

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7th APRIL 2015

### REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

#### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Overview and Scrutiny 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 Community strategy priority:
- Working with children and families to tackle problems early

#### 3. Background

##### 3.1 What is Child Sexual Exploitation?

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)

There has been recent and widespread revelations reported in 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 recent 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.

- 3.2 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 / proposal**

- 4.1 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 Acts 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.

#### **4.2 Early identification of Child Sexual Abuse**

Practitioners within 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.

Social work practitioners continually assess children and young people who may be at risk of sexual exploitation through the completion of Initial Assessments, Core Assessments and Section 47 Investigations. Additional safeguards to identify

sexual exploitation within BCBC are evident within Accommodation and Permanence Panel, Legal Surgeries, Looked After Children Reviews and Child Protection Case conferences.

#### 4.3 CSE Strategy Meetings

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) and the Independent Reviewing Service Manager. 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. Such individuals are being identified within a number of cases and as such 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.

Within BCBC between the months of April 2014 and February 2015, thirty four children and young people have been identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation across Bridgend. Sixty four child sexual exploitation meetings have been convened in respect of these children, fifty five of which have been in respect of young females and nine in respect of young males.

The ages of the children and young people who have been subject to CSE meetings varies between ten years to seventeen years and the majority of children are aged between fourteen years and sixteen years.

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.

BCBC statistics show that at the time of the child's initial Sexual Exploitation Strategy meeting:

- Nine children were subject to Child Protection procedures.
- Eleven children were Looked After.
- Two children were subject to both Child Protection and Looked After procedures.

It must be noted that numerical data is fluid and often the status of children's cases shifts between Children in Need, Child Protection and Looked After Children. This said, as of 18/03/2015 BCBC's current position is that out of the children who have been subject to CSE meetings:

- Nine children's names are placed on the Child Protection Register.
- Three of the children are now subject to the Child Protection Register.
- Three of the children's names were removed from the Child Protection Register.
- Fifteen children are Looked After.
- Four children ceased to be Looked After.
- Four children's cases have been closed.
- Two young people have attained the age of 18years.

#### **4.4 Joint working with the Police in Bridgend**

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. A recent addition to the Child Abuse & Investigation Unit is a dedicated CSE Single Point Of Contact (SPOC) who is 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 who has completed a problem profile for the Bridgend area regarding children who are at risk of being sexually exploited and the perpetrators of exploitation. The public protection department are currently reviewing past cases as well as taking new matters forward. BCBC holds a data base of all young people subject to CSE meetings and also has performance reporting arrangements with the Western Bay Safeguarding Board.

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.

More Child Abduction notices 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.

Focusing on a multi-agency approach BCBC Safeguarding services, South Wales Police, ABMU Health and BCBC Education department have formed a "CSE Task Force". The task force will address 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.

#### **4.5 Joint working with ABMU in Bridgend**

Professionals in BCBC work closely with health professionals from Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMU). The Accident and Emergency (A&E) department within the Princess of Wales Hospital has direct computer access to the Child Protection Register. The Safeguarding lead within the A&E department meets regularly with the Safeguarding Group Manager in BCBC to discuss any issues that may arise. In addition, Health professionals frequently make contact with Child Protection Clerks to make enquiries of children who present at the A&E department where there may be child protection concerns. 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 effectively in a variety of arenas to share information and complete holistic assessments to support and protect children and young people.

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. A multi-agency peer

group provides opportunity for multi-agency challenge and scrutiny of child protection examinations and their findings. 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 Review and other Western Bay Regional Children's Safeguarding sub groups.

#### **4.6 Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)**

MAPPA are 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.

BCBC is represented by the Group Manager for Safeguarding and QA, who is also responsible for joint 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. The Group Manager also ensures agencies and professionals outside of Safeguarding make the necessary referrals to the department which are then tracked to ensure assessments are carried out in a timely manner to ensure the protection of children, young people and their families. To assist this process, individuals subject to MAPPA are listed on the BCBC Electronic Records Data Base, 'DRAIG' with safeguarding alerts attached to ensure practitioners take a proactive stance to safeguarding children at the earliest stage.

#### **4.7 CSE in Education**

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.

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.

Across Bridgend, The Child Protection Coordinator for Education and Youth Services delivers an annual programme of Child Sexual Exploitation training to year eight pupils with their teachers present. During February 2015, thirty three sexual exploitation awareness sessions aimed at Year 8 pupils were held across ten secondary schools in Bridgend. This training is delivered jointly with South Wales Police Officers and an outcome report is produced on an annual basis.

