

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2014 at 6.00 pm in Committee Room 2 at the  
Council House, Dudley

### **PRESENT:-**

Councillor Marrey (Chair)  
Councillor Boleyn (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors Bills, Hill, Islam, J Martin, Perks, Mrs Simms, Vickers and Mrs Walker,  
Mr Nesbitt, Ms Sinden, Mr Taylor and Mrs Verdegem.

### **OFFICERS**

Assistant Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services (Housing Management) – Lead Officer to the Committee, Interim Director of Children's Services, Ms T Brittain and Mr H Powell, Interim Assistant Directors of Children's Services (Education Services), Divisional Lead, Looked after Children and Divisional Lead, Social Work (all Directorate of Children's Services) and Mrs K Buckle (Directorate of Corporate Resources)

### **WITNESSES GIVING EVIDENCE TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

West Midlands Strategic Leader, Preventing Violence against Vulnerable People, Mr Stephen Rimmer and Detective Chief Inspector, Sandwell and Dudley Child and Adult Abuse Lead, Public Protection Unit, Ms Jenny Skyrme and Inspector Ms G Davenport, Partnerships Team.

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25      **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Arshad and Casey, Mrs Coulter, Mr Lynch, Mr Ridney and Reverend Wickens.

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26      **SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was reported that Councillor J Martin was serving in place of Councillor Casey for this meeting of the Committee only.

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27      **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

No Member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

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28      **MINUTES**

## RESOLVED

That subject to the inclusion of Mrs Verdegem in Minute no 15 – Apologies for Absence, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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### 29 PUBLIC FORUM

No issues were raised under this item.

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### 31 APPROACHES TO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION – WITNESSES AND DEBATE

The Committee heard representations from the following witnesses, who had been invited to have a dialogue with Members with regard to Child Sexual Exploitation in order to determine best practices to work collaboratively to address these issues in Dudley.

- (a) A presentation was made by Mr S Rimmer the West Midlands Strategic Leader on preventing Violence against vulnerable people.

During the course of the presentation Mr Rimmer made the following points:-

- He referred to his role and the work undertaken in relation to key threats and risks across the region in relation to child sexual exploitation.
- He reported that the cases of child sexual exploitation were increasing and referred to the collective responsibility to protect those who were most vulnerable in society and discharging this responsibility through prevention, protection and the justice system.
- That early intervention was of paramount importance and the aims to make perpetrators feel as vulnerable as their victims.
- A more integrated approach was required with more information sharing with partners in order to detect perpetrators of child sexual exploitation.
- He referred to the victims of child sexual exploitation, advising that they did not see themselves as victims due to the grooming processes, which included manipulation and coercion and the imbalance of power which limits the victim's options.

- The threat of child sexual exploitation together with statistical information, profiling, the number of reported cases and research into the issue were outlined and the uncertainty surrounding the number of cases and the volume of those cases, in effect it was unknown “how big the iceberg and how big the tip”.
- He referred to the child sexual exploitation incubator advising of the number of families who had discovered their children viewing violent, sexually explicit, upsetting or inappropriate content on the internet stating that the average age of children viewing this material was just over four years. The rate at which technology was advancing and the confidence of young children using that technology being a factor and percentage of parents who had not installed parental controls on smart phones and who had never spoken to their children about the dangers of using the internet were referred to.
- Concerns were raised that the average age of perpetrators would reduce due to the advancement of technology, with the average age currently being 25 to 30, a generation who did not have such technology at their fingertips.
- The implementation of a regional child sexual exploitation framework and standards were outlined together with the work of the Chief Executive and the Director of Children’s Services in order to develop those standards which were to be authorised by Safeguarding Boards. The major role of schools being equipped and ideally placed for preventative work and identifying victims and those who were at risk was referred to.
- The safeguarding training in order to identify those at risk in certain hotels was referred to and that direct community engagement was required in order to identify and safeguard those at risk.
- The challenges in relation to child sexual abuse were outlined with reference to capacity as demand rises and the continuing need for partnership work involving an element of trust and community engagement which must be both genuine and proportionate.

