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| 18 June 2015 | | ITEM: 8 |
| Corporate Parenting Committee | | |
| Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children | | |
| Wards and communities affected: All | Key Decision: Non key | |
| Report of: Andrew Carter | | |
| Accountable Head of Service: Andrew Carter | | |
| Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton. Director of Children's Services | | |
| This report is Public | | |

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview to the Corporate Parenting Committee on actions currently taken to identify, disrupt and support victims of child sexual exploitation, (CSE).

In line with the risk of CSE and the risk to children and young people in general this report also sets out the actions taken to prevent and address children and young people going missing from home and care.

This report sets out the current and developing position in relation to missing children and CSE in Thurrock against national and statutory guidance.

1. Recommendation(s)

That the Corporate Parenting Committee:

- 1.1 Continue to review the actions of the council to address CSE and Children Missing from Care.**
- 1.2 Scrutinise the implementation and development of targeted preventative and self-protection programme on child sexual exploitation for looked after children.**
- 1.3 Consider the learning from the Jay Report, Casey report and LGA, Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation: A Resource Pack for Councils, and ensure that Thurrock Council effectively discharges its function as a corporate parent.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Please see attached reports presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2014 and March 2015 (Appendix 1 and 2). The November 2015 report provides an effective summary of the Jay Report but all members are encouraged to read the Jay Report in full.
- 2.2 Since the publication of the Jay Report, Ofsted have published (17.11.14) the outcome of their thematic review of CSE – The Sexual exploitation of children: it couldn't happen here, could it? (Appendix 3).
- 2.3 As presented to the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2015 the Ofsted Thematic Review makes the following key findings nationally:

2.3.1 Strategic leadership

- full responsibilities to prevent child sexual exploitation, to protect victims and to pursue and prosecute the perpetrators are not being met
- the pace to meet statutory duties is too slow
- local arrangements are poorly informed by local issues and self-assessment and do not link up with other local strategic plans
- specific training - is of good quality but it is not always reaching those that need it most.

2.3.2 Performance management

- local authorities are not collecting or sharing with their partners the information they need in order to have an accurate picture of the full extent of child sexual exploitation in their area
- not all local authorities and LSCBs evaluate how effectively they are managing child sexual exploitation cases
- raising awareness
- successful use a range of innovative and creative campaigns.

2.3.3 Findings from practice

- formal child protection procedures are not always followed
- screening and assessment tools are not well or consistently used
- plans are not robust: CIN are poor; child protection and looked-after children plans vary in quality; no contingency plan in place if the initial plan was not successful
- plans for Children in Need are not routinely reviewed

- management oversight is not strong enough to ensure cases are always being properly progressed or monitored in line with the plan
- a dedicated child sexual exploitation team does not always ensure that children receive an improved service – 2 workers

2.3.4 Disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators

Full range of powers to disrupt and prosecute perpetrators are not being used

2.3.5 Missing children

- too many children do not have a return interview following a missing episode
- not cross-referencing CSE information with frequently absent from school
- even when the correct protocols are used, too many children still go missing.

2.4 The Ofsted Thematic made the following recommendations for local authorities:

- improve management oversight of assessments, plans and case review arrangements
- every child returning from a missing episode is given a return interview; set of standards; information centrally collated
- schools and the local authority cross-reference absence information with risk assessments for individual children and young people
- establish a targeted preventative and self-protection programme on child sexual exploitation for looked after children

2.4.1 Local authorities and partners:

- develop and publish a CSE action plan; progress should be regularly shared with strategic boards and senior leaders
- proactive sharing of information and intelligence
- consider using child sexual exploitation assessment tools
- have sufficient therapeutic support available
- experiences of victims and families should inform strategies and plans
- enable professionals to build stable, trusting and lasting relationships with children and young people
- effectiveness of local schools in raising awareness

2.5 On 4th February 2015 Louise Casey CB, Report of Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council was published. It is recommended that all members of the committee read the report available at the link below.

The report is significant in building on the recommendations within the Jay Report and particularly for members in again setting out the crucial role that elected members play.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-inspection-of-rotherham-metropolitan-borough-council>

