

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	May 3 rd 2016
Report of:	Kate Rose, Head of Safeguarding, Children and Families
Subject/Title:	Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Update

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This is a progress update following the work led by the late Cllr Hoyland in relation to the CSE Task and Finish Group investigation into the Council's CSE safeguarding arrangements and incorporates the findings in respect of CSE from the inspection of children's services by Ofsted in July 2015. As with all child protection issues those that affect children who are victims of child sexual exploitation are complex, these children often believe that they are in a loving relationship with their abuser. Whilst the achievements in this area have been steady we remain ever vigilant and clear with partners of the need to continue to improve.

2.0 Acknowledgements

- 2.1 Cheshire East Council would like to thank the Members of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their work in giving their time and focus in making this national issue a local priority.
- 2.2 We would also acknowledge with thanks the work of our frontline practitioners across the partnership agencies who work together to safeguard and protect the children and young people of Cheshire East who experience Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 2.3 The most important acknowledgement needs to be to our children and young people who help us reflect on the services that we provide for them so that we can ensure our services are of good quality.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet receive the report and subsequent updated report and support the continued work of the Children and Family Scrutiny task and finish group carrying out further challenge in this area.
- 3.2 That Cabinet reaffirms its commitment to preventing child sexual exploitation across the services.

- 3.3 That the improvements and positive developments to date, as outlined in the update report be noted and welcomed.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 This report is a progress update from the report accompanying this paper based on work carried out by the task and finish group.

5.0 Update

- 5.1 This report updates against the key areas identified within the previous report:

- 5.2 Management of individual cases: Cheshire East Local Authority takes the risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) extremely seriously and considers this to be a child protection concern. We ensure the voice and experience of the child is at the centre of the decision making to protect them, and provide an independent advocate to support children subject to a CSE plan. A great deal of our work in this area is informed by the views and experience of children and young people for example: they were involved in the appointment of the commissioned service, they reviewed the CSE screening tool, they are involved in the audit of the effectiveness of our work, they have worked with us to evaluate the various tools we use for working with them, and we are currently developing a young person led evaluation process for our CSE service through the Investing in Children Membership scheme.

- 5.3 Children most at risk are made subject of a multi-agency CSE plan. We also operate a multi-agency CSE Operational group to share intelligence at a lower level to prevent harm, identify multiple victims/connections, inform targeted interventions and identify and disrupt perpetrators and locations. The effectiveness of this was recognised in the Ofsted inspection in July last year. The report stated, "*The strategic response to children who go missing or are at risk of child sexual exploitation is strong*" and "*Professionals across Cheshire are using intelligence successfully to identify and disrupt perpetrators*". We are aware that there is further work to do to improve the assessment by social workers and use that to reduce the risk to children. The significant changes in the Children's Social Care workforce have also meant that there is a need to continue to train and equip our frontline staff to improve their knowledge and skills. CSE training has been offered to all front line social workers to support them in gaining knowledge, confidence and skills in this area. The Champions group have recently produced a resource pack of tools for front-line workers where CSE is a factor, evaluated by our children and young people.

- 5.4 Profile: Not surprisingly, many of our children and young people who are most at risk of CSE come from abusive, backgrounds, which increases their vulnerability to exploitation and are often initially resistant to intervention, believing they are in a loving relationship. In Cheshire East

at any one time, we probably have approximately 14 children and young people at serious risk of CSE. These will often be children aged between 11 and 17.

