

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

21 NOVEMBER 2016

REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with information in respect of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) within Bridgend County Borough and outline the actions and strategies adopted to respond and prevent incidence of CSE.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This report links to the following corporate priority:

- Helping people to be more self-reliant.

3. Background

What is Child Sexual Exploitation?

- 3.1 Child Sexual Exploitation is the coercion or manipulation of children and young people into taking part in sexual activities. It is a form of sexual abuse involving an exchange of some form of payment which can include money, mobile phones and other items, drugs, alcohol, a place to stay, "protection" or affection. The vulnerability of the young person and grooming process employed by perpetrators renders them powerless to recognise the exploitative nature of relationships and unable to give informed consent.

(All Wales Protocol CSE 2008)

- 3.2 There have been widespread revelations reported in the past few years in the national and international press concerning the plight of a significant number of children living in the County Borough of Rotherham who are now known to have been subjected to serious sexual exploitation between the period 1997 and 2013. Even to this day, no one really knows the true scale of child sexual exploitation (CSE) during this period, but the authors of the report (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham) state that their conservative estimate is that approximately 1400 children were sexually exploited over the full period of the inquiry. One third of the children were previously known to services because of child protection concerns and neglect. It is a harsh reality that many of the children were raped by multiple perpetrators, trafficked to other towns, abducted, beaten and intimidated. Some of the appalling examples of children abused included children who had been doused in petrol and threatened with being set alight, threatened with guns, made to witness brutal violent rapes and threatened that they would be next. Girls as young as 11 years were raped by large numbers of perpetrators. The abuse reported in the report is not just confined to the past demonstrated by the fact

that in 2013, the Police received 157 reports concerning child sexual exploitation in Rotherham.

- 3.3 The report states that over the period of the inquiry collective failures of political and officer leadership was blatant and that for many years child sexual exploitation had been a serious problem. However, the true scale and seriousness of the problem was underplayed by Senior Managers within social care. At an operational level, the Police gave no priority to CSE and considered many victims with contempt, failing to act on the abuse they were suffering as crimes.

4. Current situation

- 4.1 Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) is committed to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community from sexual exploitation and as such all practitioners have access to a number of key documents which provide guidance and structure to their practice. For example:

- **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989)** stipulates that the state shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse including 'prostitution', trafficking for sexual purposes and involvement in the production of child sexual abuse images.
- **The Welsh Assembly Government's 7 Core Aims** include the right to '*enjoy the best possible physical and mental, social and emotional health, including freedom from abuse, victimisation and exploitation*'. This Core Aim is central to protecting children and young people from sexual exploitation.
- **The Children Act 1989 and 2004** set out the arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.
- In '**Safeguarding Children: Working together under the Children Act 2004**' the Welsh Government emphasises that children involved in sexual exploitation should be treated primarily as victims of abuse, and their needs require careful assessment. They are likely to be in need of welfare services and, in many cases, protection under the Children Act 1989.
- **The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014**, Section 197 includes sexual abuse as part of the definition of abuse. Section 130 is the duty on partner agencies to report a Child at Risk.

Early identification of Child Sexual Abuse

- 4.2 Practitioners within the Safeguarding Services in Bridgend have either received CSE training or are part of the ongoing training programme to enhance their knowledge in this area and ensure they are aware of the complexities, signs and risks within the parameters of sexual exploitation.
- 4.3 Social Work practitioners continually assess children and young people who may be at risk of sexual exploitation through the completion of Care and Support Assessments and Section 47 Investigations. Additional safeguards to identify sexual exploitation within BCBC are evident within Accommodation and

Permanence Panel, Legal Gateway meetings, Looked After Children Reviews and Child Protection Case conferences.

CSE Strategy Meetings

- 4.4 Child Sexual Exploitation meetings in Bridgend are held on a weekly basis and are chaired by the Group Manager for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance (QA). This ensures continuity and oversight of the actions identified within safeguarding plans, continuous evaluation of the level of risk posed to the child or young person and identification and monitoring of those persons who pose risks to children. When individuals are identified within a number of cases they can be closely monitored by the Police and attending agencies to assist in the protection of young and vulnerable children and in the prosecution of offenders.
- 4.5 Within BCBC, between the months of April 2014 and February 2015, 34 children and young people were identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation across Bridgend. Between February 2015 and February 2016, 42 children and young people were identified as being at risk. At present, agencies are monitoring 17 children and young people under the CSE protocol. Those who are no longer being monitored continue to be supported by agencies. Should CSE concerns re-emerge then another CSE strategy meeting can be considered.
- 4.6 64 Child Sexual Exploitation meetings were convened between April 2014 and February 2015; and between February 2015 and February 2016, 127 meetings have been convened. The increase in the number of meetings convened is down to the level of risk presented and the number of actions that need completing to address that risk.
- 4.7 Between April 2014 and February 2015, the 64 meetings held were in respect of 55 females and nine males. Throughout the months of February 2014 and February 2015, 37 females were discussed and five males.
- 4.8 The ages of the children and young people subject of these CSE meetings varied between ten years to 17 years and the majority of children were aged between 14 years and 16 years.
- 4.9 Each multi-agency meeting takes into account the specific vulnerabilities of the child or young person to ensure their care plan targets all aspects of their needs and their need to be protected and educated around the facets of grooming and sexual exploitation.

