

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Special Joint Meeting of the **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** and the **Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham** on **Tuesday 24 July 2018 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor C Potts (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors B Avery, A Bainbridge, B Bainbridge, D Bell, J Considine, R Crute, D Hall, C Hampson, S Iveson, I Jewell, L Mavin, A Willis, M Wilson, J Nicholson, H Smith, J Stephenson and J Turnbull

Parent Governor Representative:

Mrs J Norman

Co-opted Members:

Mr D Balls, Ms R Evans, Mr T Cooke and Chief Superintendent A Green.

Also Present:

Councillors L Maddison, M McKeon and L Hovvels

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Blakey, D Boyes, P Brookes, J Charlton, N Grayson, K Hopper, L Kennedy, H Liddle, K Hopper, L Kennedy, E Mavin, A Patterson, A Reed, M Simmons and K Thompson and S Errington (Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service), Mrs C Craig (Faith Rep) and Mrs P Parkins.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor L Maddison substituted for N Grayson.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from co-opted members or interested parties.

5 ERASE

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided information on partnership work to tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) through the ERASE brand (for copy see file of minutes).

Members received a presentation from Lisa Wood, Operations Manager and Detective Sergeant Ian Haddick which provided an update on the ERASE Team (for copy see file of minutes).

The Operations Manager confirmed that everyone who worked with young people were responsible for identifying the risk or potential risk of CSE. A matrix was completed which scored potential risks and helped to identify a child at risk and a level of risk. In 2017/18 there were 135 completed matrices, which had identified 16 children of high risk and 10 of medium risk. The rest were categorised as low risk and included normal types of experimental behaviour. For example, sexting was a very different behaviour between two young people, in comparison to an adult conversing with a child.

The Detective Sergeant confirmed that the level of risk was rapidly increased when a young person went from conversing online to meeting someone in person and the Team had to be reactive.

The Operations Manager confirmed that historically it females were exploited but there had been an increase in the number of young males and with regards to age ranges, she confirmed the number in 2017/18;

- 10 x 8-13 years
- 18 x 14-16 years
- 4 x 17-18 years

The younger age bracket usually included children who had unsupervised access to social media. This was usually as a result of pressure on parents to allow them access. Work was ongoing with parents to highlight the danger of allowing access to social media as it was an avenue which adults used in order to access children.

There was a strong link between children who went missing and CSE. In 2017/18 there had been 769 missing children and 269 of those lived in Durham. 69 had been placed in the care system by other Local Authorities. Of the 140,000 young people that went missing last year, 70% of them were at risk of CSE.

The Detective Sergeant confirmed that intelligence gathering was crucial following any missing episode and a missing report was scrutinised regardless of whether CSE was suspected. Several conferences had been arranged in conjunction with the Beck Foundation. Secondary schools were targeted and child representatives from each school would attend and then return to school and share the information with peers.

The Operations Manager confirmed that ERASE had been in operation for 2 years and had recently employed one additional Detective Sergeant and another Therapeutic Support Worker. There was a high risk of CSE for children in the Edge of Care Service and therefore collaboration took place twice a week.

The Detective Sergeant referred to a documentary film 'Kayleighs Love Story' which had been released by Lancashire Police as an online grooming prevention resource. All schools were targeted and if 16-18 year olds were at risk, colleges would also be targeted.

The Operations Manager referred to care homes and the purpose of to achieve an approachable and trustworthy service for young people to access professional advice.

In response to a question from Ms Evans, the Operations Manager advised that children were targeted from primary school age. They would first be taught about 'Stranger Danger' at age 4 years and would then go on to be given talks at various ages. 80% of young people attended school so it was a key essential in raising awareness. It was important to note that between the ages of 14-16 years it was normal for children to start experimenting with sex, therefore a lot of the identifying risk factors were also normal behaviour.

In response to a question from Councillor Jewell, the Detective Sergeant confirmed that locations were often identified as hotspots and there was collaborative working across boundaries with other Forces.

In terms of the challenges ahead the Operations Manager confirmed that there were two female Therapeutic Support Workers and there was consideration as to whether they needed to employ a male worker.

The Detective Sergeant confirmed that the Police Cyber Unit were aware of 20-30 mobile phone applications and referred to Operation Makesafe which was an initiative focused on making businesses such as hotels, licensed premises, transport services and takeaways, aware of the early signs of CSE. There were 1600 taxi drivers in Durham and CSE had been embedded into the Licensing Conditions. The Detective Sergeant confirmed that Operation Makesafe came with its own challenges such as high staff turnover in the business sector.

