

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Task and Finish Group
December 2014– August 2016

1.0 Chairman's Foreword

- 1.1 Following the issue of the Interim Report of the CSE Task and Finish Group, a reconstituted group was formed. This had become necessary following the sad and untimely death of the previous chairman, Phil Hoyland, and the local elections which brought new membership on to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 The new group met collectively on seven occasions, and other meetings took place involving two, or one, members with other individuals on five occasions.
- 1.3 Our task, we considered, was to ensure that the service provided by the council was as good as it could be for those young people who are caught up in CSE and that they are given the support they need in efforts to try to deal with this problem.
- 1.4 The additional meetings referred to in para 2 above, took place as follows:
- 1.5 13th June, 2016 - Cllrs. Dorothy Flude and Rhoda Bailey visited the Youth Engagement Service (YES) at Delamere House, Crewe, where they met the, Operations Manager and, Senior Manager, (see separate notes).
- 1.6 30th June, 2016 – Cllrs. Dorothy Flude and Rhoda Bailey attended a meeting of the Operations Group at Cledford House, Middlewich, where they met the Head of Service, Children's Safeguarding and manager of the Safeguarding Children in Educational Settings (SCIES) team, together with representatives from agencies including the police, NHS nursing, YES operations manager, Catch 22, and a Missing from Home care worker.
- 1.7 13th July, 2016 – Cllr. Dorothy Flude and Rhoda Bailey visited the CSE Integrated Team at Sandbach House where they met the manager and representatives from the police, Catch 22, a Missing from Home care worker and a nurse specialist (see separate notes).
- 1.8 In addition, Cllrs. Gill Merry and Dorothy Flude each visited social workers engaged with young people who were involved in or at risk of being involved in CSE.
- 1.9 We are grateful to Kate Rose, Head of Safeguarding, and all participants in this process who have helped us in the production of this report and to Mark Nedderman for his guidance and work in collating the information.

2.0 Introduction and Background

- 2.1 At its meeting held on 1 December 2014, the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee (the Committee) appointed a Task and Finish Group (the group) to investigate the adequacy of the Council's arrangements to protect young people in Cheshire East from sexual exploitation. The members of the task and finish group were:



Chairman: The late Councillor Phil Hoyland

Councillors: Arthur Moran, Gill Merry

(The task and Finish group was assisted also by Councillor Jos Saunders)

- 2.2 The Task and Finish group agreed the following terms of reference:

“To seek assurances about the Council's safeguarding arrangements in relation to CSE, to advise the Cabinet and the Council's partners on any improvements that are considered appropriate to local arrangements and to raise awareness of CSE across the whole community of Cheshire East. This will be achieved through a review to be undertaken over a 2-month period beginning on 1 December 2014 and concluding on 31 January 2015 by a Task and Finish group comprising 3 Members of the Children Families and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny committee, supported as the need arises by other members of the Committee”

3.0 Methodology

- 3.1 The group met 7 times over the period 15 December 2014 to 31 January 15 and interviewed 10 key individuals who were directly involved in the development and delivery of the Council's strategy to protect young people from sexual exploitation. These included the then Director of Children's Services, Portfolio holder, Chair of the LSCB, Head of Safeguarding, police and education representatives and the Council's licensing manager.

- 3.2 In March 2015, the group issued an interim report which summarised the findings of the group at that point in time. It did not make any formal recommendations but did highlight a number of issues that required attention. The findings of the interim report are included in this report.
- 3.3 Sadly, the Chairman Phil Hoyland, passed away in March 2015 and the review was halted as a mark of respect to Phil.
- 3.4 In June 2015, the newly appointed Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee reconvened the CSE task and finish group with the following revised membership and requested the group to complete the review



Councillor Rhoda Bailey Chairman



Councillor Dorothy Flude



Councillor Gill Merry



Councillor Arthur Moran



Councillor Jos Saunders

- 3.5 The group reconvened in November 2015. Having taken advice on which direction the review should process, it was agreed that the review should move away from examining the various strategies and policies that were in place to guide the Council and its partners and instead, to test the application of the strategies and policies by reviewing real cases.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The starting point for the investigation was the national focus given to CSE resulting from the high profile cases of grooming and sexual exploitation of young people in Rochdale and Rotherham. The subsequent publication of the Jay report, which had been critical of the various agencies responsible for

safeguarding in Rotherham and the report produced by Anne Coffey MP, commissioned by the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner to review the Greater Manchester response to CSE added to the evidence that some local authorities had questions to answer in respect of their procedures for dealing with CSE. In light of these and other high cases reported in the national media, Members decided to review Cheshire East’s arrangements to protect against CSE; specifically to seek assurances that arrangements are fit for purpose and agile enough to address any issues relating to CSE in Cheshire East.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Witnesses:

