

## 1 THE PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) has undertaken a review of Rotherham's plans to tackle child sexual exploitation (CSE).

Professor Jay's Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997 – 2013) states that for far too long the Council, alongside other agencies, failed to protect an estimated 1400 children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

The scale of the challenge ahead to rectify these failings is considerable. In response to Jay and the recent OFSTED inspection, Rotherham Council has initiated a comprehensive programme to transform its governance and culture; organisational capacity and service delivery as well improve immediate support to victims. This is in addition to the ongoing work to address CSE outlined in its detailed action plan incorporating the Jay's recommendations, and the other improvements identified in previous reviews and inspections.

The Jay Report reinforces the need for accountability, transparency and openness. Alongside the external challenge of the Improvement Boards, Overview and Scrutiny Members share a responsibility to hold decision makers and service providers to account. Therefore, in order to understand current practice and the future planning and delivery of services across agencies and sectors; OSMB agreed that a more in-depth scrutiny of Rotherham's plans to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation was required.

The purpose of the review therefore is to scrutinise the plans that are in place to make sure that historic failings are not repeated and Rotherham children and young people are kept safe. As Scrutiny Members, we want to be reassured that the lessons learnt are translated into sustained improvements across the board. To this end, the recommendations from this review will be fed into the Corporate and Children and Young People's Improvement Boards.

In summary, the aim of the scrutiny review was:

- To challenge the plans to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation and ensure that the direction of travel and pace of change is appropriate and timely
- To gain external perspectives on Rotherham's situation and to learn from best practice elsewhere
- To understand the long term plans for support to victims and their families and to ensure they are fit for purpose
- To understand the specific role that elected members can play in tackling CSE effectively

The scrutiny session took place over two full days on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

The first day examined the experiences from and implications for the local government sector in addressing the challenges of child sexual exploitation; examining current performance and action plans, how agencies in Rotherham work together to tackle CSE; and how criminal justice agencies in Rotherham address

CSE.

The second day focussed on how agencies can provide timely and appropriate support to survivors and their families; and lastly a panel of academic witnesses, commenting on the wider implications for social care and social work practice.

The recommendations from the review are detailed in Section 2 of the report. Section 3 outlines the planning of sessions; lists the background information circulated to Members and witnesses. Specific issues emerging from the two day sessions are in Section 4 and Section 5 of the report respectively.

Detailed minutes were taken from each of the sessions. These are appended to the report as Appendix A and Appendix B.

We would like to thank each of the witnesses for contributing openly and generously giving their time.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Prosecutions**

- a) To restore victim and public confidence it is vital that justice is seen to be done. We urge the Police and Crime Commissioner to make available all necessary resources both for "historic" and "current" investigations;
- b) Recognising that prosecution can be a lengthy and often traumatic process for the victim; asks that the PCC and CPS examines what more can be done to better prepare victims for court proceedings;
- c) As a priority, asks the Council to ensure that all necessary support is given to survivors (for example peer or "buddy" support) in order to help them to assist the police;
- d) Following the recent example of Birmingham Council obtaining injunctions against men to protect vulnerable children at risk of sexual exploitation, that the Council explores if similar measures can be taken in Rotherham

### **2. Improvement and Delivery Action Plan**

- a) Urges the LSCB to consider, as part of their review what further actions need to be taken to ensure minority communities are effectively engaged with (with particular relevance to the Roma community);
- b) Asks that an evaluation of the LSCB work with taxis / hotels / takeaways is undertaken to ensure that it is as effective as possible;
- c) Urges all Rotherham Schools to sign the Rotherham Standing Together pledge and review their own policies in order to be aware of the issue, particularly in respect of the PHSE curriculum;
- d) Asks that the LSCB evaluates the effectiveness of its work with schools to ensure that it is robust and fit for purpose;
- e) That the LSCB review the section of action plan on out of authority placements in light of the comments of the Director of Children's Services that in some cases care can be better provided locally. The Director is asked to report back to members if additional resources are required in order to ensure that social workers can dedicate enough time to individual victims / at risk young people.

- f) Welcome LSCB appointment of an additional staff member to undertake audit of cases and audit of risk assessments
- g) Support the Director of Children's Services' proposal for a "statement of purpose" for the CSE unit and clearer line management structures to ensure that this service effectively focuses on the young people who need it most.
- h) Ensure that there is adequate "early help" available - for example through the Integrated Youth Support Services - for young people who do not meet statutory thresholds

### **3. Post-abuse support:**

- a) Welcome the steps taken by the Council to date to support victims in the immediate term. Urge that plans to deliver longer term support are delivered as soon as is practically feasible.
- b) It is vital that victims' voices are used to help shape future support, recognising that this support may be more wide ranging than 'simply' therapeutic support. We endorse the Public Health's Consultants suggestion that focus groups of survivors are directly involved in designing what support is required. We recommend that this approach is reflected in the commissioning of services.
- c) Reflecting the complexity of services required to support survivors in the longer term; urge that the range of post-abuse support is considered in addition to therapeutic support, including peer-to-peer and buddying.
- d) Endorses the Leader's immediate identification of funds for post-abuse support. However, asks that further reports be brought back to Members at the earliest stage should these be not be sufficient to meet identified need.