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.

Through the delivery of training programmes in schools, children and young people within the education establishments in Bridgend receive 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.

The Child Protection Coordinator for Education and Youth Service is one of twenty four trainers commissioned and trained via the Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board to deliver CSE awareness raising sessions for professionals. A comprehensive roll-out of this training is currently underway.

In addition the Child Protection Coordinator has also undertaken 'train the trainer' learning in relation to human trafficking / Modern Slavery. This training is currently being rolled out in two forms: three hour awareness raising sessions and a number of full day first responder courses.

The link between CSE and Trafficking is often overlooked as the general view of trafficking is that of persons trafficked into the UK from abroad. What is becoming more prevalent is the danger associated with internal trafficking. In particular in CSE cases young people may be trafficked from one location in the UK to another for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

#### **4.8 Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF)**

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.

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 and the All Wales Child Protection procedures. Safeguarding practitioners regularly seek support and advice from the SERAF service provided by Barnardos Cymru.

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.

SERAF practitioners are available to offer consultation and advice to practitioners outside of the strategy meetings whether completing a SERAF risk assessment or needing to discuss strategies of work to educate and better protect children and young people from grooming and exploitation.

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 effective decision making and supports the creation of effective safeguarding plans to provide better outcomes for children and young people.

This service is able to offer structured programmes of work to children and young people of Bridgend who have been identified as being sexually exploited through the CSE strategy meeting:

- 1:1 Risk Awareness Work- 12 wks
  - 1:1 Risk Reduction Work- 24wks
  - 1:1 Risks Reduction Work- 12mnths
  - 1:1 Play Therapy and Counselling Services
- [www.barnados.org.uk/serafservice](http://www.barnados.org.uk/serafservice)

#### 4.9 **Western Bay Children’s Safeguarding Board (WBCSB)**

Child Sexual Exploitation has been recognised as one the strategic priorities for the WBCSB with the key objective 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 an effective prevention strategy in place to identify risk early and provide appropriate services for children identified as at risk.

To have inter-disciplinary training package in place for all professionals who work with children to help recognise and respond to symptoms of CSE.

The desired outcome of the above priority is to ensure that ;

- Children/Young People who are identified as being sexually exploitation are effectively safeguarded from on-going exploitation.
- Less children/Young People become sexually exploited.
- Children who are identified as at risk of CSE are provided with effective services and interventions to prevent them becoming exploited.”

Following the publication of the Home Office Inquiry report in July 2013 in England, the Chairman of the WBSCB required that work be done across the partner agencies to identify arrangements locally. This work began with a position statement and brief gap analysis which identified that providing agencies were compliant and working under the statutory guidance in place across Wales, then the localities within Western Bay should be able to confidently respond to confirm that systems were robust.

Following receipt of this report the Chairman of WBSCB wrote to Chief Executives, Directors and other senior professionals with responsibility for safeguarding requiring assurance that arrangements were in place, that they were robust, regularly reviewed and that all staff were compliant with the statutory guidance.

Agencies which responded were able to confirm that the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation was taken seriously within their organisation and that compliance with the statutory guidance was either embedded into practice or a priority area to improve awareness.

Each local authority area was asked to respond specifically regarding the safety of

Looked After Children placed both within and outside the local authority boundaries.

All agencies were asked to provide assurances of robust, responsive systems for recognition and response and offer evidence to support their assurances.

Agencies who responded provided a clear response regarding regular awareness raising throughout their workforce areas and clearly referenced the SERAF assessment tool as the robust system for recognition and response with the exception of Barnardo's Cymru who were integral in the development of the statutory guidance and continue to work with Welsh Government on a plan for review and training. Agencies that were unable to offer assurances at the time recognised that work was required to develop robust systems and provided the Board assurances that this is being addressed.

All agencies who responded demonstrated their commitment to working with the WBSCB under its strategic priority for CSE and confirmed their future commitment to promote awareness raising of CSE throughout their agency.

The WBSCB has been assured there is significant work going on across the whole workforce area to prioritise, recognise and respond to issues of CSE. There are many areas of good practice and robust arrangements which can be drawn upon to share experience and skills regionally.

The WBSCB has also be 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.

#### **4.10 Bridgend CSE Case Study**

One recent example of the use of effective multi-agency procedures and practice across safeguarding services within Bridgend is cited in the recent conviction of a male from Cardiff who has recently been sentenced to serve a 4 year custodial prison term for several sexual offences against a young vulnerable female who is Looked After by BCBC.