Arising from the presentation the following comments were made by Members:-

- The impact of data protection on information sharing;
- The further need for intelligence sharing and the expansion of communication;

- The involvement of schools, the requirement of training in schools and the establishment of a set of standards were required;
- The impact on schools given the limited resources and the requirement to work to a set curriculum;
- The requirement of information sharing and data being provided to Members by the Safeguarding Board;
- The requirement of training and standards to be implemented in primary schools in order for early intervention work to be undertaken to protect those who were at risk, vulnerable and already victims of child sexual exploitation;

In responding to comments made the West Midlands Strategic Lead on preventing violence against vulnerable people advised that:-

Information sharing was evolving and following the implementation of a framework and standards child sexual exploitation groups would be established in order to track information and ensure that work was being carried out with cases being followed up by referrals to appropriate groups and sources.

There were some statutory responsibilities on schools, however further work was required in schools and information had been forwarded to some educational establishments in relation to safeguarding and the protection of those vulnerable.

There was a requirement to take to prevent a major case in the Borough occurring.

That the Safeguarding Board had a clear responsibility to ensure children were protected and that Safeguarding Boards were subject to inspection by Ofsted.

In relation to working with schools there was a programme available which was interactive and focused on self esteem, respect and understanding relationships and that work could be undertaken if a number of schools across the Dudley Borough wished to become involved.

The Interim Director of Children's Services advised that the Safeguarding Board produced an annual report and that there was a Quality and Performance Group and a Vulnerable Children's Activity Group who met regularly to scrutinise and develop actions around the CSE Agenda.

In responding to a Member's question the Interim Director also stated that Faith Groups had policies in place to deal with cases of child sexual exploitation.

- (b) A presentation was made by Detective Chief Inspector Jenny Skyrme, the Sandwell and Dudley Child and Adult Abuse Lead, Public Protection Unit, West Midlands Police.

Detective Chief Inspector Skyrme referred to the work she conducted across all four Black Country Boroughs dealing with children who were either at risk of significant harm or had been significantly harmed, advising that she was the Senior Statutory Partner who sat on the Dudley Safeguarding Board.

She also referred to the early intervention work of her colleague Inspector Davenport.

During the course of her presentation Detective Chief Inspector Skyrme referred to the following:-

- The service transformation in her organisation following the introduction of Programme Paragon, which highlighted that there was a requirement to investigate systems and undertake a service transformation project with a team of consultants in order to streamline services.
- The impact of Operation Yewtree and the Jimmy Saville affect that saw a rise in serious sexual offences being reported.
- A graph was displayed in relation to the organisational restructure in the West Midlands Public Protection Unit with reference being made to the additional Officers that had been redeployed in order to deal with the extensive case levels.
- Details of special teams that were to be formed in order to focus on domestic abuse and the formation of a new Sexual Offences Team were noted.
- What this meant for Dudley was outlined and included the provision of a specific Public Protection Team, the number of detectives that would be involved and the work that they would be involved with. Timescales in relation to the phased implementation were displayed.
- It was noted that there were two types of child sexual exploitation, physical child exploitation and online child sexual exploitation with the latter involving online grooming and physical child exploitation was defined as sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age, with that young person receiving something as a result of the performance of sexual activities.