5.2 Members met with the following people during the review:

- DI C Morral – Cheshire Police
- DI S Blanchflower – Cheshire Police
- Tony Crane – Director of Children’s Services
- Heather Grimbaldeston – Director of Public Health
- Kate Rose - Head of Service - Children's Safeguarding
- Ian Rush - Chair Local Safeguarding Children’s Board
- Councillor Rachel Bailey Children and Families portfolio Holder
- Fiona Field – South Cheshire CCG
- Moira McGrath – South Cheshire CCG
- Karen Porter - Safeguarding Children in Education Settings Manager
- Councillor Paul Whitely – Chair of Licensing Committee Cheshire East
- Kim Evans - Licensing Officer
- Stephen Pepper – Team Manager
- Debbie Tattersall – Social Worker
- Stephen Mills -Practice Manager
- Laura Murrell – Social Worker
- Tom Dooks – Senior Manager YES team
- Joanne Boulton - Operations Manager YES team
- Kate Press - Independent Safeguarding Chair
- Elise Cox – Catch 22
- Karen Chan – Independent Review Officer

Date	Meeting / Site Visit
13/11/ 2014	Task and Finish Group Meeting Pre- scoping meeting
27/11/2014	Task and Finish Group Meeting

15/12/2014	Task and Finish Group Meeting with Licensing
16/12/2014	Task and Finish Group Meeting with Director Children's Services and Chair of LSCB
12/01/2015	Task and Finish Group Meeting with South Cheshire CCG
15/01/2015	Site Visit – Dalton House Middlewich meeting with Police and Children and Families Portfolio Holder
19/10 2015	Task and Finish Group Meeting with Head of Safeguarding
27/10/2015	Task and Finish Group Meeting
26/11/2015	Task and Finish Group Meeting
18/01/2016	Task and Finish Group Meeting
11/02/2016	Task and Finish Group Meeting
23/02/2016	Task and Finish Group Meeting
15/03/2016	Councillor D Flude case meeting with social workers
4/05/2016	Task and Finish Group Meeting
6/05/2016	Councillor G Merry case meeting with social workers
25/05/2016	Task and Finish Group Meeting
13/06/2016	Visit to the YES team
30/06/2016	Visit to CSE Operations Group
13/07/2016	Visit to the Multi Agency Integrated Team
8/09/2016	Visit to Safeguarding Chairs
26/09/2016	Task and Finish Group meeting with Karen Porter and discussion about the final report

6.0 November 2015 to date

- 5.1 Having already looked at the Council's strategies and policies relating to CSE in the first phase of the review, and having been assured that these were adequate and robustly applied by the Council and partners, the group decided to shift its emphasis away from the strategic overview, and spend time looking at how the policies were applied to real cases, to test whether the Council makes a difference to children and young people where CSE is a vulnerability.
- 6.2 The Ofsted framework for judging Local Authority response on CSE gave some pointers for the group:
- The quality and impact of referral, assessment and planning.
 - The effectiveness of direct work with children and families and of services to support children.
 - The level of awareness among professional staff, including their willingness and effectiveness to listen and receive feedback from children and young people.

- The arrangements to protect care leavers who are at risk of or who have been sexually exploited.
- What is known about the authority culture in terms of:
- listening to children, hearing what they say and acting appropriately
- hearing from staff at the frontline and engaging with what they say
- elected member engagement with the local community
- the quality of work with partners to disrupt offenders or preventative work
- children and families' views on the service they have received

6.3 The group decided therefore to break their detailed investigations into five specific tasks:

- Track two children chosen randomly
- Visit to the Youth Engagement service
- Observation of CSE Operations Group
- Visit to the Multi Agency CSE Integrated team
- Observation of a CSE Case Conference

6.4 Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter involved in the case discussions involving the two children chosen, it was considered appropriate for those visits to be undertaken by single members of the group only. It also became apparent during the investigation that not all people involved in the live cases were content to speak to elected Members. It was not possible therefore to attend a CSE conference. This was due to the parent of the child involved in the case not wishing members of the task and finish group to be present. The group fully understood the position taken by the parent involved. Unfortunately, there were no further opportunities within the time frame of the review to attend another CSE conference. Instead, the group met the chair of the Safeguarding Chairs group who explained how CSE conferences were conducted.

