

Report to:	RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Mrs Del Curtis, Director of People
Date of Meeting	17 th September 2015

THEMATIC DISCUSSION: CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To propose a process for thematic scrutiny of this area of practice.

2.0 Recommendations:

2.1 To discuss Child Sexual Exploitation in Blackpool and identify any further issues for further scrutiny.

2.2 To request minutes of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board in September to ensure a robust action plan is in place for the wider front door issues.

2.3 To consider the self-assessment and action plan.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

3.1 To ensure constructive and robust scrutiny of Child Sexual Exploitation.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? No

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priorities are:

- Tackle child poverty, raise aspirations and improve educational achievement
- Safeguard and protect the most vulnerable

5.0 Background Information

- 5.1 Child Sexual Exploitation continues to be a high profile issue for both the media and the Government following the situations in Rochdale, Rotherham and Oxford amongst others. When OFSTED inspected Blackpool services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Board in July 2014, it commented that one of the strengths of the Local Authority was:
- 5.2 “Children and Young People who are at risk of being sexually exploited (Child Sexual Exploitation) are identified and receive a range of support appropriate to their individual needs”.
- 5.3 Subsequently Blackpool was part of the 12 area project which involved a range of visits and meetings including separate meetings with the Leader and the Lead Member, the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), the Chief Executive and Director of Children’s Services (DCS). It included separate focus groups addressing the work of the specialist Awaken Team, Child Sexual Exploitation and children in residential care, the Blackpool economy and transience, disruption and patrolling of hotspots, and the work on Child Sexual Exploitation in and with schools. The summary feedback was:-
1. The political leadership agrees that there is a problem in Blackpool and indicates an appetite to address it.
 2. The Child Sexual Exploitation specific strategy and planning has historically been police led and on a Lancashire wide footprint. Although the Awaken Team has been in place for ten years and there is evidence of very positive practice on the ground, Child Sexual Exploitation has relatively recently become an identifiable element of the Blackpool LCSB approach with a (police led) sub-group. There is more to be done to shape strategy and delivery.
 3. In January 2015, internal recommendations were made to the corporate leadership team to commission work on the voice of the child, to develop the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub to incorporate Child Sexual Exploitation referrals, to develop a Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) approach, to present timely updates to children’s scrutiny, to review staff training across the borough including elected member training and to strengthen links across licensing, enforcement, and housing and legal services.
 4. There is an expectation that professionals build practice in ways that reflect the views of the child. The longstanding Awaken Team has a clear child emphasis on the need to listen to the child. There was less clarity about wider mechanisms to secure the

voice of victims on practice. The work of the Children's Society has been visible in supporting victims to engage but this again is largely on a pan- Lancashire basis in conjunction with the police and less visible within the Blackpool programme.

5. The Awaken Team includes health, police, social care, education and a missing from home co-ordinator. Referrals are worked by the most appropriate member of the team and support is provided to mainstream staff where cases are held there. The role of team nurse role was valued - we were told that disclosures were often made in the health context.
6. The 2014 Ofsted report noted that "Those who may go missing and who also may be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation are identified well, assisted by the location of the 'missing' coordinator in the Child Sexual Exploitation 'Awaken' team and well-established information-sharing practices. Monthly meetings between senior police officers and managers in the local authority maximise awareness of 'high risk' cases, issues, and the location of 'hot spots'. This supports strategic oversight of operational activity and ensures that the service is responsive to changing demands."
7. However when Lancashire police recently initiated a "Pan-Lancashire Partnership Assessment" aimed at building on core police data with intelligence from wider partnerships, it ran into difficulty in relation to the willingness of partners to share data, suggesting that there is still some way to go in this regard.
8. The assertive outreach approach to identifying children at risk is concentrated on the patrolling of hotspots described below. There is a programme of Child Sexual Exploitation training and awareness for professional staff. There was evidence of a positive culture of staff engagement in the council but also that Blackpool has an ongoing challenge in the recruitment and retention of social workers. This leading to a problem in sustaining experienced and confident staff.
9. Representatives of schools and the college in Blackpool reported good internal systems in schools to identify and address the needs of children at risk including non-teaching staff working with individual children. They described broader Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) activity including theatre productions but also concluded there was limited time available. They spoke well of the external support services including the school improvement offer and the "WISH" team offering sexual health services, this was commissioned by Public Health. The chair of the LSCB, however, was keen to ensure that the Academies were more closely linked to the work of the board and had initiated a programme of "Twilight" discussions to take forward the discussion.
10. Blackpool has a very high proportion of Looked After Children (LAC) and a large

number of children are placed there by other authorities. It was reported that the practice of authorities placing children in the area was not always helpful both in notifying Blackpool of arrivals or in assessing risk prior to placement. There is a view that receiving authorities have insufficient room to escalate poor practice when it occurs. On the other hand, the management of Child Sexual Exploitation and its place in relation to children's homes appeared to be positive. The health service presented evidence that the children were well known to the service and engaged with health assessments and support.