- 2.6 A copy of the Local Government Association publication, Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation: A Resource Pack for Council has been included at Appendix (4) of this report. The pack contains key lines of enquiry for all councillors and it is recommended that Thurrock Council adopt these.
- 2.7 There is a clear link between the risk of CSE and children who are missing from home and or care. Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away from Home or Care was published in January 2014 and a copy is again attached to this report (Appendix 5). Annex A of the statutory guidance provides a clear checklist for local authorities in relation to missing children. The checklist and Thurrock's actions and action plans against the checklist are set out below under section 3.7.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1. As in the March 2015 Overview & Scrutiny Committee report the recommendations from the Ofsted thematic have been set out below and actions in relation to these updated and summarised up to the point of writing this report in May 2015 we have:
 - 3.1.1 Improved management oversight of assessments, plans and case review arrangements.
 - 3.1.2 Carried out a review of all current cases of suspected CSE and medium to high risks of CSE as set out in the previous report to committee on 11.11.15. The review will also look back at cases up to 5 years previous to 2014.
 - 3.1.3 The report on the review is being finalised and co-ordinated by Essex police to pull the individual reviews by Southend, Essex and Thurrock (S.E.T) together into one overarching review under the S.E.T procedures.
 - 3.1.4 Modelling best practice, a dedicated Senior Social Worker for CSE cases has been recruited to strengthen our assessment, planning and review arrangements.
 - 3.1.5 Effective links are being maintained and information sharing taking place across the CSE Practitioners in Thurrock, Southend and Essex on an operational (case by case level) and on a strategic level (S.E.T, CSE Group).
 - 3.1.6 As part of the Eastern Region performance improvement framework a peer review is taking place between partner agencies across the region. A CSE Peer Review between Thurrock and Southend is being scoped at the time of writing and mutual dates are being confirmed.

3.1.7 Under the umbrella of the Thurrock Safeguarding Children's Board the multi-agency Risk Assessment Group meets fortnightly to consider children at risk, including those who are at risk of CSE and absconding.

3.1.8 As set out later in this report the Thurrock LSCB, Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation Group has been established to strengthen the strategic management of CSE.

3.1.9 The Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has received two recent reports on CSE in November 2014 and March 2015.

3.1.10 A report on Thurrock's Current Response to CSE and a separate report on CSE and Gangs, A Year on: Report from the Children's Commissioner, was presented to the Children's Partnership Full Board on 1.6.15.

3.1.11 The Portfolio holder is regularly briefed re: any issues or concerns including CSE and children who are missing from Home and Care.

3.1.12 The Head of Children's Social Care and Director are informed of any child who is reported as missing to Thurrock Children's Social Care.

3.2 Every child returning from a missing episode is given a return interview which adheres to a set of standards and information is centrally collated

3.2.1 'Returning interviews' have been commissioned from Open Door and all young people are offered an independent interview. Information from the interviews is centrally collated and the risks considered within the LSCB Risk Assessment Group.

3.2.2 Whilst the offer of returning interviews is effective the take up of such interviews is mixed with a high proportion of young people declining the interviews in some months. The LSCB Risk Assessment Group are monitoring this and assisting in coordinating multi-agency intervention and approaches where we have young people with multiple episodes of going missing but no engagement with return interviews.

3.2.3 Spreadsheets are being maintained to track the young people who go missing from home and care, the number of episodes of missing and the assessment of risk of CSE.

3.2.4 The LSCB's Risk Assessment Group's holistic focus on risk means that multi-agency approaches can be developed in relation to a wide range of risks including non-sexual exploitation; self-harm; substance misuse; serious youth violence and gangs, etc. as well as CSE.

3.3 Schools and the local authority cross-reference absence information with risk assessments for individual children and young people

- 3.3.1 Children missing education are closely monitored by Children's Services. A weekly report is provided to the DCS and monitored to ensure that children are in appropriate educational provision and safeguarded. Children missing education are considered at the fortnightly LSCB, Risk Assessment Group where there are additional concerns about their welfare, as well as at the monthly Director's CME surgery.
- 3.4 **Establish a targeted preventative and self-protection programme on child sexual exploitation for looked after children**
- 3.4.1 Consultation has taken place with the Children in Care Council (CiCC) in relation to the development and embedding of targeted preventative and self-protection programmes on sexual exploitation for looked after children.
- 3.4.2 Members of the Children in Care Council have told us that:
- a) they want social workers to be confident in talking to young people about CSE
 - b) they want foster carers and placements to be confident in talking about CSE and to receive appropriate training
 - c) they want access to information and emails / texts detailing useful information and websites
 - d) they want appropriate events and consultations for young people to include information in relation to CSE and relationship abuse
 - e) they continue to want information to keep them safe online (and within social media) and for adults not to simply remove their access
- 3.4.3 The CSE Practitioner is leading on developing the targeted programme for looked after children incorporating the information from the consultation with the CiCC above.
- 3.4.4 The department are exploring if it is possible to use existing guidance or to develop specific age appropriate guidance to be share with looked after children and care leavers.
- 3.4.5 CSE training is being offered to foster carers as part of the LSCB programme and copies of Vodafone, 'Digital Parenting' magazine, which covers 'grooming' and online protection are being sent to in-house foster carers. This is in addition to LSCB information that has previously been circulated.
- 3.4.6 As requested by young people a link has been added to the Thurrock LSCB website to the national 'This is Abuse' relationship abuse website -
- <http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/>
- 3.4.7 The Children's Social Care children leaving care group work programme has been developed to include the risk of sexual exploitation and relationship based abuse. The 'Big Wide World' guidance for young people leaving care

and care leavers is being updated to reflect current information and advice on CSE and relationship based abuse.

