



Committee report

Committee	HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD
Date	10 DECEMBER 2015
Title	CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
Report of	STUART ASHLEY, AREA DIRECTOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides a summary of the findings from key national reports produced covering the learning from child sexual exploitation cases in Rotherham and Oxfordshire, and gives a position statement about progress on the Isle of Wight in response to these report findings.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

2. In August 2014 Professor Jay's independent inquiry report was published into child sexual exploitation that had occurred in Rotherham between 1997 and 2013 was published. The report highlighted a series of failings in Rotherham council and with partner agencies, notably the police, over a number of years with regard to the safeguarding of children, including corporate governance, leadership, culture and the operation of the overview and scrutiny function.
3. The report concluded that between 1997 and 2013 over 1400 children had been sexually exploited. This exploitation was perpetrated by organised groups of adult males and took the most serious forms of child sexual abuse.
4. In September 2014, the Secretary of State appointed Louise Casey to carry out an inspection of the compliance of Rotherham Council in relation to the Council's exercise of its functions on governance, children and children, and taxi and private hire licensing. Casey was asked to draw any wider lessons for local government, including the coordination between government agencies.
5. The Casey report identified serious and on-going failings by Rotherham Council in accepting, understanding and combating the issue of child sexual exploitation. This resulted in a lack of support for victims and insufficient action against known perpetrators. The main reason for the failings were:
 - Denial by members of the numbers of past victims of child sexual exploitation
 - Denial by senior managers of the efficacy of the investigations undertaken by Professor Jay.

- Members and officers seemed content to be told that matters of child sexual exploitation were confidential and therefore no details could be divulged.
 - Members' and senior managers' inability to critically examine actions of officers with appropriate levels of challenge and scrutiny being brought to bear.
 - A distorted view that child sexual exploitation issues were a children's social care issue, not a whole council issue.
6. The issue of race impacted on politicians' and senior officers' ability to feel they could raise issues that involved the Pakistani community. There was an overriding concern that by challenging the Pakistani community over issues, individuals would be labelled as 'racist'.
 7. The report identified that the overall culture, the lack of a shared strategic vision, the complexity of partnership structures and the lack of strong political and managerial leadership at Rotherham Council inhibited its ability to tackle failings and lead effective transformation. Importantly the report identifies that Rotherham does not have a culture that encourages learning, even in the face of such serious incidents of abuse.
 8. The report reinforces that child sexual exploitation must be seen as a corporate issue requiring combined effort not that of children's social care alone.
 9. In March 2015 Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board (OSCB) published its serious case review regarding the sexual exploitation of six girls that occurred between 2004 and 2011. The perpetrators were convicted under 'Operation Bullfinch'.
 10. The OSCB review identifies three sets of attitudes amongst professionals: that the girls' 'precocious and difficult behaviour was seen to be something that they decided to adopt'; that 'there was a failure to recognise the girls' ability to consent had been eroded by a process of grooming...'; and a pessimism about the prospect of criminal investigations being successful. Overlaying this the author identifies a lack of professional curiosity amongst some professionals and an inappropriate tolerance to sexual activity.
 11. The report additionally identifies a significant lack of escalation to senior managers in some of the key organisations with regards to these issues with some senior managers not being briefed until 2011.
 12. The report makes some recommendations to national government – that consideration is given to reviewing aspects of statutory guidance, that government departments consider the impact of current guidance on the issue of consent and competency and that government should research why a significant proportion of those convicted of such crimes are from Pakistani and/or Muslim heritage.

13. On the same day that the Oxfordshire review was released the government issued its national response 'Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation'. The key features of the response are as follows:
 - A new whistleblowing national portal
 - A national task force to offer expertise for areas which are 'struggling'
 - An extension of the 'wilful neglect' law to children's social care, education and elected members (but not Members of Parliament)
 - Enhanced status of CSE as a 'national threat'
 - Additional financial support to survivors groups (£7m)
14. In July 2015 Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board published a stocktake report outlining progress made by agencies in tackling child sexual exploitation across the County. This report was produced in response to a letter from government ministers after the publication in March 2015 of their serious case review into several cases of child sexual exploitation.
15. The stocktake report highlights the progress made by all organisations in providing specialist support services for victims of child sexual exploitation; bringing more perpetrators to justice through the use of new disruption methods; ensuring schools, academies, further education colleges, and the wider community understand how to spot the signs of children at risk of exploitation; and demonstrating the impact of changes by the NHS to bring school nurses into every secondary school, train the range of different NHS professionals and work together to support the victims of abuse.
16. The report also describes the need to continue to prevent abuse and exploitation and notes there are five areas in particular that require further work. These include the regulation and use of taxis; a greater understanding of who the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation are; and the commissioning of services to provide help and therapy for children into adulthood.