11. The Ofsted report noted that "There are plans to undertake Child Sexual Exploitation awareness-raising work with local businesses, such as amusement arcades and taxi firms. However, given the long-established nature of this team, and the unique characteristics of Blackpool, it is surprising that this is not at a more advanced stage of development"
12. There is an appetite in Blackpool for a wider community campaign and engagement. There has been local support for the "say something if you see something" campaign and there is space for this to be a more fundamental strand of the strategy. The local view was that they would welcome a national campaign within which to operate.
13. The hotspots of Blackpool are heavily patrolled and there is a proactive approach to enforcing licensing requirements and addressing other offences. This is in part a response to need to manage the night economy of Blackpool, which on some nights means that there are large numbers of people using alcohol and drugs inappropriately. Within that, police and other staff are tasked to act in relation to specific suspects and children at risk in order to gain intelligence and disrupt Child Sexual Exploitation and other activity. This has included entering premises and taking action against specific businesses and individuals.
14. There is a selective licensing scheme which is systematically using the requirements placed on landlords to enter HMOs to inspect property and to speak to tenants. This work has dual objectives: first to address the poor housing conditions as part of a wider goal of attempting to change the dysfunctional housing market; and second there is a welfare goal of directing the residents towards support and employment. However, the work is also activity in which it is possible to identify both suspects and children at risk and it is therefore described as part of the intelligence gathering needed to protect children from Child Sexual Exploitation.
15. There is very positive engagement from health services in the management of Child Sexual Exploitation and support for victims. However, Ofsted indicate that "access to CAMHs is too variable to be confident that all children will receive the help

they need..... As a result, the local authority is forced to source and fund independent packages of support for some young people.”

16. As with many places there is a case for a comprehensive needs based Child Sexual Exploitation commissioning strategy crossing NHS and local government and the police addressing the spectrum from informal community based support “on their terms” and to a more therapeutic offer when appropriate.

17. There is clear acceptance of the challenge in Blackpool and some practice that is very positive. Areas for development appear to include:

- Collaborative self-assessment
- Blackpool specific refresh of governance, strategy and planning for Child Sexual Exploitation
- The next stage on:
 - i. Listening to the child
 - ii. Data and performance framework
 - iii. Schools strategy and wider Community engagement
 - iv. CCG / LA commissioning strategy

5.4 **Current activity**

The Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB) sub group has a development plan which covers the areas identified. The plan and update is attached as Appendix 12a.

5.5 In addition, following an external audit of front door functioning in July 2015. A development and improvement plan for wider front door activity is in development. This is subject to scrutiny and monitoring at the September LSCB.

5.6 In August, Ofsted consulted on a new format for thematic multi agency inspections. The suggested approach is to give eight working days notice of inspection. During the eight days a multi-agency group will be required to audit in the region of five cases. The field work will begin with a multi-agency meeting and then the inspectors will review the functioning of the multi-agency front door and follow any themes from the audits. The inspection team will be 11 – 12 people from across all the inspection bodies, with Ofsted being the lead. The fieldwork will last a week and the feedback will be to the multi-agency group. There will not be a graded judgement but will have multi and single agency actions. It is proposed that the first six thematic inspections which take place

between September and March are on the theme of Child Sexual Exploitation. Therefore, Mr Ian Wheeler, improvement manager has been asked to be the lead for ensuring inspection readiness (working with the Service Manager, Duty and chair of the LSCB sub group). As part of this work Mr Wheeler will undertake a file audit of relevant cases week beginning 7th September 2015.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

List of Appendices:

Appendix 12a: Child Sexual Exploitation Operational Plan

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 The paper is for thematic discussion only.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 N/A

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 N/A

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 N/A

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 N/A

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 N/A

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 None

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None