

## **NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES of the meeting held at LB 31-32 - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 6 April 2016 from 14.00 - 16.15**

#### **Membership**

##### Present

Councillor Brian Parbutt (Chair)  
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Leslie Ayoola  
Councillor Azad Choudhry  
Councillor Josh Cook  
Councillor Georgina Culley  
Beverley Frost (3<sup>rd</sup> sector advocate)  
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora  
Assim Ishaque (Co-optee)  
Councillor Corall Jenkins  
Councillor Glyn Jenkins  
Councillor Neghat Nawaz Khan  
Councillor Anne Peach

##### Absent

Councillor Pat Ferguson  
Councillor Mohammed Ibrahim

#### **Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:**

Helen Blackman	- Director of Children's Integrated Services
Sharon Clarke	- Service Manager for Children in Care
Rav Kalsi	- Senior Governance Officer
Councillor David Mellen	- Portfolio Holder for Early Years and Early Intervention
Alison Michalska	- Corporate Director for Children and Adults
Racheal Osborne	- CSE Co-ordinator and Missing Children's Team Manager
Lynn Pearce	- Leaving Care Service Team Manager
Michelle Roe	- Executive Officer
Cath Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

#### **43 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Pat Ferguson (personal)  
Councillor Mohammed Ibrahim (personal).

#### **44 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None.

#### **45 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2016 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

## **46     CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

Councillor David Mellen, Portfolio Holder for Early Years and Early Intervention, Helen Blackman, Director of Children's Integrated Services, and Racheal Osborne Child Sexual Exploitation Co-Ordinator and Missing Children's Team Manager, were in attendance to inform the committee of the processes and actions in place to safeguard the City's children from sexual exploitation.

In addition to the information provided within the reports and presentation, a copy of which was submitted to the agenda following the meeting, the following points were highlighted:

- (a) the government has recently defined child sexual exploitation as 'Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities;'
- (b) child sexual exploitation (CSE) has always happened but following several recent high-profile cases, there is, quite rightly, renewed efforts to address and prevent it, including the new challenge of anonymous exploitation which can take place via the internet and social media;
- (c) CSE can happen to any child in any place, anywhere with victims and perpetrators from every walk of life. Young people may not realise that they are being exploited, sometimes believing that they are in a relationship. However, where the young person is below the age of 16, the concept of sexual consent is legally irrelevant;
- (d) raising awareness of CSE and safeguarding is not purely focused on potential targets, but is aimed at everyone and anyone who could be in a position to encounter odd or unusual circumstances involving young people and adults. By raising awareness and providing easy reporting routes, people will be more confident and better equipped to prevent, challenge and/or report suspicious circumstances which may lead to or be a reflection of CSE. Awareness campaigns are often targeted but voluntary and community groups can request awareness sessions which may include language support. Social media has been used during a recent CSE awareness week;
- (e) the City and County 'CSE Cross Authority Group' (CSECAG) is Chaired by the Police and focuses on the four themes of:
  - (i) Prepare;
  - (ii) Prevent;
  - (iii) Protect;
  - (iv) Pursue;
- (f) CSE activity is not restricted within the City and County boundaries so a Cross Authority Group has been established to gather information and map common concerns and locations, looking for common recurrences which may include days, times, places, and people information is shared on a regional level amongst nine Local Authorities who have all agreed a set of standards by which to gather, co-

ordinate and communicate information. Councillor David Mellen is the Regional Lead for this work;