7.0 Case Studies

7.1 Councillor Gill Merry investigated a case in the north of the Borough involving a male victim of CSE. Councillor Dorothy Flude investigated a case in the south of the Borough involving a female victim.

- 7.2 No details of the cases can be revealed in this report. In both cases, the members met with case workers associated with the case, but did not meet the victims or parents of the victims. What surprised members was the reluctance of the young people involved in the cases to engage with the case workers and partners. They had both refused to disclose who the perpetrators were in their respective cases. This was clearly frustrating for the staff involved but the group discovered that this was not uncommon.
- 7.3 The conclusion drawn from the investigation of the two cases is not particularly satisfactory under the circumstances. The professionals are clearly providing all the support that they possibly can to protect the young people involved but are being thwarted by the refusal of victims to co-operate. Unfortunately, in both cases, the young people remain at risk as they do not view or understand the nature of their relationship with their perpetrators to be exploitative. They believe it to be loving and feel trapped and unable to escape from it. They also often feel guilty and all these things prevent them from disclosing who is harming them. There is however, ongoing work and encouragement to disclose, via the establishment of a relationship between the social worker and young person.

8.0 Visit to the Youth Engagement Service (YES)

- 8.1 The group met representatives of the YES team including, one of three senior managers. We were told there are two parts to the service – prevention, particularly for those under the age of criminal responsibility (10), and those aged 10 – 17. Broadly, this means 8 – 18. The work spans pre-court work, including those who have never been arrested but are considered to be at risk, to those who have been found/recorded guilty of more serious offences. They work with the Youth Prevention Team which tries to keep them out of the courts system and the Youth Offending Team through referrals from court.
- 8.2 No single agency can tackle all the factors that cause criminal behaviour. There is representation from the Police, Probation, Social Care, Health and Education. There used to be two full time police officers that were designated, but police budget pressures had resulted in a cut of 50%. The Youth Offending Service (YOS) was now a pan-Cheshire service to achieve economies of scale and deliver a more sustainable model going forward.
- 8.3 All staff are trained, with the LSCB delivering training; at both the strategic level and the operational level. Senior practitioners on the

team train the staff. Different learning tools are used, including a bulletin, to make sure they are getting the up-to-date screening tool from the LSCB. They have read-only access to Liquid Logic. On 1st July 2016 the Prevention Team moved on to Liquid Logic.

- 8.4 The group learned that there are many common routes for children and young people to get involved in CSE but mainly through relationships. The YES team have regular contact with vulnerable young people in order to monitor activity. They see the young people regularly, twice weekly, which is a massive benefit – the more the young people see the staff, the more they engage. This led the team to believe that on the prevention side, they were strong. When young people said they didn't want to work with the YES team, the staff would persist.
- 8.5 There is a full complement of staff on the YES team, and agency staff are not used. The number of young people seen varied from month to month. They deal mainly with young people considered to be in a risky situation, including those who display perpetrator behaviour. Most situations centre on a girlfriend/boyfriend model rather than organised groups.
- 8.6 A big part of the work of the team is in building relationships. It is important for team members to spend time getting to know the young people. Councillors were shown some work with a 14-year-old boy, on ascertaining attitudes to online chat, Facebook, Instagram etc. and eliciting understanding about what could be happening, linking it up with their interests. They talked about conversations online and how they could become threatening, and identified the risks. Some work was being done in schools through Catch 22, although there was not a consistent level of approach.

9.0 CSE Integrated Team

- 9.1 The team is based at Sandbach House on Crewe Road Sandbach. The group met five team members representing the Police, Catch 22, a Missing from Home worker, the nurse specialist, and the manager of the integrated team.
- 9.2 The group discovered that the integrated team was not a 'case holding' team but are there to facilitate good practice across the LSCB that front line practitioners should be taking on board. The primary function of the team of nine is prevention and awareness raising, including community safety partnerships and the faith sector. They do a lot of work with schools, working with the Safeguarding Children in Education

Settings (SCIES) team, teaching children about healthy relationships, identifying children at risk, linking with and supporting social workers. A CSE screening tool has been developed for every front line practitioner to use.