### **4. Governance:**

- a) Welcome LSCB commitment to open meetings to public, and to produce a publicly accessible version of the action plan;
- b) Urge that the Cabinet Member for Children has a standing item on the action plan on her delegated powers on a monthly basis;
- c) OSMB forms a sub-committee to scrutinise aspects of the multi-agency response (working with the Improvement Boards to determine respective areas of responsibility and avoid duplication);
- d) That OSMB recommends to the Member Training and Development Panel that drawing on best practice from other authorities and Local Government Association, that the corporate parenting and safeguarding elements of the Member Development Programme are revisited to ensure that they are sufficiently robust and fit for purpose.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Preparation**

As part of the preparation for the scrutiny review, OSMB agreed that two planning sessions were organised for OSMB Members. This focussed areas of questioning and objectives for each of the sessions.

External facilitators were used for these sessions to provide independent advice and challenge. We would like to thank Ed Hammond, Head of Programmes, Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and Tim Young, (Associate at CfPS; LGIU; and Frontline Consulting) for their assistance and guidance.

To ensure that priority areas were addressed sufficiently, OSMB asked for questions to be submitted in advance and these were circulated to each of the witnesses to ensure that questions could be answered at the relevant session.

All Council Members were written to with the review schedule and asked if they wished to submit questions to any of the sessions. A dedicated 'slot' was allocated at the opening session of each day for these to be asked.

#### **3.2 Supporting papers**

An information pack was circulated to Members in advance of the meeting. This included:

- Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan 2014/15 2nd Quarter report, RMBC
- Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board: Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2013-16, RMBC
- Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997 – 2013) – Alexis Jay OBE
- National Child Protection Inspections: South Yorkshire Police 12 – 22 May 2014, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
- Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers – Rotherham (November 2014) OFSTED
- Thematic inspection to evaluate the effectiveness of local authorities' current response to child sexual exploitation: The sexual exploitation of children: it couldn't happen here, could it? (November 2014) OFSTED f
- House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee - Child sexual exploitation in Rotherham: some issues for local government
- House of Commons Home Affairs Committee - Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming: follow-up
- Agenda and minutes from the Improving Lives Select Commission meeting of 22 January 2014 (this meeting examined the emergent Improvement and Delivery Plan, and asked key partners to account for their performance).

#### **3.3 Written submissions**

Written submissions were also requested from a number of invited witnesses who were unable to attend. At the time of writing, not all of these have been received however, given that OSMB have made an ongoing commitment to review this work, any salient information can be taken into consideration in due course.

### **3.4 Witnesses**

#### **Session 1: Experiences from and implications for the Local Government Sector in addressing the challenges of child sexual exploitation.**

##### **In attendance:**

- Cllr David Simmonds (Chair of LGA Children's Board; Member of RMBC Improvement Board)
- Cllr Ralph Berry (Lead Member for Children's Services, Bradford MBC)

#### **Session 2: Scrutiny of current services and action plans to address Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham.**

##### **In attendance**

- 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

#### **Session 3: Implications for Criminal Justice Agencies in addressing the challenges of child sexual exploitation**

##### **In attendance:**

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

#### **Session 4: Support to victims and their families**

##### **In attendance:**

- Zlakha Ahmed, Apna Haq

- Hayley Fisher, Victim Support
- Karen Goddard, Barnados
- Steve Oversby, Barnados
- Bina Parmar, Safeguarding Lead, National Working Group
- Sue Greig, Public Health Consultant, RMBC
- Chrissy Wright, Strategic Commissioner, RMBC

### **Session 5 – What Next?**

#### **In attendance:**

- Dr. Anne Hollows, Principal Lecturer in Social Work from Sheffield Hallam University
- Mr. Joe Smeeton, Principal Lecturer in Social Work from Nottingham Trent University

## **4 FRIDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER – DAY ONE**

### **4.1 Session 1: Experiences from and implications for the Local Government Sector in addressing the challenges of child sexual exploitation.**

Objectives:

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

Issues arising from this session reiterated the moral and legal responsibilities of Members as corporate parents to ensure the children in the Borough are safeguarded and those who have a role in safeguarding children; whether police, schools, GPs, social care; are doing this effectively.