Joint working with the Police in Bridgend

- 4.10 Good communication and collaborative working with the Police is essential in all cases and particularly so in child protection and CSE cases. The priority for the Police service is to protect children and young people through the investigation and prosecution of offenders, and also through proactive and disruptive work. Information about offenders is shared and discussed at individual CSE Strategy Meetings and themes of offending by individuals are shared at the CSE Task Force meetings with partner agencies. A dedicated CSE team has been in existence for 18 months and is led by an experienced Detective Sergeant, who has responsibility for the overview of all CSE investigations. The Detective Sergeant has a small team

of investigators supported by a Police analyst and a CSE advocate, employed by Barnardos, who provide a good service to young persons at risk of CSE, through awareness and training in the risks and dangers of CSE. The Public Protection department are currently reviewing past cases as well as taking new matters forward. BCBC holds a data base of all children and young people subject to CSE meetings and also have a performance reporting arrangement with the Western Bay Safeguarding Board.

- 4.11 The Sexual Offences Act 2003 introduced new offences to protect all children aged less than 18yrs. The Act now provides specific offences in respect of Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 4.12 More Child Abduction Notices (CAWN) are being actioned via the CSE process. This is relevant in situations where a young person is visiting the home of an adult where it is suspected he/she may be at risk of being groomed for exploitation, and does not, potentially, reach the threshold of criminal offences or whereby a young person refuses to engage with officers, stunting a criminal enquiry. CAWNs are designed to be used for service on adults. In the Child Abduction Act 1984, after section 2 (offence of abduction of child by other person), a CAWN may be issued to a person aged 18 years or over if the authorising officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the child is reported missing and is found on two or more occasions to be in the company of an adult of concern; or there is reason to suspect that the child's behaviour is, by reason of association with the defendant, giving significant cause for concern.
- 4.13 Focusing on a multi-agency approach, BCBC Safeguarding services, South Wales Police, ABMU Health and BCBC Education department in addition to a representative from Barnados, the Youth Service and Early Help Services have formed a "CSE Task Force". The Task Force addresses issues such as identifying gaps in training, highlighting and tracking current and new CSE cases, monitoring and mapping children and young people who are reported as missing. When appropriate, forums will be convened with practitioners to share the group's findings thus ensuring vital information is shared and robust safeguarding measures are implemented.

Joint working with ABMU in Bridgend

- 4.14 Professionals in BCBC work closely with health professionals from Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMU). The Accident and Emergency department within the Princess of Wales Hospital had direct computer access to the Child Protection Register prior to the implementation of the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) and future working arrangements are still being concluded. Health professionals frequently make contact with the Child Protection Clerks to make enquiries of children who present at the A&E department where there may be child protection/exploitation concerns. If the child/young person's name is not on the Child Protection Register and there are concerns then a referral must be considered. Links have also been developed with the Hospital's sexual health clinic in order to share information about young people who may be at risk of sexual exploitation. Together BCBC safeguarding and health professionals continue to work affectively in a variety of arenas to share information and complete holistic assessments to support and protect children and young people.

- 4.15 In particular, the Corporate Safeguarding Team within health provides representation at child sexual exploitation strategy meetings, professional strategy meetings and other complex cases of a safeguarding nature. In addition health representatives support in the delivery of multi-agency events and there are a number of forums across Western Bay where Safeguarding health representatives work closely alongside BCBC professionals, for example Child Practice Reviews and other Western Bay Regional Children's Safeguarding sub groups.
- 4.16 A safeguarding representative is a standing attendee on the CSE Task Force.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

- 4.17 MAPPA is a set of arrangements in place to manage the risk posed by the most serious sexual and violent offenders. These arrangements within Bridgend bring together lead professionals from the Probation Service, Mental Health Service, Housing, Public Protection and Children's Services on a fortnightly basis. These professionals are experienced in this arena and are effective in the sharing of important information between agencies which is key in protecting the most vulnerable people in our society.
- 4.18 BCBC is represented by the Group Manager for Safeguarding and QA who is also responsible for chairing the Child Sexual Exploitation meetings. This ensures continuity in information and process, and individuals who pose a risk to children and young people are identified and brought to the attention of safeguarding practitioners at the earliest stage.