- (g) In addition to the CSECAG, Children's Social Care has developed a Multi-Agency Child Sexual Exploitation Panel, which is chaired by Helen Blackman, to track children at risk of CSE, and collate information relating to perpetrators and location/hot spots. The group is comprised of colleagues from Children's Services, Education, Community Protection, Police and Health partners;
- (h) the 'Concerns Network' involving the Children in Care Team and Police gather emerging and community-based intelligence regarding potential or suspected CSE activity, for example, instances of a large cohort of young people visiting particular properties, gauge the risks and determine what measures should be put in place;
- (i) in an effort to stay ahead of perpetrators, services are continually taking creative deterrent and awareness approaches. This includes making direct contact with trades and industries which may come into contact with young people and predators. By spreading awareness this gives people confidence to question, challenge and/or report what they may identify as suspicious behaviour and circumstances;
- (j) several CSE and safeguarding awareness training options are available including face-to-face to e-learning and, in addition to direct partners, the training has been specifically promoted amongst groups, trades and industries which may encounter CSE, including:
  - (i) voluntary sector organisations;
  - (ii) hotel and security staff;
  - (iii) staff at event venues;
  - (iv) taxi drivers (as part of the taxi licensing conditions);
  - (v) local authority and private residential homes;
  - (vi) magistrates (specifically with a focus on identifying indicators of how victims may express their exploitation via behaviour);
- (k) to date, 70 hotel staff have been trained within the City, with more events planned. Of the 1,800 taxi drivers registered within the City, 732 have also received safeguarding training as condition of the licence renewal;
- (l) there are many possible indicators that a young person is being exploited. These may include the young person having items which they could not normally afford but which have been given as gifts, and disappearing for periods of time, sometimes at set times on set days;
- (m) the theatre production 'LUVU2' has proved successful and popular in raising awareness on how young people can be exploited. Approximately 32 performances have taken place across the City for professionals working with young people and young people themselves, with post-performance discussions of young people's thoughts on how to get help if they become aware of CSE;
- (n) many schools and the Youth and Play Service provide sessions where young people consider healthy relationships, with 60% of young people who have taken part in CSE awareness sessions and similar activities, saying that they felt far more

knowledgeable on the subject. By providing awareness through schools, children and young people who do not engage in extracurricular activities, such as youth clubs, can be reached and peer support and challenge empowered;

- (o) when concerns are raised about a child, agencies will be sensitive to the cultural background and family environment, ensuring that any action is evidence based. The broader issues will be taken into consideration and if the family do not want to work with one agency, another within the partnership will work to engage the family. Whatever challenges there may be, the child will not be ignored;
- (p) a single point of contact to raise and report concerns, is currently being co-ordinated, in the meantime, if you feel that a child is at immediate risk and in need of protection, then the Police should be alerted immediately;
- (q) in communities where a Police presence is not welcomed, other agencies take a lead and different approaches are tried such as meeting with women's groups to get their perspectives and collect their concerns;
- (r) if young people are reported missing, when they return or are found, they will be offered a 'return' interview where the young person is able to talk about why they went missing, where they were and with whom. This is undertaken on a 1-2-1 basis by someone completely independent of the family in case a family issue is the root of their absence. Rachel Osborne, Child Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator and Missing Children's Team Manager, signs off all return interviews to ensure that there is a consistent approach. The interviews can be beneficial in building links between other young people who were with the returned young person but had not been reported as missing. In addition, information is gathered about where young people are gathering, what the attractions are, and if there is any criminal behaviour taking place, sometimes making patterns apparent;
- (s) ASHA (Assessment of Sexual Harm Arrangements) examines the cases and circumstances of young people who have been arrested or in trouble with the police as sometimes victims of CSE display subtle behaviours which involve challenging authority and even low level criminal activity;
- (t) it is also a concern that some child victims may themselves later, as adolescents and/or adults, be involved in perpetrating harmful acts. This is just one area where the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are also working closely with the CSE Co-ordinator;
- (u) all schools have received information on the CSE safeguarding website which provides training and awareness options, including on signs and indicators. E-learning courses and awareness information can be found here:  
<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/ncscbtraining>
- (v) if anyone has a concern about a child or young person, they can report it to 'Children and Families Direct' on 0115 876 4800 or by email to [candf.direct@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:candf.direct@nottinghamcity.gov.uk) or by contacting the Police;