- 5.5 The multi-agency CSE operational group has enabled us to build a picture of vulnerability before the risk is high. In the past 6 months we have considered 60 referrals; 49 of which were concerning young people at risk, and 11 concerning persons of interest. There were also 5 young people who transferred to Adult Services for support, as per the protocol, as their vulnerability remained high as they reached their 18 birthday. The group also considered action in respect of 3 locations that were posing a potential risk/draw to young people. The factors that are most significant for increasing the vulnerability of our children and young people are difficulties at home, including family relationships, social media and peer pressure.
- 5.6 Child sexual exploitation is not a criminal offence as such, but an umbrella term for a number of offences against children. In the last 6 months at the Operational group, 4% of the children and 36% of the persons of interest discussed have led to formal police investigation. However, the value of information sharing can not be underestimated.
- 5.7 The profile for the persons of interest in Cheshire East is that they tend to be male (91%) and aged under 21 (55%). The majority, 91%, were thought to put young people at risk through their established relationships with young girls, which dovetails with the finding that young people were most at risk from associations with 'boyfriends' or peers. 18% had had an allegation of rape made against them, and 27% were a risk through their social media relationships and online activity.
- 5.8 There were examples of persons of interest using friendship groups to 'groom' other young people. Forty five percent of the persons of interest considered showed a common theme of controlling behaviour, and 9% had their own vulnerabilities and behavioural issues, 18% displaying anger issues.
- 5.9 Strategic approach to CSE: Last year a new PAN Cheshire Strategic Plan for CSE was agreed across the 4 member Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB). This has a local implementation plan that is tracked through the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Board. The Police and Crime Commissioner held a PAN Cheshire CSE summit on 17th December 2014 to ensure that the responses across Cheshire were effective and this was revisited with the independent chairs in November 2015. In response to the letter earlier this year from Isabelle Trowler (Chief Social Worker), the CSE screening tool was reviewed and assurance provided in respect of its suitability. This is currently being revaluated with children, young people, parents and frontline practitioners as part of an annual process to promote best practice.

- 5.10 The multi-agency training, both general, through the LSCB, and bespoke/ targeted (for example to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and school governors) has continued in Cheshire East and is now being developed to include partnership groups across the voluntary, community and faith sector. We have also developed an e-learning module that is due to go live after an initial pilot through the CSE Champions group.
- 5.11 We have seen an increase in the number of children placed on a CSE plan and those brought to the CSE Operational group. Through this work, we have also recognised the vulnerability of our child population transitioning into adulthood and have established a pathway with adult services for those young people to continue with a plan of support and protection beyond the age of 18. Whilst this was established relatively recently it is currently the only such arrangement within PAN Cheshire and the region and is working well.
- 5.12 The recent Ofsted Inspection report stated that, *'Child sexual exploitation arrangements are coordinated and delivered well at a local and pan-Cheshire level through the CESCOB and the community strategic partnership. A range of strategic and operational forums effectively deliver the multi-agency strategy, including the pan-Cheshire and CESC child sexual exploitation and missing from home sub-groups. The sub-group structure reflects how well this area of safeguarding is prioritised within Cheshire East with a multi-agency champions group and an operational group collectively demonstrating determination to ensure young people are safeguarded'*.
- 5.13 Integrated Team approach: The Integrated Multi-agency Team for Missing from Home and Child Sexual Exploitation has made progress. The team of Missing From Home/CSE commissioned workers from Catch 22 and the police and health lead have moved to Sandbach House and remain working alongside multi-agency 'front door', ChECS. Catch 22 has been re-commissioned which has increased to meet the demands and all these workers are now in place. This has been the result of investment from the Council.
- 5.14 There is a commitment from Education Welfare to provide a worker to the team, and it is expected this will make progress in the next month. The work of the commissioned service across the 4 local authorities on CSE and Missing from Home was shortlisted and won a national children's award for its partnership working. The Ofsted report stated *"The Local Authority and its partners take seriously their duties and responsibilities to those children who go missing from home or care and have worked well together to establish clear strategies and protocols to help these children"*.
- 5.15 Taxi Drivers; the issue identified in paragraph 3.8 of the attached report in respect of taxi drivers continues to be a focus of shared activity. These are:

a lack of consistency in respect of the conditions attached to licences in different local authority areas

little evidence that intelligence is shared between authorities, especially about applicants who, for instance, may have made an unsuccessful application in one area, but subsequently secure a licence with another authority.

that where a driver who has committed a criminal offence or breached the conditions of the operating licence the police will notify the licensing authority, but this may not necessarily be the authority in which the driver mainly operates.