The Initial CSE concerns for this young person were identified through thorough assessment and collaborative working with other agencies and professionals across the Borough of Bridgend. In total 10 CSE strategy meetings were convened which included a number of agencies involved in the care planning for this young person. Also in attendance was a representative from the SERAF service, the Missing Person's Coordinator from the Child Abuse & Investigation Unit in Cowbridge and a Detective Inspector from the CID based in Cardiff.

The meetings ensured that all relevant agencies/services, where appropriate, were referred to, all actions within the safeguarding plans were adhered to and professionals worked extremely hard to ensure the young person received the right level of support and advice whilst being part of the criminal investigation. This work was so effective that the young person returned to education and felt informed and supported to the point where she was willing to give evidence in the court. The Police commended those workers involved in the coordination of the CSE meetings



within BCBC which clearly protected this young person and others from the grooming and sexual exploitation perpetrated by this offender.

#### 4.11 Analysis

The background information contained within this report in relation to the extent of CSE in Rothertham 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.

What is also evident are the deficiencies in knowledge and understanding of the behaviours and complexities associated with CSE by professionals, both from a victim's perspective and also with regard to the perpetrators' manipulation and coercion of children and young people.

The information within this report evidences how Practitioners, Managers and Senior Managers within BCBC are taking concerns around the sexual exploitation of children and young people extremely seriously.

The extent of CSE in BCBC, based on the numbers of CSE strategy meetings held, bear no comparison to that reported in Rothertham. However, this in no way minimises the importance of ensuring that our children and young people are protected, supported and educated at the earliest opportunity.

In respect of training, there is a clear plan to educate year 8 pupils across BCBC in terms of raising their awareness to the behaviours and risks posed by sexual exploitation. There are also opportunities for front line practitioners to attend training delivered by Barnardo's. However, that said, there are clear gaps in terms of staff training and some of those staff groups are within the Youth Offending Institute in HMP Parc, Foster Carers, Teachers and Governors and Residential staff.

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 Rothertham. Partnership working is essential to safeguard children and young people but particularly so in child protection cases and 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. What has been noticeable across Bridgend is that young people who are or have been subject to CSE strategy meetings are usually, if not always, known to each other or have a friend who has introduced them to other young people who are at risk of exploitation.

Many of these young people known to Safeguarding are also frequenting particular localities or addresses within the area and are also in the presence of named individuals; males who have been identified as a risk within the remit of CSE and also known to the Police and Probation services. The majority of those individuals identified as posing a risk to young people in Bridgend are predominantly slightly older males, in their late teens, early twenties and a very small number of males have been identified to be in their forties. No female perpetrators have been identified but concerns have been shared about females introducing other young girls to males. To date, there is no evidence to indicate that known young people

who are at risk of CSE or adults who pose a risk to children are of any ethnic background other than white Welsh.

As referred to above, the value of interagency working is beyond doubt and to ensure this is maximised a Bridgend CSE Task Force has been established. This multi-agency group consists of the Detective Inspector and the CSE dedicated Sergeant, both from the Child Abuse and Investigation Unit at Cowbridge Police Station; the Safeguarding Group Manager; the Independent Reviewing Service Manager; the Child Protection Coordinator for Education and a Health representative. Representation of other agencies at these meetings is considered when appropriate.

The group will discuss and share information on all high risk CSE cases, consider all new cases of CSE, identify maps and profile perpetrators and consider ongoing prosecutions. In addition, the group will monitor the behaviours of and agency responses to young people who are frequently reported missing. A mapping process has already begun and front line professionals will be presented with information which links young people, perpetrators and locations together, thus ensuring they are fully informed and practitioners are not working in isolation but rather in a unified approach where the sharing of this information can assist in accurately assessing risk and responding with a care plan that, as far as practicably possible, protects children and young people from sexual exploitation.

Another example of inter-agency working is with regard to CSE training. The Task Force will also share resources for training but in the first instance group members will observe each other's training to create a bespoke package of trainers and training for targeted staff across Bridgend.

In terms of statistical data it is acknowledged that at present, this is limited due to reporting arrangements within the Western Bay only being in their infancy. However, 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 will place Bridgend in a unique position to provide an extensive portfolio around CSE.

Finally, what needs to be acknowledged is that CSE does not just happen in Bridgend, however to date there has been no evidence of organised sexual exploitation by criminal gangs.

## **5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules**

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

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

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

## **7. Financial Implications**

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**

Overview and Scrutiny asked to note and provide comment about this report.

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