

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held at Loxley House on 4 December 2013 from 2:00 pm to 3:40 pm.

Councillor Brian Parbutt (Chair)
Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Georgina Culley
Councillor Mohammed Ibrahim
Councillor Glyn Jenkins (Vice Chair)
Councillor Ginny Klein
Councillor Gul Khan
Councillor Neghat Khan
Councillor Thulani Molife
Councillor Toby Neal
Councillor Anne Peach
Councillor Mohammed Saghir
Councillor Roger Steel
Councillor Marcia Watson

Beverley Denby (Third Sector Advocate)

indicates present at meeting

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Martin Hillier	- Nottinghamshire Police, Chair of Child Sexual Exploitation Cross Authority Group
Pete Turgoose	- Project Manager, Protect and Respect, National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Anne Partington	- Acting Head of Safeguarding
Jane Garrard	- Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Angelika Kaufhold	- Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator

37 MEMBERSHIP

Noted that Councillor Longford has resigned from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that Councillor Anne Peach and Councillor Neghat Khan have been appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Councillor Azad Choudhry – unwell/ medical
- Councillor Georgina Culley – unwell/ medical
- Councillor Gul Khan – personal
- Councillor Mohammed Saghir - personal
- Councillor Roger Steel – other Council business
- Councillor Marcia Watson – personal

- Beverley Denby

39 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

40 MINUTES

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2013 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

41 CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION – TO DISCUSS THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL AND ITS PARTNERS ON THE ACTIVITIES, PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO COMBAT CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Anne Partington, Acting Head of Safeguarding, explained that the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board (NCSCB) had responsibility for managing and co-ordinating multi-agency work to tackle child sexual exploitation in the City. The rapidly changing environment is reflected in the Family Support Strategy (previously considered by the Committee). Intervention is shifting to an earlier stage, for example work taking place at Children's Centres and support programmes in schools.

Martin Hiller, Chair of the Child Sexual Exploitation Cross Authority Group, introduced the briefing note circulated with the agenda, highlighting the following points:

- (a) Nationally, child sexual exploitation receives a lot of media coverage and these media reports are often about situations when intervention has taken place at a late stage. Perceptions of child sexual exploitation built by the media often give an inaccurate reflection of exploitation victims and perpetrators and this can be unhelpful in tackling the real issues. For example there has recently been a high level of media coverage about gangs of British Pakistan men exploiting girls, but the majority of child sexual exploitation is carried out by white males.
- (b) Child sexual exploitation is a priority area for the NCSCB and work takes place in a proactive way. This is not because Nottingham has a worse problem with child sexual exploitation but because the NCSCB feels that work needs to be proactive in order to tackle exploitation effectively.
- (c) The Child Sexual Exploitation Cross Authority Group leads on child sexual exploitation of behalf of the NCSCB. It was re-formed in January 2012 and includes key partners such as Nottinghamshire Police, National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Nottingham City Council, voluntary sector organisations. Organisational cultures on issues of child sexual exploitation are changing.
- (d) The local strategy is based on the Department for Education National Action Plan.
- (e) Child sexual exploitation is not a criminal offence. It is a generic term that covers a number of offences, including rape, sexual activity with a child. The retention of this

old legislation can make it difficult to prosecute perpetrators because victims of child sexual exploitation often do not see themselves as victims.

- (e) Locally there are several work streams and working groups planned and underway:
 - i) Raising awareness of child sexual exploitation with professionals
Full day training has been held for professionals directly involved with child sexual exploitation issues, and a half day training session for those who may come into contact with individuals vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. Good feedback has been received from the training but there has been lower take-up of training in the City compared with the County.
 - ii) Raising awareness of child sexual exploitation with children and young people
Work is taking place through schools, including productions by the Pint Sized Theatre Group. This is a hard-hitting, interactive session which has received excellent feedback. Web resources are also being developed.
 - iii) Improve support for looked after children
This work is in early stages and will look at issues beyond child sexual exploitation. OFSTED will be involved in this work.
 - iv) Tackling sexual exploitation of girls in gangs
This work is in early stages, but will be working with Vanguard Plus.
 - v) Data collection
Collection of data about the extent of child sexual exploitation is a huge issue, and it is anticipated that there is exploitation taking place that agencies are not aware of but the extent of the problem isn't fully known.
- (f) Organisations are currently developing a virtual team and slowly there are moves towards the recommended approach of having a co-located multi-agency team for child sexual exploitation.

Peter Turgoose, Protect and Respect Project Manager, NSPCC, provided the following information:

- (g) The Child Sexual Exploitation Practitioners Forum will provide opportunity for practitioners to meet regularly to share information and support a multi-agency approach to developing solutions. Logistical issues are a challenge to making the Forum work, for example enabling teachers to attend the meetings, so individuals who attend will have responsibility to represent and feed back to their wider practitioner teams. So far approx 30 individuals from a range of different organisations have committed to attend.
- (h) The Concerns Network meeting provides opportunity to identify individuals/ situations below the threshold for intervention but where there are concerns. Concerns will be logged and enable links to be made so that otherwise unidentified issues are highlighted. Professionals can send concerns to a Police inbox, which will be regularly reviewed and concerns stored in a central location. Themes will be taken to a Concerns Network meeting. Community Protection Officers are involved in meetings and feed in local information.

