The Police and Crime Commissioner spoke about a significant refresh or review of Police and Crime Plan. It needed to be more specific about CSE and reflect the immediate priority of cases and also identify additional resources to support this work.

The Detective Superintendent outlined the staffing that had been in place since 2010 when there had been 4 Officers working on CSE. This had grown to 10 in 2012 and 20 in 2013, including three Sergeants, sixteen DCs and allied professions. By April 2014, 65 professionals were solely dedicated to CSE cases. Authorisation had recently been granted to extend to a further 65 posts to protect vulnerable people.

Councillor Watson asked: How will victim support be commissioned to deliver on this agenda to ensure that agencies work with victims throughout the prosecution and post-trial processes?

The Police and Crime Commissioner described how he needed to work to ensure that the right number and efficient organisations were in place. A piece of work to commence in the New Year would involve calling all providers together to get a full picture of what is provided and whether

there were any gaps in provision. The Police and Crime Commissioner outlined his focus and priority was the victims who had been lost sight of.

The Chief Executive and Solicitor for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner referred to the performance framework in place for recipients of grant funding. Whilst bidders for grant funding needed to satisfy criteria to be successful, there was less emphasis on evaluation at the end of their funding period to evaluate the outcomes from the funding. This would be incorporated in the future.

Councillors C. Vines and Parker asked a question about who held the Police and Crime Commissioner to account.

The Police and Crime Commissioner referred to the Police and Crime Panel and, ultimately, the electorate.

Councillor C. Vines asked a supplementary question about governance and how the Police and Crime Commissioner did not have to implement the recommendations of the Police and Crime Panel, which meant that his confidence in the role was very low.

Councillor Steele referred to the legislation that governed this area. What happened in South Yorkshire was consistent with all legislation.

Councillor Parker asked a supplementary question about how good scrutiny of the role of Police and Crime Commissioner was. He described how, in his view, the meeting had been subject to vetted questions and how Members had been gagged from asking questions. He was not confident to tell his constituents and members of the public that he had any confidence in the criminal justice agencies here represented. He shared concerns about a case of a young victim being arrested whilst the perpetrator was still at large. Why had this been allowed to happen and what were the police doing about it?

Councillor Steele, Chairperson of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, referred to the process in which questions had been gathered for the meeting, and how they had been assigned to all members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to ask. All members had been emailed on two separate occasions asking for questions in advance. Two planning sessions had been held for all OSMB Members to prepare questions and ensure that the issues being considered were effectively scrutinised. There had been no vetting or gagging – the process had been notified to all Members well in advance of the meeting. Elected Members not wishing to respond or engage in the process did so at their discretion.

Councillor Steele stated that in his opinion, more information had been gained by preparing questions in advance than would otherwise be the case.

The Police and Crime Commissioner urged Councillors C. Vines and Parker to contact him directly with any questions they wanted to ask and he would ensure that they received a response.

Councillor Parker responded that this method would not allow the information to be available to members of the public.

The following questions were asked directly to Barbara Petchey, Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor:

Councillor Read asked: Can criminal proceedings be brought without the consent of the victim? How likely is it that we will see more "victimless" prosecutions in the future? Councillor Read referred to the West Yorkshire model.

The Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor referred to the difficulty of getting cases through the Court system. These included the different legislation pre- and post-2004. The 2003 Act had brought up to date how sexual offences and offenders were dealt with. Offences which occurred prior to May 2004 had to be brought under the old legislation (from 1956). This posed real problems for historic charges of CSE and child abuse.

Working with victims also brought challenges as they were often groomed and under the influence of highly manipulative and devious men. This meant that persuading the victims to come on board and stay on board with a prosecution was often fraught. Victims' credibility would often be poor with juries, perhaps due to previous convictions, drugs, chaotic lifestyles and difficult behaviour. This can often be observed by others to be "deviant and bad".

She gave example of witnesses giving inconsistent or contradictory evidence. Despite this, the Crown Prosecution Service had been able to prosecute in these cases. Experts were used to advise the prosecution barristers on how to present to show how the apparently irrational behaviours of a young person were normal in the circumstances.

She explained that because of the complexity of cases, prosecution could often take years. There needed to be a shift from the credibility of the victim to the nature of the offending; it was not the victim in the dock.

However, in answer to the question, yes there had been victimless-prosecutions previously.