It was suggested that Members had to understand which elements of CSE are happening in Rotherham and what is being done about it (and by whom). It is the role of scrutiny members to ask the challenging questions of the executive and partners. However in doing so, members must have access to timely and appropriate information and not just rely on the reassurances of officers as had happened in the past. As the 'eyes and ears' of communities Members are uniquely placed to triangulate data from a range of sources, including service users, to see whether these concur or are at variance with the information provided.

It was suggested that in the myriad of accountability structures (described as 'spaghetti') that it is easy to assume that someone else is taking the responsibility for oversight and challenge. Both witnesses stated that scrutiny councillors should be asking questions of the Safeguarding Board; Lead Member and key agencies to 'reality' check what is happening in practice.

Other issues raised included the role of member development to provide elected members with a thorough knowledge of children's safeguarding issues. By understanding the complexities; Cllr Berry argued that Members are better placed to provide effective support and challenge. It was also suggested that as part of this members could learn from practice in other authorities.

### **4.2 Session 2: Scrutiny of current services and action plans to address Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham.**

Objectives:

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

This session scrutinised the latest CSE action plans. All key partners who contributed to the CSE sub-group were present at the meeting. The minutes refer to the detailed questioning of the action plan.

As the LSCB Chair, Steve Ashley was questioned at length about the ownership of

the improvement and delivery plan; the clarity of outcomes and timescales. Assurances were given about how agencies are held to account for their targets and performance. As a commitment to transparency and accountability, plans to hold future meetings of the LCSB in public were welcomed.

OSMB concurred with the Steve that a review of the action plan should be undertaken. Members raised the following issues:

- The ongoing challenge of community engagement, particularly with new migrant communities;
- Support for the Director of Safeguarding proposals that a "statement of purpose" for the CSE unit and clearer line management be developed to ensure that this service effectively focuses on the young people who need it most
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of awareness raising and training interventions; specifically with health professionals; taxis and hotels
- The effectiveness of risk assessments; and specifically for looked after children based out-of-authority (in light of OFSTED comments that "Young people placed 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..." )

Other key issues raised in these discussions include:

- The initial steps to support victims was welcomed, however, it was recognised that further work was required to develop a comprehensive package of support, which is able to respond to individual need – including the need for advocates and peer-support. (This would be explored further on Day Two.)
- Ensuring the that the action is publically accessible;
- Issues of governance, particularly strengthening oversight of the Lead Member for Children’s Services to ‘own’ the action plan in terms of relevant Council services;
- The importance of providing public reassurances that prosecutions were being actively pursued in ‘historic cases’;
- Challenges of communicating successes in order to counter public perception that “little was happening”;
- How is support provided to young people who do not meet ‘threshold’ for services and ensuring that there is adequate support available through the Youth Services;
- Early intervention and the ongoing engagement of schools

#### **4.3 Session 3: Implications for Criminal Justice Agencies in addressing the challenges of child sexual exploitation**

Objectives:

- 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 session explored the extent to which the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Police and Crown Prosecution Services were working effectively together.

The PCC outlined that steps being taken by his office to tackle CSE including:

- Holding South Yorkshire Police to account
- Planning, priorities and funding (announcing additional resources)
- Victim's Commissioning

The PCC highlighted that the Police and Crime Plan was being reviewed to ensure that CSE was reflected as a priority; and that he would hold to account the performance of the Police in this area.

The importance of ensuring the victim's voice was central to the commissioning of post-abuse services was reiterated; with the PCC giving assurances that this was being addressed. It was noted that an evaluation of current post-abuse support was being undertaken to identify gaps and ensure that needs were being met; in effect the 'right' organisations were being supported to provide the 'right' services.

Whilst the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub is in its infancy, the Police were confident that it had already led to better information and intelligence sharing. Questions were asked about the work with front-line officers to test if the strategic commitment to tackle CSE was reflected in day-to-day police work.

Ms Petchey outlined the complexity of cases coming to court; highlighting the difficulties in bringing historic prosecutions. The importance of providing advocates or 'buddies' to ensure that victims going through the court process were adequately and appropriately supported was restated.

As with the first session, the importance of providing public reassurances that prosecutions were being actively pursued in 'historic cases' was reiterated. Not only would that restore public confidence but may lead to other victims coming forward. Members sought confirmation that action was being taken to bring perpetrators to justice. As part of this, assurances were sought that the process for identifying risk was robust and disruption activity meant that potential risk to victims was minimised rather than 'shifted' elsewhere.

## **5 THURSDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER; DAY TWO**

### **5.1 Session 4: Support to victims and their families**

Objectives:

- To understand the long term plans for support to victims and their families and to ensure they are fit for purpose;
- To test out evidence from the previous session with advocate organisations and to understand how it is working in practice;
- To determine whether universal services are working to support victims and their families.

