

## **Thurrock response to Child Sexual Exploitation Update May 2015**

This paper provides an overview of the Children and Young People Partnership (CYPP) and Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) position in its development and continuing review of safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation in Thurrock.

Its content takes into account the development of our approach, local context and the reflective learning from a number of reviews and enquiries that have taken place over the last three years across various counties in England and Government and Children's Commissioners reports. It aims to provide the Boards and other relevant organisations with information on the progress and activity made in tackling CSE.

The development of our response is a continuing process and many of our partner agencies have made significant progress in their own approach as single agencies to support the Partnership Boards in achieving the best possible outcome for the children and young people of Thurrock.

The sexual exploitation of children and young people is completely un-acceptable and that is why the CYPP and LSCB have worked in partnership with our colleagues in Southend and Essex to develop a strategy and approach to meet the emerging needs across Essex as well as in Thurrock.

The Children's' Commissioner set out recommendations and minimum standards that LSCB's across the country need to ensure are in place to support tackling CSE. I am pleased to report that those recommendations relevant to Thurrock are in place and support our local response.

Our approach and response to CSE also takes into account the revised Working Together 2015 and its previous editions, the supplementary guidance published in 2009 and the legislation framework of the Criminal Justice System.

We have adopted our response and approach to enable it to be sufficiently flexible to respond to and learn from the experience of other LSCB areas, reviews and future guidance when available.

The CYPP and LSCB have identified tackling the sexual exploitation of children as a key strategic priority and acknowledge child sexual exploitation as an integral part of child abuse. Our LSCB Business Plan and Children's' and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP) reflect this position and CSE is also one of the elements of focus of the Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG) which has been adopted across the Borough.



The Partnership Boards are committed to combating the sexual exploitation of children through effective and coordinated multi agency and partnership working. The Local Safeguarding Children Board work closely with the Children and Young People's Partnership Board (CYPP) and Adult Safeguarding to ensure that children and young people who have been subjected to child sexual exploitation will receive seamless support as they progress from childhood to adulthood.

It is our collective responsibility as agencies to identify those children at risk of CSE, and ensure that swift and appropriate actions are taken to prevent them from becoming sexually exploited and to safeguard them from further risk of harm.

One of the main challenges we have faced over the last 12 months is understanding the local context of CSE which does not stand in isolation from other safeguarding risks and is often hidden. We have reviewed our existing systems for recording safeguarding in this area and have taken a robust and proactive response to improving our approach. As a result, partners have been developing their understanding of risk and the methods of recording this element of child abuse. As part of that work agencies have been reviewing their current systems and processes and conducting audits of young people who may be at risk.

The outcome of those activities has led to a refreshed partnership infrastructure to support our approach to meet the strategic and operational needs over the last 12 months.

The Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) LSCB CSE Strategic Group was established in 2012 and is chaired by the Public Protection Lead for Essex Police. The Strategic Group, which includes representatives from agencies across the three LSCBs, is coordinating the multi-agency response to cases of CSE in Southend, Essex and Thurrock. The LSCB Business Manager, the Local Authority Quality Assurance, Child Protection and LADO Manager and CCG currently represent Thurrock on the group.

The SET CSE group meet on a regular basis and those meetings are recorded and the minutes available for scrutiny. The aspiration of the Strategic Group will always be to identify those at risk of CSE and take steps to prevent CSE occurring. However, if victims of sexual predators are identified, the response must be appropriate and timely to protect them and prevent further offences.

The priorities of the Strategic Group include:

- raising awareness across all agencies,
- the development of CSE Champions in each agency,
- a single co-ordinated intelligence framework
- Prevention, through the early identification and support for children and young people vulnerable to CSE.





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Having agreed the whole Essex strategic approach, Thurrock has looked at its local needs and the LSCB has developed and implemented its local CSE strategy which is available on the website [www.thurrocklscb.org.uk](http://www.thurrocklscb.org.uk)

The CYPP & LSCB Business Manager undertook a review in January 2015 of the existing structures to support our response to CSE. The outcome identified that our response could be enhanced further through developing the CSE strategy locally through a more joined up approach across those groups established within the CYPP and LSCB that support safeguarding children.