- (i) The aim is to develop 'disruption strategies' to prevent/ stop exploitation before an offence takes place, rather than necessarily get a prosecution. Effective disruption will stop the (potential) victim being abused, which is the most important outcome, and getting a prosecution can be very difficult because victims don't always see themselves as victims and are not always willing to make statements against their abusers. A high level of social care support is provided to victims.
- (i) Nottingham is one of three sites of the Protect and Respect project run by NSPCC. Nottingham was identified as a site because of the NSPCC's previous work here on missing children. The project aims to tackle child sexual exploitation and has a strategy for work up to 2016. It focuses on young people aged 11-19 years at risk of/ currently subject to child sexual exploitation. It is not a therapeutic intervention, but works collaboratively with the young person to risk assess vulnerability to exploitation and make an intervention. Intervention lasts for a minimum of 6-8 months. Since May 2012 the project has worked with 40 children in Nottingham. Early intervention is an important aspect and the project is working with schools as part of the Personal, Social, Health and Economic curriculum exploring grooming, online activity and resistance to exploitation. The project also wants to educate professionals and parents, including foster carers, but this workstream has suffered from resource constraints. It is hoped to increase activity in this area from 2014.

Following questions from councillors, Anne Partington, Martin Hillier and Pete Turgoose provided the following additional information:

- (j) Media stories can give a distorted picture of child sexual exploitation, for example around the involvement of Pakistani communities, and this can cause problems. However, professionals have a good accurate understanding of the local issues.
- (k) Professionals try to engage local communities when there are major child sexual exploitation incidents. This is particularly important because individuals charged with offences are often released on bail into the community.
- (l) It is difficult to identify the impact of the work of the Cross Authority Group but it is believed that more intelligence is being collated and activity spotted earlier.
- (m) The lower level of take-up of training by professionals in the City is thought to be due to advertising and is now being addressed. A recent NSPCC conference was over-subscribed.
- (n) Activity to tackle child sexual exploitation refers to young people under 18 years. Most offences relate to young people under 16 years but vulnerability can continue to 18 years old and beyond. Agencies try to continue their involvement for older age groups, particularly for looked after children.
- (o) There is a huge spectrum of responses from parents to issues of child sexual exploitation, from denial and resistance to being engaged, through feelings of guilt to being very engaged in tackling the problem. The support provided to parents depends on what they need and want. It can be more difficult for parents to acknowledge abuse in circumstances when the young person denies being a victim.

- (p) Nationally feedback is being sought on the 2003 legislation to identify potential improvements. The NSPCC has contributed to this.
- (r) There is no national standard for the way in which local authorities should collate data on child sexual exploitation. This makes it difficult to compare the situation between areas. The Police have a more standard way of reporting incidents in line with definition of offences. However, variations in data may reflect local decisions on the threshold at which incidents are referred and reported, rather than any actual variation in activity levels.
- (s) There is nothing to suggest that Nottingham has a particular problem with organised child sexual exploitation. National research suggests, contrary to many media reports, that child sexual exploitation is often more opportunistic and, if at all, only loosely organised. Such research provides learning for how to tackle issues locally.
- (t) Online child sexual exploitation is a big issue across the country.
- (u) Work to develop in the future includes looking at more hidden potential exploitation situations, for example sexual exploitation of boys.
- (v) Information about child sexual exploitation issues could be better communicated to local people. It is a big challenge to make everyone aware of the issues but important to have effective communication in place and this will be an action to take forward.
- (w) Intra-familial abuse is not technically part of child sexual exploitation but it can be linked and there is close working with the relevant team in Nottinghamshire Police. Social workers are responsible for all child protection issues, including both intra-familial abuse and child sexual exploitation. Agencies are getting better at dealing with cultural and language barriers and interpreters, although expensive, are used.
- (x) Every organisation within the NCSCB has resource challenges and therefore work must be efficient and focus on key priorities. However, there is nothing to suggest that there currently isn't capacity to deal with issues and work is also taking place on new developments, for example working towards a co-located team. The NSPCC Protect and Respect project is of benefit to the City and brings in resource. The NCSCB is also drawing on other existing relevant work and skills, such as child sexual health professionals.
- (y) Evaluation of the Protect and Respect project will take place in 2016. The NSPCC has launched another 6 sites based on experience of the first 3 sites. Project success will be measured on outcomes for young people.

Based on the evidence provided, the Committee concluded that, although it was still relatively early days in the work of the Child Sexual Exploitation Cross Authority Group, it was satisfied with current activity to prevent and tackle child sexual exploitation in the City.

RESOLVED to recommend that

- (1) The Child Sexual Exploitation Cross Authority Group explore opportunities for raising awareness of child sexual exploitation issues in local communities;**

- (2) Ways be sought to raise the profile of child safeguarding issues, including child sexual exploitation, amongst all councillors; and**
- (3) Committee members engage in dialogue with local MPs about local child sexual exploitation issues with the objective of influencing national policy and resourcing.**

42 PROGRAMME FOR SCRUTINY

The Committee considered the Head of Democratic Services' report about the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2013/14. Angelika Kaufhold explained that in January the Committee will be looking at the Customer Access Programme, Citizen First and Have Your Say. Councillors discussed possible topics for future reviews and identified maximising the use of allotments and local food growing as a potential topic for further exploration.

RESOLVED

- (1) To note the topics scheduled for forthcoming meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and**
- (2) To commission a scrutiny review looking at allotments and local food growing to be carried out on 25 February 2014.**