- 9.3 The team is a relatively new concept having first been brought to the group's attention in early 2015. The team is trying to gain the confidence of the front line practitioners to liaise with them and share information. Concerns are escalated as appropriate. The group had previously been made aware of the benefits of having such teams co-located with other professionals as had been the case at Dalton House Middlewich in 2014. It is crucial that members of the team work together on the same floor so that they can pick up on one another's conversations to identify links between young people and their contacts. Even having to use a set of stairs to speak to colleagues can form a natural barrier.
- 9.4 The team is contracted to provide a service based upon the assessed needs of the child involved and work with the child as long as needed . This may involve a relatively small number of sessions (6-8) although they opt for flexibility and extend that where necessary. They use the positive relationships they build with young people to help them access other services, e.g. the sexual health clinic.
- 9.5 The team now have access to Liquid Logic but this is still being embedded and the team needs stability to develop further.
- 9.6 It was noted that the team did not have a representative from Education Welfare, which would be a valuable addition as they sometimes come across children missing from education and not necessarily missing from home. Stronger links between the two devices would be advantageous.

10.0 – Visit to the CSE Operations Group

- 10.1 The meeting investigated the current situation of a number of young people individually, and was used as a good opportunity for information sharing. There was no representative from the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) which the team considered was an omission that should be rectified. The group would like to pay tribute to their 'early intervention' work in spotting young people, through their contacts and other information, who may be at risk of being drawn into CSE.

11.0 Safeguarding Chairs Group

- 11.1 The group met three safeguarding chairs to learn about the way in which CSE case conferences were carried out.
- 11.2 It was explained that Case conferences were held at the centres in Macclesfield and Crewe. The room layout used for the Macclesfield and Crewe centres was identical. The aim was to make the conference as informal as possible without tables which form an artificial barrier. Chairs are set out in a semi-circular fashion. This makes the atmosphere less intimidating for participants. Macclesfield also had the benefit of an ante room which was used to allow young people to retire to if matters became too difficult or during periods when it was not appropriate for the young person to be in the main conference room. Crewe did not have such a room at Delamere House and this was considered to be a disadvantage.
- 11.3 Conferences are attended by the young person, health professionals, Education provider, carers and any other relevant agencies such as catch 22.
- 11.4 The conference aims to put the child at ease and begins by talking about who is important to the child. This is to start on a positive note. Often there are surprises as to who the child identifies as a person important to them, but often, it is a social worker, teacher, and school nurse or family member. This can itself provide a revealing insight into the lifestyle of the child/young person. Likewise, it is considered telling if the young person is unable to identify somebody who is important to them.
- 11.5 This initial conversation provides vital clues for the conference to identify an individual who may be able to work with the child/young person. The conference attempts to establish what is going well in the life of the child/young person, again to give emphasis to the positive aspects of their life e.g. Education, family relationships, activities etc. The conference seeks to identify aspects of the child's life that are being managed well. This could be for instance that an improvement has been made in the number of times a child goes missing, or maybe having agreed to allow parents to see social media accounts and sharing passwords etc. It is found that people often find it hard to discuss difficult matters; so again, this positive discussion takes place first in order to open up dialogue.
- 11.6 The conference also tries to identify matters that the child/young person is worried about. This could be inappropriate relations involving

peer group, meeting people on line, - in the modern world 'E safety' is very important, doing favours for people in return of something e.g. packet of cigarettes. The conference is always wary about new things being acquired, especially alcohol. Conference is alert to missing from home incidents, especially if they are for prolonged periods. The group learned that there is a high correlation between children going missing and being at risk of CSE . Another concern would be discovering that the child/young person has travelled to areas that they have never been to before and continually go back to. There is a need to discover how child/young person have made connections – how are they getting there? It is accepted that teenagers are very secretive but is the secrecy beyond what you would normally expect? Other warning signs are:

- Self-harm
- Internet use
- Frequenting CSE hotspots
- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

- 11.7 Occasionally, the child/young person can be hostile to this approach especially if they come unprepared for the meeting. An added complication is that many are convinced that they are in a genuine relationship but don't see the signs. Cheshire East has a very good attendance rate with 80% of children/young people attending case conferences. It was suggested that the attendance rate was good because the focus of the conference is on the child/young person and not on their parents.
- 11.8 In terms of working to make improvements, the conference identifies an individual who is best to work with the child/ young person. Parents are always involved. Conference works with the police to disrupt and prevent inappropriate relationships continuing and aims to build self - esteem and self-worth. Also measures are identified to improve health, especially if they are sexually active, including contraception. Emotional health is also an important consideration, as is sexual identity as some sexual exploitation relates to sexual orientation.
- 11.9 Conferences put review arrangements in place three months after conference with a mid-point meeting between the chair and social worker. If something has not been done, practice alerts can be issued at this stage. The group was informed that 86 practice alerts were

issued last year. Finally, a timetable of actions is produced so that everybody is clear as to who needs to take action and when.