CSE in Education

- 4.19 Staff in schools, further education colleges and other education establishments in Bridgend are uniquely placed to recognise and refer children who are believed to be vulnerable to CSE.
- 4.20 School staff should be alert and competent to identify and act upon concerns where a child is vulnerable to, at risk of, or experiencing abuse through CSE.
- 4.21 Across Bridgend, the Child Protection Team for Education delivers an annual programme of Child Sexual Exploitation training to year eight pupils with their teachers present. During February 2016, twenty-nine sexual exploitation awareness sessions aimed at Year 8 pupils were held across ten secondary schools in Bridgend, delivering to 1423 pupils. This training is delivered jointly with South Wales Police Officers and an outcome report is produced on an annual basis.
- 4.22 This training has been regularly reviewed and adapted to keep it up to date and relevant, responding to emerging potential threats to children, for example, Sexting. What is always surprising is the responses of young people and in particular their lack of awareness of the potential risks posed to them through their use of interactive technology.
- 4.23 Unfortunately, due to changes in the role of the School Police Liaison Officers the programme will not be able to run in the same format in future. However, the Child Protection team are considering working to support schools to deliver the CSE resources available on 'Hwb' within school. These resources were developed by

Barnardos for Welsh Government for delivery within PSE programmes in schools. The planning around this change in approach is in the early stages.

- 4.24 Through the delivery of training programmes in schools, children and young people within the education establishments in Bridgend have received appropriate early education around the risks and behaviours associated with CSE. The Child Protection Coordinator, Officer and Group Manager are always available to offer additional guidance support and advice.
- 4.25 The Child Protection (CP) Coordinator for Education is one of twenty four trainers commissioned and trained via the Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board to deliver CSE awareness raising sessions for professionals. In addition to the Western Bay roll-out of this training the CP Coordinator for Education is co-facilitating specific sessions focused on Bridgend Staff.
- 4.26 The CP Coordinator for Education is supporting in the 'train the trainer' of another cohort of CSE trainers within Western Bay. This support includes reviewing the current training, delivering a pilot session and delivering the whole presentation to the new trainers on the train the trainer day.
- 4.27 In addition the CP Coordinator for Education has also delivered sessions to staff in the Early Help hubs and central hub around CSE, Anti-Slavery and Radicalisation. Schools are also booking whole school training on CSE and Radicalisation. This will increase the knowledge and confidence of staff to respond to concerns.

Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF) Appendices A & B

- 4.28 All Social Workers within BCBC are familiar with the Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF) and we are confident they are able to identify children at risk of CSE. For background information, the SERAF Information and Intervention Pathway document is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 4.29 In addition to the CSE training which practitioners receive, there is clear guidance within the All Wales Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children and Young People who are at Risk of Abuse through Sexual Exploitation guidance (**Appendix B**) and the All Wales Child Protection procedures (**Appendix C**). Safeguarding practitioners regularly seek support and advice from the Seraf service provided by Barnardos Cymru.
- 4.30 The SERAF service supports professionals working in BCBC to ensure they have the knowledge to identify risk indicators early, understand the most effective form of intervention and prevent further abuse.
- 4.31 SERAF practitioners are available to offer consultation and advice to practitioners outside of the strategy meetings whether completing a SERAF risk assessment (an example form can be found at **Appendix D**) or needing to discuss strategies of work to educate and better protect children and young people from grooming and exploitation.
- 4.32 A representative from the Seraf service is invited to attend at each and every Child Sexual Exploitation strategy meeting held in Bridgend. This ensures that specialist service expertise supports affective decision making and support the creation of

effective safeguarding plans to provide better outcomes for children and young people.

