

## Central Bedfordshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14 March 2017

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### Child Sexual Exploitation Health Check Review

Report of (Cllr Carole Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing ([carole.hegley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:carole.hegley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)))

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**This report relates to a non-Key Decision**

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#### Purpose of this report

1. To provide the Committee with an overview of the National Working Group's Child Sexual Exploitation Health-Check Review Report.
2. To provide a summary progress towards the recommendations made in the National Working Group's Child Sexual Exploitation Health-Check Review Report.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Comment on this report and support the partnership work being undertaken towards the prevention, identification and disruption of Child Sexual Exploitation in Central Bedfordshire.
2. Consider Member role in the eradication of Child Sexual Exploitation in Central Bedfordshire

#### Background into Bedfordshire Child Sexual Exploitation Work

3. Following the Professor Jay report into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Rotherham, in September 2014 the Chief Executive Officers of Bedfordshire adopted a proactive response to review the strategic CSE landscape in Bedfordshire.
4. Discussions were held with the three independent chairs of the Local Children's Safeguarding Boards (LSCBs) who were invited to consider

the commission of an independent review into CSE. This approach was agreed and in January 2015 an independent review was commissioned.

5. A Bedfordshire CSE review was conducted by the National Working Group (NWG), and in July 2015 six strategic recommendations were made to statutory organisations<sup>1</sup> in Bedfordshire to enable a more holistic and partnership focus to CSE.
6. Over the following 12 months considerable work was undertaken to support and identify those suffering with CSE, to disrupt offenders and suspected offenders, and to raise awareness of this issue.
7. In November 2016 the NWG were invited to return to Bedfordshire and carry out a CSE Health-Check Review on the progress made towards the six strategic recommendations.

### **Background in to Central Bedfordshire's response to CSE**

8. Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) has committed to work with the five other statutory organisations involved in the CSE review, by collaboration on initiatives, joint communication, multi-agency training, increased information sharing and joint governance. However, at a local level there are geographical and demographic differences between the Central Bedfordshire area to that of Bedford and Luton
9. There is a Central Bedfordshire CSE Action Plan in place which takes into account the strategic work required across Bedfordshire, together with the local actions that are specific to our communities, children and young people. The Action Plan will shortly be reviewed to ensure it is best placed to take into account the work around the Transformation Programme and Locality Working.
10. A Central Bedfordshire CSE Task Group, chaired by Sue Harrison, oversees the CSE Action Plan, provides challenge and scrutiny into work carried out, agrees local action and provides an area summary to the Pan-Bedfordshire CSE Strategic Group.
11. At a local level CBC has started working with the NSPCC in a new Hub and Spoke model approach. This sees an NSPCC worker placed in the Young Peoples Support Team who undertakes group work, and assists in the education of subject matter. The worker also carries out some individual case work.
12. CBC has committed to a Bedfordshire Multi-Agency CSE Classroom Training programme, which will provide officers with an understanding and awareness of CSE, better and more consistent information sharing and improved working together with other organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> Bedford Borough Council, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Bedfordshire Police, Central Bedfordshire Council, Luton Borough Council, Luton Clinical Commissioning Group

13. CBC has committed dedicated resources to support ongoing CSE work, to improve awareness, knowledge, taking a joint approach, information sharing and the ultimate outcome of providing the best care and support children and young people.

### **CSE Health-Check Review**

14. In November 2016 the NWG Review Team carried out desk top research, one to one meetings and focus groups to 'health-check' our work in CSE. The full report is attached as Appendix 1. The team's findings were:
  - A positive change in culture across organisations and across levels. In such a short space of time since joint working started this is a considerable achievement.
  - A shared sense of ownership and commitment to tackle CSE together.
  - Evidence of an increase in information sharing and utilising information in the monthly CSE Group to understand key areas of risk and disruption opportunities.
  - Communication campaigns have used the problem profile to inform direction, target audience and outcomes it is seeking
  - CSE Single Points of Contact and those working to tackle CSE had built strong relationships and communicated effectively and regularly
  - There had been an investment of CSE resources made by organisations'
15. In regards to the six strategic recommendations, the Review Team offered focus into areas which can assist organisations in Bedfordshire to move further forward:
  - **Governance;** clarification and definition of relationships between strategic groups
  - **Strategic Development;** representation at groups by voluntary / charity sector
  - **Information Sharing;** regular internal communication
  - **Training & Awareness;** CSE to be embedded into the wider Safeguarding structure
  - **Commissioning;** scoping of services and dissemination of that information
  - **Parent Engagement;** consider how voice of the parent is heard at a strategic level

