

**Children and Young People's  
Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**10 March 2022**

**Independent Inquiry into  
Child Sexual Abuse**



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**Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director for Children and Young  
People's Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Children and Young People's and Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees with a presentation that will provide information on The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse into Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks and provide information on the actions taken by Durham Constabulary, Durham County Council and the Durham Children's Safeguarding Partnership to address areas within the report.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was set up in 2014. Their role is to investigate what went wrong through a range of investigations into historic abuse and to use its findings to make clear recommendations and prevent failures from happening in the future.
- 3 IICSA published its 14<sup>th</sup> report focusing on Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks in February 2022 and is appended to this report at appendix 2. Unlike IICSA's other investigation this report did not concentrate on specific historic failings but took a more contemporary view of the system up to early 2019 using 6 randomly selected local authority areas.
- 4 Arrangements have been made for the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services and Detective Chief Superintendent of Durham Constabulary supported by senior managers to attend a

meeting of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to address areas of the report significant to County Durham.

- 5 The content of the report also includes areas of responsibility within the remit for the Council's Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SSC OSC). Within this context and with agreement of the Chairman, members of Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been invited to attend the meeting.

## **Recommendation**

- 6 That the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to:
  - a) Note the content of the IICSA Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks report attached at appendix 2
  - b) Consider providing a response taking into account comments from Members of the committee and Members of SSCOSC to the Corporate Director of Children and Young Peoples Services, Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Children and Young People's Services and Community Safety, Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Safe Durham Partnership Board.
  - c) Agree to receive an update to a future meeting in relation to the agreed next steps and actions taken by the service and partners to address the issues highlighted in the report attached at appendix 2.

## Background

- 7 The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) is an ongoing national inquiry in England and Wales into how institutions handle their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse. It was established by the Government in 2014 following reports of widespread abuse involving prominent media and political figures stretching back over decades
- 8 The Department for Education defines child sexual exploitation as a form of child sexual abuse that is said to occur “*where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator*”.
- 9 A ‘network’ was defined for the purposes of this investigation as “*two or more individuals (whether identified or not) who are known to (or associated with) one another*”. Offender networks are often loosely interconnected rather than formally organised and older children or teenagers may also be involved in grooming victims.
- 10 The aim of the investigation was to obtain an accurate picture of child sexual exploitation (CSE) in England and Wales by looking at current organisational practices, examining individual cases and drawing on wider knowledge of CSE.
- 11 The inquiry focused on six local authority case study areas, chosen at random that included County Durham to support the national learning into child sexual exploitation.
- 12 The investigation examined eight themes:
  - Problem profiling and disruption of child sexual exploitation;
  - Empathy and concern for child victims;
  - Risk assessment, protection from harm and outcomes for children;
  - Missing children, return home interviews and children in care;
  - Male victims;
  - Children with disabilities;
  - Partnership working and;
  - Audit, review and performance management.
- 13 The report makes a number of recommendations for the Government, the Department for Education, police forces and local authorities.

- 14 The IICSA published its report into Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks on 1 February 2022 and is one of the inquiry's final reports into Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks.
- 15 Arrangements have been made for the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services supported by senior managers to attend a meeting of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members of Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been invited to attend as this item is cross cutting area with that committee.
- 16 A presentation will be given by the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services and Detective Chief Superintendent of Durham Constabulary will cover the following areas:
  - Introduction and Background to IICSA
  - Scope of the inquiry : child sexual abuse by organised networks
  - Methodology and scale
  - Recommendations from the inquiry report
  - Themes raised in the report
  - Service improvements and developments implemented since 2019
  - Current/in progress developments in relation to Contextualised Safeguarding
  - Durham Response to the report and agreed next steps

## **Conclusion**

- 17 Members of Children and Young People's and Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be aware of the areas of concern and actions taken to safeguard and mitigate risk.

## **Background papers**

**None**

## **Other Useful Documents**

[IICSA report - Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks Feb 2022](#)

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Children Act 1989 provides a legislative framework for child protection in England and is strengthened by the Children Act 2004, which encourages partnerships between agencies and creates more accountability.

### **Finance**

Not applicable.

### **Consultation**

Not applicable.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Not applicable.

### **Climate Change**

Not applicable.

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Information within this report is linked to the Safe Durham Partnership Plan priority to Support victims and protect vulnerable people from harm.

### **Staffing**

Not applicable.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

### **Risk**

Not applicable.

### **Procurement**

Not applicable.

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## **Appendix 2 IICSA Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks**

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