- It was stated that child sexual exploitation was not a crime in itself however details of other criminal offences that were committed as they were associated with the exploitation were outlined and details of these were displayed.
- That those who were abused had a perverse sense of loyalty and love towards their abusers and there were organised criminals who operated in groups and threatened, terrorised and emotionally blackmailed their victims and there was an actual role reversal where a grooming adult wished to take the attention away from their victim which in turn would take away the attention from the abuser.
- A case was referred to whereby a sixteen year old looked after child, (not in Dudley) who as a result of previous circumstances had no self-esteem or respect had been targeted by a group of youths who befriended her and subsequently sexually exploited the child. As the sexual activities had been deemed to be consensual a different approach had been adopted to deal with the perpetrators whereby other offences were investigated such as anti social behaviour, vehicle and bail checks.
- That locations around hotels in relation to licensing, health and safety and fire regulations could be investigated should they be hotspots for child sexual exploitation.
- Child Sexual Exploitation was dealt with by a partnership approach with Dudley operating a good approach to such exploitation. That there was local policing through Operation Sentinal where training was provided on the recognition of child sexual exploitation in order for early intervention and signposting work being undertaken.
- The work with partners such as the Community Safety Team, Children's Homes, hotel staff, joint media strategies and Young Person's Officers within schools was referred to.
- It was noted that 51% of victims from problem profiles had never been looked after children, which evidenced that this child sexual exploitation was not a stereotypical problem.
- The Dudley Safeguarding Board's structure was outlined and statistical evidence in relation to child sexual exploitation crime rates throughout the West Midlands were displayed.
- It was noted that different strategies and tactics would be put into place in different localities and new low level child sexual exploitation co-ordinators would be appointed in order to deal with those young people missing from home in order to detect and prevent low level exploitation which would prevent those vulnerable becoming future victims.

- Challenges for the Police and their partners were outlined including intelligence and information exchange and data sharing, joined up work across the Borough, cross border arrangements for out of borough placement offences, the investigation of child protection systems which were designed for familial issues and not sexual exploitation, mindsets of practitioners and gaps in service providers for 16 to 18 year olds.

Arising from the presentation Members asked questions and Detective Chief Inspector Skyrme advised as follows:-

- That conviction rates were low and work was being conducted with the Crown Prosecution Service to investigate different offences and that governance was required in relation to for example taxis who collected children unaccompanied.
- Local Policing do attend schools to provide information on child sexual exploitation.
- Grant aid was available to deal with offences of trafficking and details in relation to trafficking were outlined together with the use of legislation in order to secure a conviction for such an offence.

The Interim Director of Children's Services advised that Child Protection had bespoke training for teachers and agreed to impart the observations and comments of Members in relation to the requirement to disseminate information onto teaching staff who work on the front line with children regarding the recognition and reporting of concerns regarding possible child sexual exploitation.

RESOLVED:

That the information contained in presentations on approaches to child sexual exploitation and as reported on at the meeting be noted.

## CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION – FEEDBACK FROM MEMBER VISITS

Members reported orally on their visits to establishments and services involved in tackling sexual exploitation including visits to Street Teams, Respect Yourself – Teenage Pregnancy Service and a meeting with the Divisional Lead for Looked after Children and Missing Children and attendance at Training awareness sessions.

Member's comments and observations in relation to their visits were noted and the Chair requested Members to forward their comments and observations to either himself or the Vice-Chair in order that a report could be prepared and submitted to the next meeting of the Committee for further consideration.

The Chair thanked Officers, Presenters and Members for their contribution to the meeting and requested that weaknesses outlined be targeted especially in relation to the work that should be conducted with schools in relation to child sexual exploitation.

The Interim Director of Children's Services undertook to present a report to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to Safeguarding data.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the information reported on and feedback from Member visits together with Members comments, be noted.
- (b) That Members be requested to forward their comments and observations in relation to their visits to the Chair/Vice Chair.
- (c) That the Chair and Vice Chair be requested to submit a report on the feedback from Member Visits to a future meeting of the Committee.
- (d) That the Interim Director of Children's Services be requested to submit a report on Safeguarding data to a future meeting of the Committee.

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STANDARDS REPORT – PERFORMANCE DATA

This item was deferred to a future meeting of the Committee.

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DUDLEY SCHOOLS OFSTED OUTCOMES

This item was deferred to a future meeting of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm

CHAIR