- (w) Ofsted has commented positively on the work being undertaken to prevent and address CSE within the City but officers continue to strive to further strengthen and improve approaches and processes;
- (x) with regard to fulfilling the recommendations of the Rotherham report:
  - (i) a robust action plan is in place with considerable changes to HR and recruiting policies which also even includes checking and training of elected members;
  - (ii) statistics are being collated as to where CSE referrals have originated, with a report proposed to be presented to a future meeting;
  - (iii) Children's Services communicate across municipal boundaries as a reflection of exploitation not being restricted to boundaries;
- (y) when a child is taken into care, they are placed with carers appropriate for the individual child with the cultural position of the child and careers taken into consideration. If this means that the child or young person is placed away from the City, they receive the same level of attention and support as a child placed locally within the City. All members of the host family, including their children, are checked and scrutinised to ensure the safety of the child being cared for. Mechanisms are in place to ensure that the young person's voice is heard and that communication is fluid;

The following comments were raised by members of the Committee:

- (z) Assim Ishaque, Co-opted member of the Committee, commented that as a member of the Asian community from which several high profile CSE rings were found to be operating, many community members would report CSE if they believed that it was happening. However, some members of the community, even second generation British, are not well educated, may not speak or read fluent English and so careful consideration needs to be given as to how to engage these sections of the community and raise awareness, in particular by ensuring that appropriate officers speaking appropriate languages lead with the engagement;
- (aa) Concerns raised by Beverly Frost, 3rd Sector Advocate for the Committee, included that the 'Under Protected, Over Protected' report funded by Comic Relief, highlighted that many young people with Learning Disabilities, especially mild, appear to be overlooked. However, these young people can be both or either victims and perpetrators of CSE so particular attention is needed to ensure that these young people and their parents and carers have an understanding of appropriate relationships to ensure that potential issues around sexually inappropriate behaviour can be identified and addressed prior to any escalation of concern;
- (bb) Helen Blackman responded that further information could be provided regarding the awareness and relationships work done with young people with learning disabilities and agreed that our most vulnerable young people needed to be made aware of inappropriate behaviours and on-going information and support provided.

## **RESOLVED**

- (1) **to note:**

- (i) the work to protect Nottingham children from CSE;**
  - (ii) the co-operation, communication and joined up working of local and regional organisations, agencies and authorities, to share information, practices and policies and to further strengthen successful approaches;**
  - (iii) that there is an ongoing drive to educate and promote CSE awareness and reporting across all sections of the community, including young people;**
- (2) for a further update report on the work to prevent and address CSE to be submitted to a future meeting.**

#### **47 LEAVING CARE SERVICE IN NOTTINGHAM**

Councillor David Mellen, Portfolio Holder for Early Intervention and Early Years, and Joint Chair of Corporate Parenting Board, informed the Committee of the corporate responsibility of the City Council for all 595 of the City's Children in Care (CiC) and that these young people needed to receive the same level of care, financial assistance, support and opportunities that young people within a regular family environment would receive.

The report was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation jointly delivered by Sharon Clarke, Service Manager Children in Care, Lynn Pearce, Senior Personal Advisor in Leaving Care Services and Helen Blackman, Director of Children's Integrated Services.

The following points were highlighted and responses given to member's questions:

- (a)** although encouraged to stay in care until the age of 18, young people can leave care from the age of 16. Either 3 months before their 18th birthday, or 3 months before they know they are leaving care, they receive the support of a personal advisor;
- (b)** a personal advisor works alongside the young person's social worker to ensure that appropriate support is available during the transition period and help the young person develop practical skills including managing accommodation, a home, accessing benefits, if necessary;
- (c)** care leaver's outcomes and vulnerability nationally was outlined in the presentation with the following information:
  - (i)** young people in care often do not achieve the same level of qualifications as other children, with almost one third leaving school without any GCSEs or vocational qualifications, and only 13% obtaining 5 reasonable GCSEs compared to 57% of other children. However, the longer that a child is in stable care, the better their achievements are likely to be;
  - (ii)** only 6% of care leavers attend university, compared to 38% of young people, and nearly 33% of care leavers are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), compared to 13% of all young people;

