

20 December 2016		ITEM: 8
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Update Report On Child Sexual Exploitation		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: To note Action Plan	
Report of: Claire Pascoe, Child Sexual Exploitation Manager (CATO)		
Accountable Head of Service: Andrew Carter, Children's Social Care (CATO)		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report highlights the key strategic, operational, technological, partnership and practice developments relating to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) as progressed by Thurrock Council. As this is a public document details of current operations and measures to disrupt CSE have not been provided.

Thurrock Council have made significant steps to identify and tackle Child Sexual Exploitation but cannot afford to be complacent. Vigilance across the council and its partners is required to disrupt and prevent the exploitation of children.

The Local Government Association's '*Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation, A resource pack for councils*', 2014, is attached to this report. Members of this committee are asked to ensure that they and their fellow Thurrock Councillors are fully cognisant with the pack and their roles within it.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 For Police and Community Safety to consider securing a data analyst for Thurrock, specifically to work on CSE, missing children and child trafficking data. An analyst would work in collaboration with the Essex Police and would enable professionals to target resources efficiently and effectively.**
- 1.2 Whilst progress has been made awareness raising is still a key issue to truly embed recognition and respond appropriately. There is a need to provide ongoing training and awareness session with Thurrock Councillors. Councillors are encouraged to fully engage in CSE Training.**

- 1.3 **In order to strengthen Thurrock's response to victims, it is proposed that along with SERICC and the LSCB, we consult further with victims of CSE to inform our strategic and operational planning.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Regular reports have been present to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress and impact of steps taken by Children's Social Care and partner agencies to tackle, disrupt and address child sexual exploitation.
- 2.2 Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee have requested a further update on progress within Thurrock.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

This update report on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) has been prepared at the request of Andrew Carter, Head of Children's Social Care for the Thurrock Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It will highlight the key strategic, operational, technological, partnership and practice developments relating to CSE as led and progressed by Thurrock Council, during the period May 2015 to November 2016. Recommendations are made to collaboratively strengthen our individual, and partnership response to safeguarding children from CSE and contributing to the identification and targeting of possible perpetrators.

Key Developments:

Thurrock are committed to improving awareness, assessment, collaborative practice, development of processes and outcomes for the children of Thurrock who may be at risk of CSE or who have been sexually exploited, in a variety of ways: In responding to the findings of numerous reviews into CSE across the country and notably, those of Professor Alexis Jay in her '*Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham 1997-2013*' the CSE Manager (referred to by Ofsted, as CSE co-ordinator), was appointed in May 2015. In collaboration with a range of statutory and voluntary partners, progress within this contested and closely scrutinised field has been externally acknowledged;

i. Ofsted:

Ofsted visited and undertook a single inspection of Thurrock Children's' Social Care in February 2016 for four weeks. Whilst the overall judgement was that Thurrock 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted concluded that children in Thurrock were safe. The work around CSE was acknowledged. Below, are some of a number of direct quotations from the Ofsted report:

- Managers have worked well to make sure that children who are at risk of child sexual exploitation receive a good service that reduces their risk.

- The Child Sexual Exploitation co-ordinator provides social workers and managers with effective challenge, advice and guidance.
- Social workers recognise and respond well when children are at risk of sexual exploitation.
- Positive and focused work with most teenagers and their families is completed by the Adolescent Team. This includes effective use of the child sexual exploitation risk assessment and adolescent neglect tool, when relevant; to support young people in need, including those in need of protection. Clear, directive and creative plans help professionals to prevent family breakdown and provide effective direct work with young people.
- Although the local authority currently keeps separate data in respect of children missing from home, school or care, and those at risk of child sexual exploitation, the operational risk assessment group rigorously cross-checks data against the most recent list of children reported as missing to the police to ensure that individual children are safeguarded and protected.
- Children looked after who are at risk of sexual exploitation receive effective help. Child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and 'Prevent' duty have a high profile, with key leads from relevant agencies working effectively with the LSCB.
- The children most at risk of going missing, sexual exploitation, gang involvement and online exploitation are given comprehensive multi-agency consideration. The effective risk assessment group (RAG) demonstrates added safeguarding value'.

ii. Risk Assessment Group (RAG):