In March 2015 we implemented a Risk Assessment Group (RAG) that joined up the previous Missing Person Panel, E-Safety Group and CSE Group to support a seamless approach to risky behaviours. Early indications have already shown additional benefits by these changes with 87 children who have been reported missing being assessed for risk and 24 referrals being reviewed for risk of CSE or other safeguarding risk. This approach has been very positive and enabled a number of young people to be identified at various levels of risk at a much earlier stage.

The Risk Assessment Group (RAG) reports to a newly formed Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Group (MASE) which looks at the strategic implications for the Borough on behalf of the Partnership Boards and report its activities on behalf of the Board on a quarterly basis.

The Thurrock RAG and MASE have the following key functions:

- a) Meet the aims and objectives of the SET CSE strategy
- b) To coordinate and monitor the delivery of a CSE Annual Action Plan for Thurrock
- c) Develop and support the identification and understanding of the scale of the problem of CSE within Thurrock by improving the collecting and monitoring of local data
- e) Report to the LSCB on progress, highlighting any specific barriers or areas of risk
- f) Raise awareness of sexual exploitation within agencies and communities
- g) Encourage the reporting of concerns about sexual exploitation
- h) Support the identification of training and awareness needs of both professionals and the larger community
- i) Disseminate guidance and examples of good practice across all professions and sectors

The groups are currently working on improving the local knowledge and extent of CSE in the Borough and raising awareness. It is in the process of developing a programme of work that will ensure that Thurrock meets and where possible exceeds the needs of tackling CSE and be in a position to respond to any call for evidence of delivery.



The Thurrock Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG) provides an overarching strategy that encompasses sexual exploitation as one of its components. This approach will enable the LSCB and CYPP to maintain its wider safeguarding responsibilities whilst maintaining oversight and scrutiny through the currently agreed reporting structures. Members of the Partnership Boards sit on all safeguarding groups which ensure that the views of the LSCB and CYPP are reflected in their work.

### **CSE Training provision**

Until recently training in CSE has been covered under its broader context in the multi agency child protection training programmes. This has been reviewed by the Inter Agency Group of the Children's Partnership and a separate programme in addition to this training has been agreed.

The LSCB have also recommended that individual agencies review their single agency training of CSE and in support of this an initial multi agency training stakeholder event took place on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2014 and this is now an annual process.

The current multi agency training approach to CSE training has been developed to focus on front line staff across the Borough that may have contact with children, young people and families.

The LSCB have provided an online basic CSE awareness course – free for all partners and those agencies working with children and families in Thurrock. I am pleased to report that since embarking on the programme in December 2013 we have issued 1,794 licences at the time of this report, of which 877 have been completed. These include practitioners from children's social care, police, health, schools, academies and third sector services.

CSE Champion training is also being provided to enable additional knowledge and awareness to be available to supervisors and managers supporting front line staff. A champion will be an individual such as the safeguarding lead at a school, team leader or GP safeguarding practice lead. In addition to completing the e-learning course they will attend a day session explaining the Thurrock approach to CSE in more detail including a risk assessment toolkit and intelligence pathway. This training began in March 2015 with 72 champions trained with further courses planned.

Agency lead Champion training - All partners represented on the LSCB have nominated a lead professional for CSE, who will act as the single point of contact for all matters relating to child sexual exploitation for their individual agency. They will also have completed the on line course and attend a half day lead champion session planned for 2015.



### **CSE Risk Assessment toolkit**

To aid front line practitioners and managers in determining the best response to a child or young person who may be at risk of CSE, the SET Strategic Group agreed a Common Risk Assessment Toolkit to aid identification of the risk a young person or child may face. This process is now embedded within the MASH and across Children's Social Care with further work continuing across all partner agencies.