- (iii) 23% of the adult prison population has been in care and almost 40% of prisoners under 21 years of age have been in care, compared to 2% of the general population;
- (iv) 25% of young women leaving care either already have a child, are pregnant or become pregnant before the age of 24.
- (d) once a young person has left care or is living semi-independently, they can still request assistance with attending college/university and the Care Leavers Team will support them;
- (e) it is important to know what young people want from the service. 'Your Voice' group has been established just for care leavers to ensure their views and feelings are captured and can be taken into consideration. The group also links with the Children in Care Council and the Corporate Parenting Board;
- (f) every care leaver has the opportunity to meet with a member of the Care Leaver's Team every 8 weeks to ensure they are coping and identify what support may be needed. However, once they are formally an adult, they can refuse all contact;
- (g) the CiC Team have a specific Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) section which support children and young people with the most severe disabilities. These young people usually remain in care until the age of 19 and where appropriate, the team work with the careers and family;
- (h) there is a significant number of care leavers who have mild learning disabilities and it is acknowledged that they may struggle to live independently so are allocated a transition worker who will provide a bespoke package with robust support. For the more vulnerable young people with Learning Disabilities(LD), who don't meet the LD threshold for Adult Services, 'staying put' is encouraged and the team work with the foster carers to ensure that a safe and stable home is available to the young people up to the age of 19 years old;
- (i) every young person in care has a Pathway Plan from the age of 15 and three quarters, in which they record their wishes, feelings and plans for the future, and they are encouraged to take ownership of and to 'buy-in' to it. When it's not followed it has to be rescheduled. Each plan is reviewed every 6 months or earlier if a significant change, such as being taken into custody or having health issues occurs. Although every young person will have a plan until they are 21 years old, once they actually leave care, many do not want to maintain contact with the service, preferring to live completely independently and sever all communication;
- (j) some young people are not ready to leave care at the age of 18 but semi-independent living provides supported independence and can provide a valuable period to demonstrate that the young person is capable of maintaining a tenancy on their own;
- (k) approximately 33% of young care leavers are NEET and it is recognised that bespoke training/employment programmes are often required to achieve the best results as many young people need additional support. By leading on, (not providing) 'in-house' programmes in areas in which the young people are interested, there has

been a pleasing increase of care leavers in EET. Where young people are in EET, their social health is often improved and they are less likely to be lonely and/or commit crime;

- (l) Nottingham City Homes and the City Council are currently providing apprenticeships to care leavers which have proved mutually very successful.

Following the presentation, the following comments were made:

- (m) Beverly Frost, Independent Committee Member, expressed concern that it had been reported that approximately 80% of children in care have special educational needs (SEN), but there is nothing to show that these children's needs have been acknowledged and appropriate support and coping skills provided to both them and their parents/carers. Young people with SEN are 6 times more likely to be abused in some way by their parents if their needs are not identified, addressed and supported. It is vital that as soon as children and young people are taken into care, they are appropriately assessed to determine if they have learning and psychological needs which need to be supported. The sooner such needs are identified and supported, the better the outcome for the young person.

The Chair commented that whilst the transition for all young people leaving home had become more difficult, as Corporate Parents, Councillors have a corporate duty to ensure that children in care and leaving care are supported in the same way in which other children are.

**RESOLVED to thank the presenting officers for their informative presentation.**

#### **48 INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

To enable thorough consideration, this item was deferred to the Committee meeting on 8 June 2016.

#### **49 WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16**

Rav Kalsi, Senior Governance Officer introduced the report of the Head of Democratic Services setting out the programme of activity for this Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Review Panels for 2016/17. Subject to the inclusion of the International Development Strategy on 8 June 2016, the Committee is asked to consider and review the work programme for 2016/17.

**RESOLVED to agree the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Review Panels for 2015/16, as summarised in the report, subject to the inclusion of the International Development Strategy topic on 8 June 2016.**