The witness from the National Working Group and Barnardos commented that

Rotherham was working as hard as they can to improve the services for victims and those potentially still at risk and they were encouraged that changes were taking shape.

The immediate work undertaken by the Council and partners, to provide counselling support and care to victims, was recognised. The process to commission longer term services was underway and Members were able to question the process and how the voice of the victim was to be included. This was welcomed, although some of the witnesses suggested that post-abuse support should have a greater emphasis in the strategy.

Issues emerging from the discussions included

- The need to have consistent support so as to build trust and a rapport with the victim/survivor; this may be across a range of agencies but recognising that those in the voluntary sector may be in a better position to engage;
- The difficulties of engaging with young people, both boys and girls, who may not acknowledge that they were in an abusive relationship and were unwilling to work with statutory agencies (or any agencies);
- A recognition that the work undertaken with victims and those at risk, needs to be tailored to meet individual needs;
- Ensuring that post-abuse support is responsive to the needs of the victims; including a range of interventions including peer support, advocacy to specialist therapeutic interventions;
- The immediate need to provide practical support victims going through prosecution process (for example buddying, support with housing etc);
- Working with the CPS, Court Services and victim support services to ensure that witnesses and victims are appropriately identified and supported through the court process;
- Ensuring that Members are notified at the earliest stage, if the resources allocated to post-abuse services are not sufficient.

Following earlier discussions about risk assessments, particularly with cases perceived to be at 'lower risks', there was a view that early intervention could prevent risks from escalating into harm given that risks change rapidly due to often chaotic lifestyles. Reiterating the earlier contribution of the Director of Safeguarding, it was stated that professionals needed to make that professional judgement around that young person to understand the risks to the young person and their families.

Members probed about how young people with additional vulnerabilities, for example mental health issues or learning disabilities, were captured in the needs analysis. It was recognised that further work would need to be undertaken in this area.

Similarly, Members asked if agencies understood what the different issues are in terms of diversity and BME; with established communities as well as new arrivals. It was felt that this was a strand that required strengthening in the action plan.

Questions were asked about appropriate training and supervision to ensure that staff dealing with these traumatic issues, were also well supported.

## 5.2 Session 5 – What Next?

Objectives:

- To explore the wider implications of the Jay report;
- To test out the Council's direction of travel and pace of change, to ensure it is appropriate and timely.

The witnesses were both asked from their perspective as experts in the field of social care, following the publication of the Jay Report, what would be your advice and recommendation for Rotherham's best way forward? The complexity of working in this area was reiterated – as cited in the Jay Report, victims often had multiple needs and as themselves or their families, experienced multiple disadvantage; for example neglect, domestic abuse or poor mental health. It was important that social work understood the individual needs and responded to them holistically.

Citing the recent civil injunctions taken out by Birmingham City Council, it was suggested agencies had to think creatively about how to minimise risk. It was felt that this was an interesting example of disruption activity which protected vulnerable young people.

Many of the points raised in the discussion echoed earlier contributions. These included:

- Ensuring that the level of risk should set an appropriate level to prevent escalation from low risk to harm;
- Having a range of interventions available, based on individual need and level of risks;
- Importance of awareness raising and early intervention in schools; particularly through curriculum work;
- Links between social care and schools;
- Value of multi-agency safeguarding hubs and models for sharing information and allocating resources
- Alongside this ensuring that there is an effective Early Intervention strategy is in place to ensure that referrals are properly 'sieved' and dealt with by the appropriate agency;
- Ensuring that the risk assessment process is 'nuanced' and able to make professional judgement based on individual and family circumstances;
- Ensuring that there is a range of post-abuse support in place based on individual need.

In considering the wider issues of social care and services to vulnerable children, young people and their families, Mr Smeeton and Dr Hollows made some general observations:

- The Council needed to look after the staff it had, nurture and train them. Newly qualified Social Workers were the least able to cope with 'high-end' child protection work and were unable to sustain overburdened and over stretched workloads;
- The importance of post-qualification support - Rotherham was thought to be

strong in this area;

- The importance of appropriately managed workloads and adequate supervision;
- Ensuring that performance management is based on the quality of work and not simply, ticking boxes. Rotherham had previously been judged to be performing well in inspection, but it was about meeting timescales but not necessarily quality of care for children and young people;
- The current climate meant that social workers were often anxious about whether they would find themselves in the midst of a media-storm; there was a risk that social workers may revert to very process driven, risk-averse practice;
- Ensuring that stable placements were secured for looked after children as soon as possible and networks of support are in place for care leavers.

Appendix A:

Minutes from OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Friday, 12th December, 2014

Appendix B:

Minutes from OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Thursday, 18th December, 2014