

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION : UPDATE

Summary

1. The Independent Chair of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB), Superintendent Steve Eccleston, Head of Protecting Vulnerable People, West Mercia Police and the Director of Children's Services have been invited to the Meeting to give the Panel an overview of Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board's strategic approach to tackle child sexual exploitation.

Purpose of this Meeting

2. The purpose of this report is:

- To provide the Overview & Scrutiny Panel with information about child sexual exploitation in Worcestershire
- To inform the Overview & Scrutiny Panel of the strategic commitment to tackle child sexual exploitation and the development of the Child Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Strategy 2015 – 2017
- To ensure that the Overview & Scrutiny Panel has opportunity to consider the WSCB response to tackling child sexual exploitation in advance of Cabinet endorsing the final strategy and action plan in July 2015

Executive Summary

3. In Worcestershire the main response to CSE has been led through the Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) although individual agencies have also acted according to their own drivers.

4. CSE can be defined as 'The sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities'.

5. The WSCB has adopted the key principles from Louise Casey's recent report on Rotherham that **CSE: is child abuse and is a crime; the victims are children; it is squarely a community safety issue and the failure is not in the existence of CSE but in not recognising it and taking appropriate action.**

6. To date, the evidence suggests that CSE exists in Worcestershire on a relatively small and generally individualised scale, with no evidence of a link to gangs, organised crime or any specific minority ethnic group. There is also no indication that

Child Sexual Exploitation Definition

disclosures or reporting have been ignored as was the case in Rotherham.

7. The Child Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Strategy has been developed by a strategic group on behalf of the WSCB with four overarching priorities and a discrete number of target areas for action.

8. Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Board have adopted the definition of CSE that is commonly used nationally:

9. 'The sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities.

10. Child sexual exploitation can occur through use of technology without the child's immediate recognition, for example the persuasion to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones with no immediate payment or gain. In all cases those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

Strategic Principles

11. The WSCB fully supports and accepts as its own principles the four points set out in Louise Casey's report 'Reflections on Child Sexual Exploitation' (March 2015), these being:

- That **CSE is child abuse and is a crime**, and our efforts need to be directed towards perpetrators in order to detect, prevent and disrupt that abuse at the earliest stages as well as the prosecution of individual perpetrators.
- That **the victims are children**, however they present themselves. They cannot consent to their abuse. There should be no scenarios in which victims are viewed as young women or as making choices.
- That **CSE is squarely a community safety issue** and local government working with police and others need to make use of community safety tactics and action to keep children safe. The regulatory and enforcement functions of the local authority are vital in preventing and disrupting CSE and in building intelligence which can help with prosecutions. Those in upper tier authorities and district authorities where responsibilities for children's social care and community safety lie in different tiers, have additional partnership challenges, but these cannot be insurmountable.
- That local government and the police should not fear

seeking out and shining a light on sexual exploitation for fear they may be held to account for what they find. **The failure is not in the existence of CSE but in not recognising it and taking appropriate action.**

Local Context

12. In Worcestershire the main response to CSE has been led through the Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) although individual agencies have also acted according to their own drivers.

13. WSCB launched the Child Sexual Exploitation Pathway in August 2013. This sets out a clear pathway for referrals and response to child specific concerns with operational oversight delivered through a monthly multi-agency panel.

14. Targeted training of staff to raise awareness and to ensure understanding of the pathway and procedures has also taken place. WSCB also makes available an e-learning module for all agencies.

15. WSCB is required to both be assured and to provide assurance that large scale and organised CSE is not present in Worcestershire and that the mechanisms are in place to identify, support and protect potential victims from further harm.

16. Taking a broader view, it is clear that the focus of co-ordinated multi-agency activity has been predominantly on protection and that prevention and the pursuit of perpetrator activities are both also in need of development. The development of the strategy therefore focused on how WSCB progresses this work with partner agencies.

CSE in Worcestershire

17. A great deal of work has been undertaken to develop the pathway for CSE referrals and whilst the numbers of identified victims is relatively low (as opposed to the numbers of children and young people about whom there have been concerns), we do not, however, know what we do not know as the identification of actual victims is not easy.

18. The WSCB Missing Children, CSE and Trafficking Group is working to incorporate a national and regionally accepted dataset within performance management data to capture and collate the existing CSE picture in Worcestershire.

19. Police routinely undertake a 'CSE Problem Profile' to interrogate police information where children have been flagged as potentially vulnerable to CSE. Work is then undertaken between social care and the police to ensure the data is fully reconciled with CSE referrals. The recent analysis of police data for the period September 2013 to September 2014 is attached as appendix 1.

20. The data about children who go missing in Worcestershire is also cross-referenced with data about children who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation. This is in its early stages and will form

CSE Strategy

part of the CSE Strategy to ensure any patterns are responded to for individual children or particular locations/communities.

21. To date, the evidence suggests that CSE exists in Worcestershire on a relatively small and generally individualised scale, with no evidence of a link to gangs, organised crime or any specific minority ethnic group. There is also no indication that disclosures or reporting have been ignored as was the case in Rotherham.

22. The data reviewed also confirmed that children previously identified during that period had been appropriately safeguarded

23. The Child Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Strategy has been developed by a strategic group of the WSCB, with links to the community safety partnership. There are four overarching priorities and a discrete number of target areas for action:

a) Prevention and Education

Overarching priority: Increasing knowledge and understanding of CSE, including the development of protective factors, across children and young people (to include victim focus), the children and young people's workforce and local communities

Key target areas:

- Undertake a public awareness campaign
- All schools to deliver a CSE awareness programme to children and young people, tailored to their age
- All staff to receive awareness training
- Develop a means of evaluating the effectiveness of the staff training programme

b) Recognition and Identification

Overarching priority: Providing information and tools to support the identification of potential indicators of CSE; providing and publishing agreed models of assessment; and agreed protocols for the effective sharing of information across the multi-agency partnership

Key target areas:

- Identify vulnerable children for potential sexual exploitation and develop a risk assessment framework and pathway to protect them
- Develop professional curiosity amongst front line staff to ensure they look for and act on signs of potential CSE (particularly social workers, Health workers and school staff)
- Identification of vulnerable children who have the potential to become perpetrators
- Promote the crucial importance of effective information

sharing

c) Intervention and Support

Overarching priority: Drawing on models of recognised good practice to develop local responses ; tailoring intervention and support to individuals; and mapping and publicising a range of available intervention/support services

Key target areas:

- Develop different methods/casework suited to CSE
- Develop victim and family specialised support
- Develop community safety, regulatory and taxi licensing functions

d) Pursue and Disrupt

Overarching priority: Being pro-active across multi agency partnerships to identify, disrupt and prosecute perpetrators of child sexual exploitation through criminal or civil means

- Align cross-border arrangements with neighbouring areas/regions
- Develop an ongoing problem profile, mapping hot spots and keep relevant agencies informed
- Use criminal and civil powers wherever possible

24. The action plan underpinning these priorities is currently being finalised and will be included in the report to Cabinet in July then on to full Council.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.