### **Intelligence Pathway – Operation CARE**

Essex Police have agreed to be the lead agency in collating CSE intelligence. There is no specific offence of CSE and its pathways have been varied. All intelligence received associated with CSE is now tagged "Operation Care". This enables analytical work to be conducted and produced to aid identification of linked offences or intelligence that will support a better understanding of the scale of the problem. An intelligence notification form is in place to enable any agency to provide information.

### **CSE Referral Pathway**

CSE is recognised as a form of sexual abuse and to ensure clarity for those involved in working with children and young people the existing procedures for reporting or referring potential safeguarding cases will be in accordance with existing practice for safeguarding concerns. The SET Procedures have recently been refreshed (March 2015) and a more detailed section on CSE has been included to support practitioners.

### **Raising awareness**

One of the core functions of the Partnership Boards is to build on raising the awareness of the CSE agenda which is being approached in two phases. The first phase is to ensure that front line staff is fully aware of the signs and indicators and the referral pathways. This is continually being delivered through a number of mediums including training, marketing material and on line development.

The warning signs and vulnerability checklist identified in the Interim Report from the Children's Commission was originally circulated in December 2012 and are included in leaflets produced for professionals across the Borough by the LSCB.

The LSCB Conference 2012 was focused on child sexual exploitation and included information and learning workshops and continues to provide a platform for learning. This work is being built on further at the 2015 LSCB conference.

The second phase includes raising awareness of the risks of CSE with children, young people and parents. The LSCB conducted a series of 6 road shows during March 2014 to capture 5,570 young people from years 5, 6 & 7 from every School and Academy across the Borough. This engagement with young people in Thurrock took place again in March



2015 with 1,662 year 5 pupils attending the roadshows. During these events a survey is undertaken which has provided valuable insight into the virtual world of our young people and the potential risks they face. Hearing the voice of the child has provided a greater awareness for our partners to their safeguarding needs in this area.

This approach although a significant logistical challenge to implement, has provided further opportunities to develop our engagement with parents and professionals.

Following these roadshows we have conducted a series of events for parents and professionals to raise awareness of E-Safety, CSE and share what the young people were telling us. Since these programmes began they have been attended by over 376 professionals and parents with further programmes scheduled during 2015.

### **SCR Julia**

As part of our learning improvement framework, the learning from the recent serious case review “Julia” published in December 2014 has been cascaded across the partner agencies through a series of front line workshops, leaflets and booklets to support learning from this case. The overview booklet of the review has been developed to provide an easy read for front line staff with over 550 of the booklets circulated. Workshop events with Children’s Social Care and Education Safeguarding Leads and Head Teachers have taken place, along with single agencies cascading the learning across the children’s workforce. A detailed action plan supporting the learning is in place and reviewed regularly to ensure practice reflects the learning from this review.

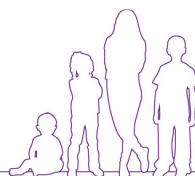
### **Youth Safeguarding Ambassadors.**

I am pleased to report an exciting opportunity to develop further, hearing the voice of the child and capturing real time evidence of young people’s needs through the introduction of Safeguarding Ambassadors. These are young people ages 11-19 from the Thurrock Youth Cabinet who want to support the partners in their safeguarding responsibilities. 12 young people so far have agreed to undertake the youth ambassador role. This will incorporate networking with safeguarding leads in Schools and Academies, speaking with their peers and being our eyes and ears on the ground capturing real-time information.

### **Next steps**

The Partnership Boards will continue to closely monitor the impact and outcomes of Thurrock’s approach to tackling CSE and the implementation of the action plans from the Children’s Commissioners and other learning frameworks.

This report has provided an overview of where we are. Work continues on a daily basis as the developing landscape changes. Together the Partnership Boards will continue with





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their focus on better engagement with children and young people to ensure that their voice is heard in our future policies and procedures and the understanding of the benefits of the early offer of help provision is embedded across the Borough.

*A P Cotgrove*

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