

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	6 NOVEMBER 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	READING BOROUGH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR GAVIN	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND FAMILIES
SERVICE:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	VICKI LAWSON	TEL:	0118 9372072
JOB TITLE:	INTERIM HEAD OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES	E-MAIL:	Vicki.lawson@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 For ACE Committee to note the current position of Reading Borough Council Children's Services in respect of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). CSE is a high profile topic particularly in light of the recent report following an Independent Inquiry commissioned by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council in October 2013 and published in August 2014. Reading Borough Council have always responded proactively to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in conjunction with key partners especially Thames Valley Police. National awareness and understanding of CSE has grown in the last few years prompting government responses and new legislation to this very serious issue.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the current position of Reading Borough Council's Children's Services in respect of Child Sexual Exploitation be noted.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Rotherham Report has been read by senior officers and discussed at the Reading Safeguarding Board Serious Cases Panel in September 2014. It was agreed that in light of the very serious issues raised in Rotherham the Serious Cases Panel (which is multi agency) would use their next meeting to reflect on the report and any implications for Reading.
- 3.2 Reading Borough Council's response to CSE has reflected the national picture in terms of changes and development in practice and response over time. It is essential that as awareness of CSE grows nationally Reading Children's Services (and partners)

reflect and consider any further developments both operationally and strategically to improve response to CSE.

- 3.3 The Rotherham report offers a further opportunity to do this and build on the work that was already current in terms of developments in working with children and young people who are sexually exploited, at risk of sexual exploitation and those that go missing who may be more vulnerable.

THE POSITION IN AUGUST 2013 WAS AS FOLLOWS:

- A multi-agency CSE Operational group reporting to the Reading Safeguarding Children's Board.
- An overarching strategy and action for tackling CSE in Reading was drawn up by this group.
- Training on CSE was commissioned at universal safeguarding, targeted and specialist levels.
- Consideration to developing a 'virtual team' of workers who were to undertake the specialist training and undertake direct work with young people.
- There was a 'complex investigation' into CSE in Reading, which resulted in some successful disruption activity with the alleged perpetrators.
- All workers were briefed on how to make referrals if concerned about CSE to social care or the police.
- The theme of the Reading Safeguarding Children's Board conference on 27th September 2013 was 'sexual abuse'.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The Rotherham report publication in August 2014 coincided with an ongoing review of CSE requested by the Director of Children's Services and being undertaken by the Interim Head of Service.
- 4.2 Key developments since August 2013 are the introduction and roll out of the CSE screening tool for all referrers to use prompting them to consider whether CSE could be an issue by way of a checklist.
- 4.3 The Signs of Safety approach fundamental to all work in children's services has been rolled out, embedded and is audited rigorously.
- 4.4 A robust auditing cycle is in place quality assuring that the voice of the child (referred to as the lived experience of the child) is clearly recorded and demonstrates the workers have "heard" the child or young person.
- 4.5 The Children Who Go Missing and CSE Panel was combined in July 2014 to recognise the overlap that can occur between these groups of children. This is a panel that is co-chaired by Thames Valley Police and Reading Borough Council.
- 4.6 The already ongoing review has separated the operational group into a defined strategic and operational group.
- 4.7 The current CSE strategy is to be updated by the strategic group and taken to the Reading Safeguarding Board for agreement in December 2014.
- 4.8 The operational group is to produce a manual to offer the wider workforce information on what to do if they are concerned about CSE as well as driving forward the already ongoing work raising awareness, understanding the local picture, supporting victims, facilitating policy, prosecuting offenders, joining up missing

children / trafficking / safety / corporate parenting / community safety / West of Berkshire / Berkshire wide approach.

- 4.9 In relation to Children who go Missing the Department for Education checklist for Local Authorities has been used as a tool to check compliance and CSE has also been considered where appropriate.
- 4.10 As a result of this RBC are currently commissioning from the third sector an organisation to conduct interviews with young people after they have gone missing which is seen as good practice and offers insight and intelligence as well as support to this group of vulnerable children and young people.
- 4.11 Thames Valley Police and Reading Borough Council have arranged training on intelligence sharing taking place in November 2014.
- 4.12 The Serious Cases Panel of the LSCB is to consider the multi-agency issues in respect of response to CSE at the next meeting in light of the Rotherham recommendations.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The work of Children's Social Care is aligned with the strategic priorities of Reading Borough Council and the Reading Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-16.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 This is a multi-agency issue and community awareness of the issue will be promoted in the strategy.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no legal implications to this report, although the Children's Social Care work enables the Council to meet the statutory duties set out in the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004 and the Childcare Act 2006.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There is a cost associated with commissioning a new service to undertake missing interviews.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Rotherham report