3.4.8 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. Twelve 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.

3.5 Local authorities and partners

3.5.1 Develop and publish a CSE action plan; progress should be regularly shared with strategic boards and senior leaders.

3.5.2 A local CSE Action Plan and revised CSE Strategy are in place.

3.5.3 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 co-ordinating 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.

3.5.4 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.

3.5.5 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.

3.5.6 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

3.5.7 Thurrock LSCB has established a Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation Group (MASE). The terms of reference for the group are:

3.5.8 **Remit**

The Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) sub group is a formally constituted arm of Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Board (Thurrock LSCB). Its core functions are:

- to reduce the harm caused by Sexual Exploitation to Children and Young People in the Borough.
- provide strategic direction for the LSCB Risk Assessment Group meetings and report activities to the Thurrock LSCB Full Board.

3.5.9 **Main Responsibilities**

The MASE will:

- work collaboratively with all agencies to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children and young people who are being, or are at risk of being, sexually exploited.
- apply proactive problem solving to address the risks associated with victim, perpetrators and locations and ensure the safeguarding and welfare and young people who are or may be at risk of sexual exploitation.
- raise awareness and provide preventative education for the welfare of children and young people.

3.5.10 **Membership**

The sub-group will:

- comprise of named representatives of constituent agencies of the main Board, including education, children's social care, health providers and police representatives.
- extend to other organisations by the agreement of the Board.
- elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson with the chairperson being a member of the main Board.

3.5.11 **Accountability and Reporting**

- The sub-group is accountable via the chair/vice-chair to the Thurrock LSCB Management Executive Group.
- The chair/vice-chair is also accountable to the main LSCB Full Board.

3.5.12 The MASE will:

- Meet every six weeks
- Provide minutes of the meetings for the attention of the Board
- Provide the Board Manager with a planned agenda two weeks in advance of each meeting.
- Provide accounts of its activities on a quarterly basis or more frequently as required for the scrutiny and endorsement of the main Board.

3.5.13 Processes

The MASE will:

- Review progress of cases and ensure action is being taken by whichever agency is involved in individual cases.
- Identify any trends or problem locations and ensure they are dealt with.
- Look at cross border issues and ensure there is a co-ordinated approach with other boroughs.
- Ensure children looked after placed away from the borough and at risk of CSE are being protected by the agencies where they are located.
- Receive updates from the LSCB Risk Assessment Group on the work being undertaken.

3.5.14 Principles

The sub-group will:

- Retain a child focus to its work, recognising that each child is unique and having due regard to the diversity of race, language, culture, religion and gender in generating better informed practice.
- Remain alert to the vulnerability of certain populations of children according to age, disability, family context and to those who are disadvantaged by poverty and social exclusion.
- Conduct its business with a focus on supporting individuals and agencies to help promote the welfare and safety of children.
- Complement and contribute to, but not duplicate, the work of the Inspectorates and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

3.5.15 The first meeting of the MASE group was held on 2 June 2015.

3.6 Proactive sharing of information and intelligence

Intelligence Pathway

- 3.6.1 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. 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.
- 3.6.2 Clear inter-agency information sharing procedures are in place and supported by the MASH.
- 3.6.3 The Thurrock RAG Group; Thurrock MASE & S.E.T CSE groups provide platforms to promote and monitor effective information sharing at an operational, strategic and regional level.
- 3.6.4 Operational information sharing and intelligence gathering is being strengthened with the ability to focus and target CSE, that the CSE Practitioner and CSE Champions within agencies provide.

3.7 Consider using child sexual exploitation assessment tools

- 3.7.1 Child Sexual Exploitation risk assessment toolkits are in place and their use is being monitored.
- 3.7.2 In line with the letter to Directors of Children's Services from Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker for Children & Families dated 3.3.15 (Appendix 6), Thurrock Children's Services are mindful that tools are useful but are no substitute for sound professional judgement.
- 3.7.3 In reviewing the use of the CSE Assessment Tool the department and partners have established that while there are examples of excellent practice there is also a need for greater consistency of analysis.
- 3.7.4 The CSE Practitioner is working with teams and CSE to continue to improve the quality of assessments.
- 3.7.5 New pathways and guidance have been developed for workers in relation to missing children and CSE in order to strengthen, simplify and align pathways to maximise effectiveness.
- 3.7.6 Along with the new pathways, a new CSE Risk Management Plan is being introduced to ensure greater clarity regarding the actions to be taken, by whom, by when and towards what outcome.