The Risk Assessment Group, (RAG), is a bi-monthly operational multi-agency sub-group of the Local Safeguarding Children Board's, Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE), strategic group. The RAG was created in March 2015. The RAG's remit among others, is to review the cases of all children missing from home or care in Thurrock, and the complex cases of children who are vulnerable to CSE among a wider range of harm. With the benefit of voluntary and statutory partner's participation, and frequently their live access to their organisation's information systems, proposed actions to support and safeguard children and their families are made, recorded and monitored. The effectiveness of the RAG as an added safeguard, was highlighted by Ofsted.

iii. Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Group (MASE):

Strategically overseeing the RAG is the LSCB's MASE Group, which came into operation in June 2015 and is attended by 13 statutory and voluntary agencies. To promote county-wide coherence and transcend boundaries (by which CSE perpetrators are not confined), the Southend Essex and Thurrock (SET), CSE Strategy has been used as the foundation on which the Thurrock,

CSE 'Plan on a Page' has been devised, and which partners are using to guide the development of their individual and collaborative plans to tackle CSE from a victim, as well as perpetrator perspective.

A key role of the MASE Group is to provide challenge around practice and performance among partners: the sharing by Thurrock Social Care of the names of the 10 children assessed to be particularly vulnerable to CSE, ensured all partners were and could as needed, contribute to the plans of these children. Also, and in line with wide ranging research indicating the 'invisibility' of boys as victims of CSE (Office of Children's Commissioner, 2013; Barnardos, 2016), to promote their being kept 'in professional view,' Social Care shared the names of the 5 boys assessed most vulnerable to CSE.

iv. Missing /Found Children's Return Home Interviews:

Research widely confirms the significant association between children who go missing from home and care, and their increased vulnerability to CSE, (DfE, 2014). In working to illuminate the 'push' and 'pull' factors associated with children going missing from home or care, Thurrock Children's Social Care have commissioned the Open Door service to undertake independent return home interviews, (RHI). Improvement in timeliness of referrals of children who have been missing, over the past year can be demonstrated in the time between a child returning from being missing and being referred for their RHI reducing from 14 days in 2015, to an average of 3.5 days over the preceding 7 months to November 2016. Collaboration with Essex Police is currently seeking to reduce this time further, to expedite a child who has been missing, being spoken with within 72 hours, and identified remedies and actions, including potentially Section 47 enquiry being implemented more quickly. An ongoing challenge is to increase the numbers of children who agree to meet with Open Door for RHIs. For those children who decline, allocated Social Workers or whoever the child is most likely to engage with from the team, arrange to speak with the children to find out how they are and how they can be supported in not going missing from home or care again.

The MASE Annual Report was submitted in September 2016, and proposed recommendations have been allocated to partners to develop our response to CSE in safeguarding children further over the coming 12 months.

v. Training and Development:

Partnership working is enshrined in '*Working Together to Safeguard Children, Statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*', (DfE, 2015) and in the CSE-specific *National Action Plan*, (DfE, 2011). The centrality of partnership working is essential in the child protection arena of CSE, where victims frequently do not perceive themselves as victims, or for a wide range of reasons often associated with the impact of grooming, and / or fear, will feel unable to disclose what is happening to them to their families, friends or professionals. Equally,

perpetrators have myriad motivations for keeping their behaviour 'hidden'. In recognition of the apparently 'hidden' nature of CSE indicators and / or evidence, Thurrock Social Care in collaboration with partners, have thoughtfully and intensively invested in training and awareness raising, not only of Social Care Staff, but more widely. Essex Police and Thurrock Social Care have intentionally co-written and co-delivered the training, joined by Open Door and South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre, (SERICC) for the Thurrock Foster Carer and Supported Lodging Provider training:

All training aims to maximise our chances of identifying vulnerabilities and risks associated with CSE, focusing equally, upon perpetrators, and using the multi-agency group to galvanise links / services to children: All training is bespoke, and includes advice on gathering evidence, local and national help and support and the pathways by which professionals and possible victims can share their concerns, make referrals and report abuse. Training completed and planned to date, is as follows:

