

<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>12 NOVEMBER 2014</b>
<b>IMPLICATIONS FOR SCRUTINY FOLLOWING THE PUBLICATION OF THE JAY REPORT INTO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN ROTHERHAM</b>
<b>REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</b>

1. **Purpose**

To consider the implications for scrutiny following the report by Alexis Jay into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham.

2. **Action required**

**The Committee is asked**

- 1) **to consider the impact of the report into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham and its implications for effective scrutiny;**
- 2) **to determine if any changes to the operation or approach to scrutiny in Nottingham are required to ensure that it operates effectively as possible.**

3. **Background information**

- 3.1 The independent report into Rotherham Borough Council's response to issues around child sexual exploitation was conducted by Alexis Jay and published in August 2014. The independent inquiry looked at the internal processes and procedures of Rotherham Council and its work with partners regarding cases of child sexual exploitation between 1997 and 2013. The report has highlighted the importance of holding decision-makers to account, not just in relation to the scrutiny of children services, and has highlighted the role of effective scrutiny in this process.
- 3.2 Although the true scale of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham is not known, it is estimated that around 1,400 children were victims of abuse between 1997 and 2013 and in just over a third of cases, the children affected were previously known to services. Over the first twelve years covered by the Inquiry, the collective failures of council leaders was "blatant" and the scale of the seriousness of the problem was underplayed by senior managers in social care. Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board and its predecessor body oversaw the development of good inter-agency policies and procedures but the Jay Report states that members of the Board rarely checked whether they were implemented or were working and the scrutiny functions of the Board and the Council were seriously lacking.

## Scrutiny implications

3.3 On 11 September 2014, a government appointed inspection into the running of Rotherham Borough Council was launched and it is expected to cover whether the Council allows for adequate scrutiny by councillors. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has also asked for that report to cover any matter that could help all councils across the country to improve the delivery of their services, particularly those relating to children and young people.

3.3.1 Councillors will note that the report indicated an apparent lack of effective scrutiny exercised by several groups, least of all by the Scrutiny Panels. The report into Rotherham has highlighted the importance of scrutiny and noted that in its widest sense, is an essential component of governance. It is important that councillors test proposals by reference to their broad experiences of the city and their residents, good officers should welcome challenge as a central part of local governance. This has parallels with the findings of the Francis Inquiry into Mid-Staffordshire and in the wake of these findings, discussions took place at both the Health Scrutiny Panel and the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee.

3.3.2 This resulted in training for health scrutiny councillors; steps to develop a better working relationship with the CQC; ensuring minutes of meetings enable us to evidence scrutiny activity; and renewed efforts to listen more to the voice of the public and obtain information and evidence from beyond the 'usual sources' to provide more robust challenge to decision makers. Health scrutiny is getting better at this and this has been aided by decision makers in the health community being very engaged in addressing the issues raised by Francis. However, as Rotherham demonstrates, there is a need to take this approach beyond just health issues.

3.3.3 The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) has produced a paper titled, 'What Rotherham and Mid-Staffordshire tell us about scrutiny, and where it's lacking.' This paper raises the following three questions which scrutiny should be asking:

- How do I know that this council, and those with whom it works, will be aware when significant problems rear their head – and do I have confidence that this information will be acted on?
- Does scrutiny itself have access to information which will allow me to confidently challenge, on the basis of evidence, the council's assertions about the quality of a service?
- Do council officers and officers from other agencies agree and accept that scrutiny has this role to play?

3.4.5 The CfPS report highlights that, in addition to scrutiny councillors, the political and managerial leadership of an authority needs to take some

responsibility for ensuring that they have effective arrangements in place for both scrutiny and challenge.

### Jay Report's recommendations

- 3.5 In January 2015, the Committee will consider Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board's Annual Report 2012 – 13 and progress on actions following the publication of the OfSTED report in May 2014. The Jay Report made 15 recommendations in total, some specific to Rotherham with little broader relevance, however the following recommendations detailed below, although addressing the situation in Rotherham, have general implications and will prove useful when considering the City Council's Safeguarding Children Board's Annual Report.
- 3.5.1 Senior managers should ensure that there are up-to-date risk assessments on all children affected by children sexual exploitation (CSE). These should be of consistently high quality and clearly recorded on the child's file.
- 3.5.2 Managers should develop a more strategic approach to protecting looked after children who are sexually exploited. This must include the use of out-of-area placements. The Borough should work with other authorities to minimise the risks of sexual exploitation to all children, including those living in placements where they may become exposed to CSE.
- 3.5.3 The Council should make every effort to make help reach out to victims of CSE who are not yet in touch with services.
- 3.5.4 Wider children's social care, the CSE team and integrated youth and support services should work better together to ensure that children affected by CSE are well supported and offered an appropriate range of preventive services.
- 3.5.5 All services should recognise that once a child is affected by CSE, he or she is likely to require support and therapeutic intervention for an extended period of time. Children should not be offered short-term intervention only, and case should not be closed prematurely. The Safeguarding Board should work with local agencies, including health, to secure the delivery of post-abuse support services.
- 3.5.6 There should be more direct and more frequent engagement by the Council and also the Safeguarding Board with women and men from ethnic communities on the issue of CSE and other forms of abuse. The Safeguarding Board should address the under-reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse in minority ethnic communities.
- 3.5.7 The issue of race should be tackled as an absolute priority if it is a significant factor in the criminal activity of organised child sexual abuse in the Borough.

3.5.8 The guiding principle on redactions in Serious Case Reviews must be that the welfare of any children involved is paramount.

3.6 The Home Secretary recently announced that the findings of the Jay Report in sexual exploitation in Rotherham will feed into the work of an independent inquiry into whether public or non-public bodies have taken seriously their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse. As a scrutiny function, we need to learn lessons from this and minimise the risks that ineffective scrutiny presents to local authorities.

**4. List of attached information**

**Appendix 1** – ‘What Rotherham and Mid-Staffordshire tell us about scrutiny, and where it’s lacking’, Centre for Public Scrutiny.

**5. Background papers, other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information**

None

**6. Published documents referred to in compiling this report**

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997 – 2013).

[http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1407/independent\\_inquiry\\_cse\\_in\\_rotherham](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1407/independent_inquiry_cse_in_rotherham)

What Rotherham and Mid-Staffordshire tell us about scrutiny, and where it’s lacking, Centre for Public Scrutiny.

**7. Wards affected**

Citywide

**8. Contact information**

Contact Colleagues

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