LOCAL CONTEXT

17. The Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children Board (IOWSCB) has overall responsibility for ensuring there is a coordinated, multi-agency response across the partnership, to the issues of child sexual exploitation, missing and trafficked children on the Island. 'groomed' by an abusing adult. A child can be exploited by an abusing adult who grooms them, children can be targeted on-line or in person, and the exploitation can occur between children of a similar age.
18. IOWSCB has in place a missing, exploited and trafficked subgroup, chaired by Hampshire Constabulary. This oversees the multi-agency strategic response to child sexual exploitation and children who go missing. At each meeting it reviews data and information about children who are at risk and tasks an operational group to review the plans supporting individual children and to agree tactical responses to disrupt known or potential perpetrators. The work

of this group and the procedures within children's services ensures the ready identification at any time of the number of children who are or might be at risk.

19. In the 2014 the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services noted '*The missing, exploited and trafficked (MET) sub group of the IOWSCB specifically oversees the operational work of the agencies in this area of work. The sub group ensures any cases where children may be at risk of child sexual exploitation are tracked and protection plans are in place to reduce any risks.*'
20. For the council, the responsibility for leading and tackling the issue of child sexual exploitation rests in the main with children's services given the nature of the work. However, all council departments have a responsibility to train and raise awareness across their workforce on the issue of child sexual exploitation and to ensure they have an action plan to embed this within their overall service delivery.
21. Children's services have well established processes as part of its child protection procedures and these routinely assess the risks of child sexual exploitation for individual children. This process was strongly validated by Ofsted in their inspection in 2014. At any one time there are between four and six Island children who are at possible risk of child sexual exploitation. Appropriate measures are quickly put in place to reduce this risk and provide on-going support to the children. It is important to note these children are at risk but not necessarily being exploited.
22. All such identified children have multi-agency plans in place to protect them, coordinated by the local authority. All of the analysis to date indicates a strong level of responsiveness for those cases, including where appropriate a readiness to use secure accommodation. These assessments must and will be subject to continuous review and vigilance.
23. Underpinning this is a missing persons panel which looks at children who are regularly going missing, the risks this is presenting and what actions can be taken to prevent them going missing in the future. This multi-agency forum has identified a core group of children who are routinely going missing from home or their care placement. An analysis of children recorded as missing on the Isle of Wight between July 2014 and July 2015 identified that there were 251 missing episodes involving 49 children over this period of time.
24. A missing from home and care procedure has been implemented by children's services to ensure all staff are aware of the responsibilities of local authorities as set out in Department for Education Guidance issued in 2014. Any child who goes missing from home or care has to be offered an independent return interview within 72 hours. The local procedure clearly sets out who needs to do what and when from the point that the parent or carer is concerned that the child has gone missing, through to the completion of the return interview and use of the information from this.
25. Senior officers for Isle of Wight have continued to benchmarked the local position against national and government reports as they have been published. An action plan is in place led by children's services to ensure full

compliance with government recommendations and expectations is achieved. This is reviewed and updated on a monthly basis by the department's senior management team. The priority actions in this plan include safe transport and licensing arrangements, on-going awareness raising, provision of therapeutic support and maximising use of the available disruption powers and tools.

RECOMMENDATION

26. That the Health and Wellbeing Board note the progress to date in complying with government guidance in relation to child sexual exploitation and missing children

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Louise Casey Report of inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/401125/46966_Report_of_Inspection_of_Rotherham_WEB.pdf
2. Department for Education 'Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation'
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation--2>
3. The impact of the multi-agency approach to tackling CSE in Oxfordshire
<http://www.oscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Stocktake-report1.pdf>

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