- Thurrock Children's Social Care Staff: Co-written and delivered by Thurrock CSE Manager and Essex Police: 195 have been trained. Dates into new year have been set.
- Thurrock Foster Carers: Co-written and delivered by CSE Manager and partners, this training covers CSE indicators: Missing Children and processes of reporting / information capture regarding victims and perpetrators, (Essex Police): Return from Missing Interviews and Mentoring (Open Door) and support for children who have been sexually abused / exploited, (SERICC). Fifty eight carers have been trained to date: Dates into the new year have been set.
- Thurrock Licenced Taxi Drivers and Passenger Assistants: CSE and Child Trafficking training: Co-written and Delivered by CSE Manager and Essex Police: 253 have now trained; 220 remain to be trained. Bespoke 'indicators' and 'reporting Pathway cards and air fresheners have been produced for drivers and passenger assistants, and ongoing meetings with the Taxi Operators have been requested into new year set.
- Thurrock Housing Staff: 200 staff have received an introduction to CSE at the 'Eyes and Ears' conference in 2016: further, in depth training is scheduled to be delivered early 2017 for 300 accommodation staff in CSE, Missing and Child Trafficking.
- GPs: 27 Thurrock GPs have received an introduction to CSE.
- Multi-Agency Group: 280 professionals received a 'Gang-related CSE' presentation at the 'Gangs' conference, 2016.

vi. Developing our IT systems to provide a clearer ‘problem profile’ of CSE in Thurrock:

Understanding more closely our CSE ‘problem profile’ in Thurrock is something Social Care is committed to and are working in collaboration with partners to develop our understanding of. To this end, our Children’s information system, LCS, now has an additional, bespoke ‘work space’ for CSE: combined process and practice guidance has been rolled out to Thurrock Social Care staff. Whilst in the nascent stages, it is anticipated that by December 2016, Thurrock Social Care will be able to report on numbers of CSE Risk Assessments having been completed by us, how many children are assessed to be a medium or higher risk of CSE, and to be able to report on a range of other key indicators. These themes and trends will be analysed and shared with MASE partners including the Police. They will be used to inform the emphasis of training, practice and commissioning in order to meet evolving need.

vii. Using national expertise to improve our multi-agency CSE Risk Assessment and Multi-Agency response across the wider Essex partnership:

In collaboration with Essex University, the National Working Group (NWG) a Charitable organisation formed as a UK network for professionals working on the issue of CSE and child trafficking within the UK, and with the Essex and Southend CSE leads, the Thurrock CSE Manager has developed a new, research-informed CSE Risk Assessment for professionals to complete and share with Social Care the Essex Police for children about whom they have CSE concerns. The Risk Assessment is supported by a comprehensive ‘toolbox’ for professionals including a range of interventions, resources, legislation and powers to support victims and their families; equally, to inform the multi-agency targeting and disruption of possible perpetrators. This is due to be launched county wide, on the 21st November, 2016.

viii. Re-launch of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock ‘I Didn’t Know’ CSE campaign:

The, ‘I Didn’t Know’ campaign was a collaboration between Essex Police and Southend, Essex and Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Boards and was successfully launched in March 2016.

The concept for the campaign was inspired by a project designed and created by the Essex Children in Care Council. To maintain focus and further raise awareness about this important area not least our children, their parents and the wider Thurrock community, the Campaign is to be reviewed and re-launched in March 2017.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

To ensure that Thurrock Council and its partners are strategically and operationally able to maintain effective actions to prevent and disrupt CSE; providing support to victims and prosecuting perpetrators.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

Thurrock Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB), Multi-Agency Agency Sexual Exploitation Group.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

Ensuring that children and young people are safe and free from exploitation is a central part of the statutory duties of the Council.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Finance Manager

A full costing breakdown will be required regarding how additional data analysis capacity will be obtain without increasing the staffing budget within Children's Social Care. Funding options across the Council need to be explored and utilised alongside potential funding streams from partners or Innovation bids.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsay Marks**
Principal Solicitor, Children's Safeguarding

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide services to children in need of help and protection, failure to effectively do so could lead to legal challenges and reputational damage. Failure to address CSE could result in significant reputational damage for the council and possible litigation.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community Development and Equalities Manager

The local authority and its partners must ensure that a range of services and provision is in place to protect children from all backgrounds. The impact of CSE on both genders needs to continue to be analysed and addressed.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

N/A

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

N/A

9. **Appendices to the report**

Appendix 1 - The LGA's *'Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation, A resource pack for Councils'*, 2014

Appendix 2 - Thurrock LSCB, Multi-Agency Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children, Strategic Group, Plan on A Page

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