Western Bay Children's Safeguarding Board (WBCSB)

- 4.33 Child Sexual Exploitation has been recognised as one of the strategic priorities for the WBCSB with the key objectives being;
- To ensure full implementation of the statutory All Wales Safeguarding Children and young people from Sexual Exploitation Protocol.
 - To understand the extent to which children are involved in CSE across Western Bay.
 - To have inter-disciplinary training package in place for all professionals who work with children to help recognise and respond to symptoms of CSE.
- 4.34 The WBCSB has been assured there is significant work going on across the whole workforce area to prioritise, recognise and respond to issues of Child Sexual Exploitation. There are many areas of good practice and robust arrangements which can be drawn upon to share experience and skills regionally.
- 4.35 The WBCSB is also assured that partner agencies are committed to working with the Board to address the issue of child sexual exploitation and this will be further demonstrated by the upcoming CSE audits and performance reporting arrangements established by the Board and its partners. Such reporting will also allow for scrutiny of multi-agency attendance at CSE meetings.

Analysis

- 4.36 The background information found at 3.1 to 3.3 within this report in relation to the extent of Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham clearly evidences the devastating impact upon children and young people. The enormity of such is incomprehensible when concerns have not been identified or acted upon.
- 4.37 What is also evident are the deficiencies in knowledge and understanding of the behaviours and complexities associated with Child Sexual Exploitation by professionals at that time, both from a victim's perspective and also with regards to the perpetrators manipulation and coercion of children and young people.
- 4.38 The information within this report evidences how partner agencies across the Borough of Bridgend have developed productive working relationships to proactively and comprehensively manage concerns around the sexual exploitation of children and young people.
- 4.39 The extent of Child Sexual Exploitation in BCBC based on the numbers of CSE strategy meetings held bears no comparison to that reported in Rotherham. However, this in no way minimises the importance of ensuring that our children and young people are protected, supported and educated at the earliest opportunities.
- 4.40 There is unlimited value to the benefits of multi-agency information sharing and positive productive working between agencies and this was no more evident than within Rotherham. Partnership working is essential to safeguard children and young

people but particularly so in cases of sexual exploitation. This is due to the number of persons usually associated with the young person and their contact with professionals across agencies.

- 4.41 As referred to above the value of interagency working is beyond doubt and to ensure this is maximised, Bridgend established a multi-agency CSE Task Force.
- 4.42 The group discuss and share information on all high risk CSE cases, considers CSE geographical hotspots across Bridgend and identifies maps and profiles perpetrators as well as considers ongoing prosecutions. In addition, the group monitors the behaviors and agency responses to young people who are frequently reported missing.
- 4.43 Another example of inter-agency working is with regard to CSE training. The Task Force will also share resources for training and will create a bespoke package of training for targeted audiences across Bridgend although resources may be limited in the future.
- 4.44 In Bridgend, Members can be assured that comprehensive information is maintained in respect of the number of young people who have been identified as vulnerable to CSE. Those currently deemed most at risk are females aged between fourteen years and sixteen years. The collection of CSE data, complemented by the CSE Task Force, places Bridgend in a unique position to provide an extensive portfolio around Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 4.45 Bridgend's database is currently reporting seventeen children and young people who are being monitored under the CSE Protocol. There has been a reduction in this number over several months, not because monitoring is less effective but as a result of a combination of factors. For example:
- 4.46 A small reduction in numbers can be attributed to young people reaching the age of 18 years and an even smaller number of "Looked After" young people being placed out of the Bridgend area.
- 4.47 The substantial reduction in numbers is evidenced within CSE strategy meetings. It is as a direct result of the dedication and hard work of a number of practitioners across services. Through engaging children and young people in specific work around grooming, sexual exploitation education, healthy relationships and social media and online safety to name but a few. This is of course coupled with the work of the dedicated Police CSE unit in the disruption and prosecution of offenders.
- 4.48 A recent CSE 'open day' for practitioners was coordinated and facilitated by the BCBC Safeguarding Group Manager. Officers from the CSE Unit attended along with partner representatives. Front line professionals were presented with information gathered from CSE meetings about individuals, geographical hotspots and actual and potential perpetrators. The sharing of and linking of information during this day was invaluable. The day was an overwhelming success resulting in substantial information being shared by practitioners across services.
- 4.49 The work carried out by Professionals across Bridgend within the CSE Task Force has recently been recognised and as a result the CSE Task Force were nominated

as finalists in this year's South Wales Police Annual Awards in the Innovation category as part of the CSE partnership teamwork.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

5.1 There are no implications on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 As this report is for information purposes only, an EIA is not deemed necessary.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Whilst there are no specific financial implications linked to this information report, it should be noted that the workload demands linked to safeguarding continue to place increasing pressures on staff and individual managers.

8. Recommendation

8.1 Partnership and Governance are asked to note and provide comment about this report.

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10. Background documents:

- 1) Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework
- 2) SERAF information and intervention pathway
- 3) All Wales Child Protection Procedures