## Review Response from CBC

16. **Governance - clarification and definition of relationships between strategic groups:** A map of CSE meetings and governance has been produced, and clarity has been provided. The Governance Map (Appendix 2) will be circulated to the CSE Strategic Group and to the LSCB Managers'
17. **Strategic Development - representation at groups by voluntary / charity sector;** The CBC Director of Children's Services has been the Chair of this group for the past six months. The Group has been reviewed and has a clear agenda, partner scrutiny and joint work. The group attendance has been streamlined and key CSE / Safeguarding leads attend. Work is underway to engage with Voluntary and Charity partners' to have input and action at the Group.
18. **Information Sharing - regular internal communication:** An increase in sharing information and CSE awareness with staff across has started and is proving successful, however we need to continue to build on this. The regular CSE Group monthly meeting provides a platform for sharing case information, intelligence on possible trends and new concerns for all partners. This information is cascaded to front line officers and partner agencies.
19. **Training and Awareness - CSE to be embedded into the wider Safeguarding structure:** We are working with partners to start a new Multi-Agency Classroom CSE Training, which will start in early summer 2017. This training will take into account key Safeguarding messages and start to see a cultural change in the way officers work together and share information.
20. **Commissioning- scoping of services and dissemination of that information:** The three local authorities jointly commission a Theatre Group to hold performances of 'Chelsea's Choice' which is a thought provoking CSE and exploitation presentation. We are working with partners to co-commissioning for improved sustainability and efficient use of resources in areas of Training, Communication and Technology.
21. **Parent Engagement - consider how voice of the parent is heard at a strategic level:** Voice of the Parent / Carer is key to the work that we do, and this is starting to be captured via Parenting Groups, Locality Working and Team around the Family.

## Council Priorities

22. The work that is being undertaken to tackle and understand CSE in Central Bedfordshire, supports the following Council priorities:

- Improved educational attainment – by supporting children and young people who are suffering with this form of abuse, they are able to fulfil their potential and are sustained in education.
- Promote health and well being and protect the vulnerable – those who suffer from this abuse have a higher rate of mental health difficulties and substance misuse problems as a result. By supporting children and young people who are exposed to or at risk of CSE, there is a reduction to the possible use of substances, and an improvement in mental and emotional health.

### **Corporate Implications**

23. Partners and Service Areas have supported this work over the past 18 months, and where possible joined resources and initiatives for a greater impact. CBC needs to continue this momentum and ensure that constant learning and understanding takes place, and to respond to that increase of knowledge by adapting our work and focus.

### **Legal Implications**

24. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to safeguard vulnerable children in its area as set out in the Children Act 1989, connected legislation and regulation and statutory guidance, including Working Together to Safeguard Children. This report sets out the progress being made in relation to practice to prevent and disrupt Child Sexual Exploitation.

### **Financial Implications**

25. The cost of producing the NWG report was £5,000, which was funded by the NWG themselves.
26. The commitments that CBC has made in response to the report can all be met from existing budgets.
27. There are no other financial implications arising from this report.

### **Equalities Implications**

28. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
29. National research into child sexual exploitation undertaken by Barnardo's indicates that Child sexual exploitation (CSE) can affect all children – including those with disabilities – regardless of gender

identity, sexuality, ethnicity, faith or economic background. Nevertheless, public and professional perception often stereotypes victims of CSE as white girls from disadvantaged backgrounds who are assumed to be heterosexual. While some victims and children at risk do meet this description, assumptions can prevent the identification of other children who do not fit the stereotype.

30. The research highlights that understanding CSE and the different methods that perpetrators use to exploit must be considered in parallel with the fact that children are not defined by one aspect of their identity. A victim of sexual exploitation may have multiple identities and, for example, be male, gay, come from a faith group that does not tolerate homosexuality and have a disability. What makes a young person vulnerable to sexual exploitation is very individual, and while an identity alone may not result in vulnerability, all aspects of a child's identity must be considered when identifying and raising awareness of CSE.
31. When the CSE Action Plan is refreshed, we will ensure these equality research findings are built into the work of the Task Group and the action plan.

### **Conclusion and next Steps**

32. Considerable work has been undertaken in a short period of time to provide a robust framework to support those who have suffered with this crime, for those who are vulnerable to this crime, to prevent and deter those who seek to cause harm, and to increase awareness and understanding within our workforce
33. There are still areas of work that need focus on and a continued joint effort by Directorates, Services and Partner agencies to support our commitment to an improved co-ordinated response to CSE.
34. The work that is being undertaken in relation to the CSE Action has ultimate outcome of providing the best care and support for children and young people in Central Bedfordshire.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1: NWG CSE Health Check Report  
Appendix 2: CSE Governance Map