The Detective Superintendent confirmed that there had been two recent victimless-prosecutions heard by the Sheffield Crown Court – one was successful and one collapsed due to the level of evidence presented. The successful case had been an intended prosecution case without a victim. At the last minute the victim came forward and this aligned with forensic evidence and CCTV. Although they were possible, they were very

difficult to achieve.

Councillor Middleton asked: Could prosecutions be secured based on the DNA of children that had been born as a result of CSE? The Jay Report had stated that 104 children had been born as a result of CSE.

The Deputy Crown Prosecutor, the Detective Superintendent and the Assistant Chief Constable confirmed that this would be possible but consent would need to be given by victims to collect their DNA for the purpose of prosecution. The Multi-Agency Support Hub would enable the sharing of information between the Police and Health, which should significantly improve the ability for swifter and better access to information with services like sexual health and midwifery.

Councillor Steele asked: Is there a tension between the need for professional separation of the Police and the CPS and the need for close working to secure the right evidence?

The Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor confirmed that there was healthy tension between the distinct and different roles. The Police owned investigations. There was a role for the Crown Prosecution Service in advising this process. Both Services shared a common objective to see perpetrators brought to justice and it was in neither Partners' interests to put weak cases before the Courts.

Councillor Wyatt asked: What early investigative advice can be provided to the Police?

The Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor described how the Service was looking to embed a lawyer into one of the Public Protection Units in the New Year. This would be an exciting new development and would test the concept out. This professional would play a critical role in guiding and steering investigations from an early stage.

Councillor Parker asked: How many times in the last year had the CPS declined to bring prosecutions when presented by the police with cases of suspected CSE? Also, how were the Criminal Justice Agencies responding to alleged marriages within the Roma community of teenaged children between 12-15 years old?

The Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor did not have data available regarding how often the CPS had declined to bring prosecutions relating to CSE.

She committed to gathering this evidence and reporting back.

The Chief Superintendent confirmed that all marriages must comply with the UK's laws.

The following questions were asked directly to the representatives of the South Yorkshire Police:

Councillor Currie asked: What is different now in terms of culture, competences and development of staff?

The Detective Superintendent described the impact of reports of the National Crime Agency and the Jay Report in shifting cultures. If perpetrators could be identified the Criminal Justice Agencies would work together to prosecute them. The effect of the Jay Report and its publicity had meant that training had become focused for all levels from Detective Inspector to CSE frontline staff and trained specialist officers. CSE was the Force's number one priority. An internal and external media marketing campaign had begun on spotting the signs of CSE on a consistent basis. Focus groups had been started so that all Officers were fully aware of CSE. The Force was certainly on the right track culturally to better respond to CSE.

Councillor Sims asked: How do you know you have changed attitudes on the front line and how has this translated into improved outcomes on the streets?

The Chief Superintendent explained that feedback from victims was really important. It would also mean that better intelligence was fed into the system. Were prosecutions successful? No agencies wanted anyone to be a victim. All agencies knew the signs so intervention could happen earlier. All relevant partners and third sectors were involved.

Councillor Sims asked a supplementary question: had the allegation that victims involved in CSE had made a lifestyle choice been ended?

The Chief Superintendent explained that learning had taken place over the previous two years and all agencies knew that the victims had not chosen to be victims in CSE.

Councillor C. Vines asked: Is the ultimate measure of your success the number of arrests and prosecutions? How are you performing in this area?

The Assistant Chief Constable did not believe that arrests and prosecutions were not necessarily an accurate measure of success. Victims must be at the heart of everything the Force did. Victims may not

seek to give information to enable a prosecution. Prevention was a much better measure. Prevention work with hotels had taken place. This measure of success would not be captured on any statistics. Sometimes, it was not possible to prosecute sexual offences but there was often a whole raft of other offences and criminal activity that could be pursued. Whatever the outcome was, the Criminal Justice Agencies had to ensure that victims were confident to come forward.

To the beginning of November, 2014, Rotherham had seen 26 prosecutions involving 24 offenders.

Councillor C. Vines asked a supplementary question: Why was this not being projected to the public? Elected Members speaking to members of the public were picking up the message that the public thought that nothing was happening. It was not in the local press.

The Assistant Chief Constable agreed that these cases did not necessarily make the headlines. The Force would continue to use social media but was unable to publicise ongoing investigations.

The Chief Superintendent confirmed that the issue of media releases were discussed at the Chief Executive Group for Rotherham. More releases were coming forward.