12.0 SCIES Team

12.1 The group met the manager of the SCIES team twice. The first time at the beginning of the enquiry and the second time at the end of the enquiry. The group were pleased to see the positive progress made in the intervening twelve months and were particularly encouraged to hear evidence that relationships between the team and schools was good and that schools were fully engaged in the process. Training for schools was well received and the team provided lots of useful additional advice through news bulletins and a dedicated website. However, the group felt that opportunities could be developed for the team to engage with trainee teachers who were studying at the Crewe Campus of Manchester Metropolitan University in order to raise awareness of all the initiatives provided by the Council at the earliest opportunity and this forms one of our recommendations.

13.0 Conclusions.

13.1 The second phase of this review was completed many months after the work led by the late Cllr Hoyland in phase one. 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 group acknowledges achievements in this area have been steady, we also recognise that the Council and its partners must remain ever vigilant. This report is not exhaustive and the length of time between the two phases has inevitably led to things moving on. The improvements made to stabilise the workforce in children's social care since this review started in 2014 is welcomed, particularly the 'grow your own' initiative which is now beginning to bear fruit. One recurring message that has appeared throughout this investigation is 'We only know what we know'.

13.2 Although not directly falling within the terms of reference of this review, many individuals we met raised genuine concerns about the current Taxi/Private Hire Licensing arrangements. This became a recurring theme throughout our investigations which inevitably led us to the conclusion that the concerns expressed by the group in phase 1 of the review should be reiterated in this final report and be the subject of a formal recommendation. We acknowledge this is a national issue that only the Government can address, but if we at Cheshire East can at least start the ball rolling by taking the lead at regional level, enough impetus may be generated to begin a national debate.

14.0 Recommendations

- 14.1 That the Cabinet Member for Communities and Health in conjunction with Licensing Committee be requested to take up at regional and national level this group's concerns regarding the current licensing arrangements for private hire and hackney carriage drivers, which the group consider to be unsatisfactory. The group is of the view that the government should consider introducing a uniform set of licence conditions across all local authorities to ensure that the standard required by an individual to obtain a licence is the same irrespective of where the application is made. In addition, the group believes that consideration should be given to the introduction of measures to require authorities to share/publish information relating to applications that have been refused to prevent the continuation of the current situation which allows an applicant, who may have had an application for a licence refused by one authority, to subsequently obtain a licence elsewhere.
- 14.2 In conjunction with the recommendation above, the Council's five Members of Parliament be requested to take up this matter with HM Government to urge it to review current arrangements with a view to tightening up licensing conditions so that there is a uniform minimum standard across the whole country.
- 14.3 That the Council's Licensing manager be requested to report to the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress made to date to improve information sharing with other local authorities, the police and other agencies on licensing applications for Hackney carriage and Private Hire drivers.
- 14.4 That the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), Education Welfare Service and the Integrated Team be encouraged to develop closer integrated working arrangements, to continue to identify and to close potential gaps in the current arrangements, as the PRU and welfare services sometimes come across children who may be missing from education but not necessarily missing from home.
- 14.5 That consideration be given to re-locating the CES Integrated Team from its current location at Sandbach House, where there are presently nine staff working in cramped conditions in one room, to a building that will enable the whole team to be located on one floor in the same building; this to encourage better communication at an informal level which was considered to be a big part of the success of arrangements at the previous location at Dalton House Middlewich.

- 14.6 That in recognising the strong police commitment to CSE, the integrated team and wider support, Cheshire Police be asked to continue with and to improve working arrangements with the integrated team, in particular to consider putting in place arrangements for greater involvement of Police Crime Support Officers (PCSOs).
- 14.7 That in the interests of consistency, the current accommodation arrangements that exist at Macclesfield Town Hall in respect of CSE conferences, which includes a separate ante room/break out area for young people to retire to, be replicated at Delamere House Crewe.
- 14.8 That the Director of Education be requested to report to the Schools Forum on the impact on Education support services of the withdrawal of Education Support Grant in the Autumn of 2017.