3.7.7 Children identified as a medium to high risk within the risk assessment tool are referred to the LSCB, Risk Assessment Group and have strategy meetings held to consider how to progress the case in line with child protection procedures.

3.8 Have sufficient therapeutic support available

3.8.1 Targeted and effective support for victims is available from South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre (SERICC).

3.9 Experiences of victims and families should inform strategies and plans

3.9.1 We continue to review plans and acknowledge that greater action is needed to fully co-produce our strategies and plans.

3.10 Enable professionals to build stable, trusting and lasting relationships with children and young people

3.10.1 We continue to promote and develop relationship based social work and direct work with children and young people to allow meaningful relationships.

3.10.2 The retention and recruitment of social workers is a key priority for Thurrock Council. A strategic, and separate operational, retention and recruitment board have been established to drive forward and monitor the retention and recruitment strategy.

3.10.3 The department's recruitment strategy is focused on growing our own social workers (NQSWs) and retaining experienced social workers.

3.10.4 We wish to avoid any child having multiple social workers and being unable to develop a meaningful relationship that can promote their protection and welfare.

3.11 Effectiveness of local schools in raising awareness

3.11.1 Extensive e-safety and awareness raising campaigns have been, and continue to be, undertaken with schools.

3.11.2 The LSCB conducted a series of six road shows during March 2014 to capture 5,570 young people from years 5, 6 & 7 from every School and Academy across the Borough.

3.11.3 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.

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

3.11.5 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.

3.12 CSE Training Provision

3.12.1 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.

3.12.2 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 7th February 2014 and this is now an annual process.

3.12.3 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.

3.12.4 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.

3.12.5 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.

3.12.6 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.

- 3.13 The Annex A checklist for Children Missing from Home and Care is set out below with the actions and action plans in place within Thurrock:

Annex A - Checklist for local authorities

| Checklist | |
|---|--|
| Do you have a lead manager in place with strategic responsibility for children who run away or go missing? | YES |
| Do you have a Runaway and Missing From Home and Care Protocol (RMFHC Protocol)? | YES |
| Do you have a clear definition of a child who has run away? | YES |
| Does your LSCB have in place systems to monitor prevalence of and the responses to children who go missing, including gathering data from LSCB members and other local stakeholders in order to understand trends and patterns? | YES |
| Do you have effective working relationships with your local police force? | YES |
| Do you have effective partnerships with the voluntary sector, relevant specialist services and information about national level resources, eg, helplines for missing children? | YES |
| Do you have clear procedures in place to offer return interviews when a missing child is found? | YES |
| Do you have support services in place for children and their families? | YES |
| Do you have a strategy to prevent children from running away and to deal with repeat runaways? | YES re: repeat runaways and NO re: prevention. |

- 3.14 Thurrock Children's Social Care are working with the LSCB and S.E.T CSE / Missing group to pull together a clear over-arching strategy to prevent young people from going missing. Thurrock has effective measures in place once a child or young person is identified as being at risk of going missing but the department (and partners) are seeking to establish a more pro-active and early intervention approach with universal services to education and discourage young people from going missing.
- 3.15 At the point of writing (29th May 2015) Thurrock has one child reported as missing from home and four as missing from care. Essex Police data for 2014/15 shows that there were 201 episodes (periods) of children and young people reported as missing in Thurrock.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To continually review and ensure the effectiveness of local responses to CSE and Missing Children.

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

Not applicable.

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

- 6.1 To be effective strategies to disrupt and prevent CSE must incorporate the full functions of the Council and its partners.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

This Report is for information only and there are no immediate financial implications arising from this report

7.2 Legal

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

This report is for information only and there are no legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Karen Wheeler**
Head of Strategy & Communications

CSE procedures must equally protect boys/young men and girls/young women and respond appropriately to their needs with due consideration of their racial, religious, cultural, disability, sexual orientation or other characteristics.

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

Not applicable.

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):

Ofsted Thematic Report on CSE

11.11.14 Overview and Scrutiny Report on CSE 'Responses to the Jay Report'.

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 - Report dated 11th November 2014 to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Child Sexual Exploitation and the Jay report – implications for Thurrock
- Appendix 2 - Report dated 10th March 2015 to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Child Sexual Exploitation – Update
- Appendix 3 - Ofsted thematic review of CSE – The Sexual exploitation of children: it couldn't happen here, could it?
- Appendix 4 - Local Government Association publication, Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation: A Resource Pack for Council
- Appendix 5 - DfE Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home
- Appendix 6 - Letter from Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker for Children and Families re Tackling child sexual exploitation – review of assessment and decision making tools.

Report Author:

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