Councillor Watson asked: How do you strike the balance between disruption activity and gathering evidence in cases of suspected CSE?

The Chief Superintendent described how risk assessments were used, along with prevention activities and securing evidence for a conviction were important. Actions were taken against offenders for other offences.

The Assistant Chief Constable explained that the Force would look at all other safeguarding issues as well, recognising the different and specific roles for frontline and specialist staff.

Councillor Wyatt asked: How many abduction notices have been issued in the last 12 months in Rotherham, and to how many individuals / in relation to how many children? How does this compare to Doncaster and Barnsley?

The Assistant Chief Constable did not have the information to hand but would be able to provide outside of the meeting.

The Chief Superintendent confirmed that Abduction Notices were used successfully.

Councillor Read asked: The councillors' briefing note makes

reference to "CSE suspect risk assessment and Disruption Plans", highlighting 32 people of "high risk", with an initial focus on the ten highest risk individuals. What can you tell us about how these risks have been assessed, what they are and what action you are able to take?

The Chief Superintendent described the role of Offender Management that existed between the wider partnership and the powers that existed. This included pursuing other criminality not on the Police's thresholds, including tenancy issues. Police briefings included tracking incidents in a certain locality.

Supplementary questions were asked to the Criminal Justice Agencies represented:

Councillor Parker asked: Was it the case that the disruption process with hotels would just transfer the issue to other areas?

The Assistant Chief Constable confirmed that the Force was continually refining what they did to be on top of any changes. The key was in educating everyone in the Borough on what to look out for and to be confident in reporting issues.

Councillor Currie asked: Would the Action Plan continue to be positive and all partners engaged?

The Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor, the Assistant Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commission spoke about their respective roles in the Action Plan. The CPS attended forums where their role could provide added value but could not attend meetings where the agenda did not cover criminal justice issues. The Assistant Chief Constable referred to the role of protecting vulnerable people to prevent actions and support victims. The Police and Crime Commissioner spoke about his role in preventing silo working and ensuring that tackling CSE was a top priority.

Councillor Sims asked: Was there the ability to support juries listening to CSE cases?

The Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor stated that juries could not be coached in any issues as this could undermine their role in ensuring a fair trial. However, public education about the issues involved in CSE, expert witnesses to explain the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder and CSE issues would secure prosecutions. Judges also had a role in ensuring that victims were not intimidated by the defence team.

Councillor J. Hamilton asked: What role could evidence from social media play in securing convictions?

The Assistant Chief Constable explained that some social media was open to access and other areas closed. There was legislation and powers to access closed social media but this was not a straightforward process. There was a dedicated internet team in South Yorkshire. Social media was used in evidence all the time. If there was no permission to use the evidence it could be hard.

Councillor C. Vines asked: Were shrinking budgets having an impact on the affordability of the calibre of staff that you can recruit?

The Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor confirmed that the CPS was not currently recruiting. It was clear that there was no shortage of talent out there who would love to join the Service.

Councillor Steele thanked the representatives of the Criminal Justice Agencies for attending the meeting and for their responses to the questions that had been put.

76. SUMMING-UP OF KEY ISSUES FROM DAY ONE

The Scrutiny Manager summarised the key points from Day One of the Scrutiny of Rotherham's plans to tackle CSE.

Key issues that had been identified in the Scrutiny sessions with the individual agencies were: -

- Are all matters reflected in action plans?;
- Was Scrutiny effective enough to hold Agencies to account?;
- Was there scrutiny on whether practice on the ground was being improved?;
- Personal, Social and Health Education – role and importance in Schools;
- Greater public understanding;
- Further posts being recruited to and single management structures;
- Risk assessments – Social Care and the Police;
- Support to victims;
- Changing trends and behaviours – staying ahead of changing trends of perpetrators and offenders;
- Effectiveness of scrutiny arrangements;

- Communications;
- Things not captured in Action Plans – commissioning and commissioning activities;
- Community engagement;
- The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board's role in understanding data. This would be taken forward as a smaller sub-committee to compliment the work of the Corporate Improvement Board.

Councillor Steele thanked Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and other Elected Members represented for their attendance and contributions to the questioning and discussion process.

77. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on Thursday 18th December, 2014, commencing at 9.30 a.m., to facilitate the continuing scrutiny of Rotherham's plans to tackle child sexual exploitation.