The police have worked with the licensing section of the Council. The plan is for taxi and private hire drivers licensed to Cheshire East to be required to have completed safeguarding training. The aim of this engagement is to promote these drivers as potential 'eyes and ears' to prevent harm as well as minimise and manage risk. The issue of inconsistency across Local Authorities is, as indicated in the report, a national challenge but this is being taken up through the appropriate Committee and regional networks. The intelligence locally has so far identified this risk for children in Cheshire East as small and not the dominant factor in our offending profile. A Notice of Motion was heard at Cabinet in January with agreement that a letter would be written to highlight the legislative gap and risk for licensing and operation of taxis across Local Authority boundaries and requesting a change.

- 5.16 On a Pan Cheshire basis, steps have been taken to mitigate the risk for taxis operating across boundaries locally. To facilitate the better sharing of information, Cheshire Constabulary and Local Authorities within Cheshire entered into an Information Sharing Agreement. This agreement provides clarity and guidance on when and what information will be shared between signatories, including Cheshire East. Information given under the agreement has resulted in our General Licensing Sub-Committee revoking licences where drivers have been charged with sexual offences.
- 5.17 The report was correct and helpful in identifying the need for regular meetings to be set up between the LSCB Independent Chair and the Chief Executive on the Council. This provides a direct line to ensure the Chief Executive is informed of the critical areas impacting on the effective Safeguarding of children in the Local Authority. These meetings are taking place and are planned throughout the year.
- 5.18 Discussions have taken place through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board to strengthen the integrated multi-agency nature of the initial response to consultations about children. The Safeguarding Children in Education Settings (SCiES) team continue to work with the ChECS team every afternoon, and the education welfare provision is also planned to start. Health colleagues have also been considering a restructure to their provision to operate within the team and this is expected. The Domestic Abuse Hub is also situated with ChECS and

we have recently agreed a new pathway from the Hub for triage for all children,

- 5.19 **Partnership:** Child sexual exploitation is clearly not only a Council only issue and through the Local Safeguarding Children Board, we work closely with all our statutory and non statutory partners, (for example, police, schools, sexual health, probation, communities). These partner agencies are being asked to report how they are meeting their single agency requirements to ensure their front line staff are connected with the key issues in safeguarding children.
- 5.20 The Pan Cheshire CSE group continue to deliver their communication strategy in respect of CSE, focusing and targeting key front line staff on a monthly basis, and themed to ensure a concentrated focus. Over the months this has included, schools, taxi drivers and hotels, the public and private providers of children's homes, health providers and the late night economy. We have also developed a web site <http://www.knowandsee.co.uk/>. The communication strategy has been shortlisted for a national award.
- 5.21 There is also ongoing work to raise the profile within our community and faith groups, working in partnership with Community Safety. Within Cheshire East, all Children's workers received a CSE E-bulletin setting out key messages for them and many participated in National CSE Awareness Day. There is a CSE Champions group established across all the agencies to sustain momentum and inform us what front line practitioners need to be effective. The DCS and Chief Constable recently wrote a joint letter to all parents of secondary school children to advise them of CSE, the risks and support available if they had concerns.
- 5.22 The challenges of cross border exploitation have been identified for some time and the report was really useful in highlighting these. In response we have established a group with the Local Authority representatives who share a border with Cheshire East. As a result of this, I have written a protocol that has gone to the North West Regional Safeguarding Group for agreement together with a template for sharing information and providing trigger plans to keep these children safe as they move or are trafficked across our Local Authority borders. This has recently been agreed.
- 5.23 Whilst there are still areas that need to develop and progress there is a commitment to ensure we act effectively to prevent, identify and protect the children in Cheshire East.
- 5.24 The work and findings of the task and finish group was welcomed and extremely useful in providing a focus, challenge and reflection on the work we are doing to safeguard our children from child sexual exploitation. This remains an issue of national political concern and

priority, including a key strand of agency inspections including the recent Ofsted and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary visits in Cheshire. Any further work planned by this committee would be supported.

- 5.25 The Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish group are now progressing phase two of this work stream. The focus is on scrutinising the impact our practice makes to keep this group of children and young people safe. This is through the tracking of two cases and will be completed by September. The findings will then be reported through the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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