The Operations Manager confirmed that a priority was to ensure all child workers were aware of the LSCB referral form as this was vital to improve intelligence gathering. Ms Evans queried how voluntary sector workers were made aware of the referral form and especially those in rural areas. The Operations Manager confirmed that the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) alliance workers were represented at every level and various resources were available to community groups.

With regards to therapeutic support, the Operations Manager confirmed that the first stage was to remove the perpetrator and then a various stages of mending and confidence building would follow. The final stage was to remove the future risk of exploitation. Activities were used for confidence building such as 'bounce' academy, horse riding and animal care.

In response to a comment from Councillor Turnbull regarding the gender of Therapeutic Workers, he suggested that it could not be assumed that male victims of CSE wanted to speak to male workers, but agreed that it would be advantageous for the service to have a choice.

Mr Cooke referred to the recent concept of social media and the reliance on tablets and smart phones to keep children entertained.

The Detective Sergeant confirmed that social media for children was high risk and parents needed to be made aware of the dangers of children having unsupervised access. Raising awareness with parents could be done through school and parents evenings, but it was questionable whether there were more ways to reach out.

Chief Superintendent Adrian Green confirmed that Neighbourhood Beat Teams were already working with schools and programmes were embedded within teacher training and of social worker upskills, to ensure they were able to identify key issues relating to CSE.

Councillor Maddison queried whether there was a link between drug abuse and CSE and where the information was stored. The Operations Manager confirmed that there was a Drug Alcohol Service and this was activated when substance abuse was identified. Children were more likely to be exploited under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The Detective Sergeant confirmed that Durham Constabulary worked closely with other forces and would be notified and passed information on any vulnerable children who moved in to the area.

Councillor Crute referred to the constant peer pressure on children and the struggle for them to reach standards of perceived superiority. They were often low in confidence and more likely to be exploited. The Operations Manager referred to campaigns aimed at educating children and parents about peer pressure. She added that young people who were known to be vulnerable were low in confidence. If a teacher identified a young person lacking in confidence, they were able to access external services to assist in reducing the risk. Low self esteem was one of the early signs of vulnerability and it was important to build resilience at this early stage.

In response to a question from Councillor Jopling the Operations Manager confirmed any child from any background could be a victim. It could be that two people in school were formerly in a relationship, they parted ways and one of them had a photograph on a mobile phone. Vulnerability was not down to socioeconomics.

In response to a question from Councillor McKeon, the Detective Sergeant confirmed that the team had an excellent relationship with children's homes and fostering agencies and had been invited to provide an ERASE presentation to foster carers.

Councillor Jewell queried whether there could be a situation where families did not want to take matters further due to the perception of the victim and the Detective Sergeant confirmed that if that was to happen, it would identify a failure of the system.

Councillor Iveson queried the role of social media in CSE and the Detective Sergeant replied that most young people communicated now via social media and it was considered to be a platform where people would take risks they wouldn't normally. Information was permanent and the speed at which it could be shared was greater, but historically issues were contact offences.

Councillor McKeon queried the procedure for a member of the public who was concerned about a child and their awareness of how to report suspected CSE. The Operations Manager referred to a recent campaign by ERASE which referred to the reporting procedure. This had been advertised in pubs, at bus stops and on buses and had generated a successful number of hits on the website.

On contacting 101, 999 or First Contact, the information would be reviewed in the same way. Operation Makesafe had distributed posters in a number of places such as taxis, youth premises, doctors surgeries.

Councillor Turnbull commented on the aftermath of a prosecution where perpetrators were seen to have not been punished accordingly. He was aware of situations where families moved out of the area and of children not coming forward in order to avoid stigma.

The Operations Manager referred to Kayleigh's Love Story and advised that a link would be sent for Members who had not yet seen it.

The Chief Superintendent reminded the Committee that most CSE took place in the home from known family or family friends. With regards to the impact of social media, he confirmed that historically an incident which started as natural curiosity was nothing more than a moment in time, whereas now it was able to be captured with a camera, giving people the advantage to use it indecently. With reference to children's homes, it was a fact that County Durham and Darlington had an extremely high number of children's homes, possibly the highest in terms of other regions, and it was factual that these children were at risk. This placed huge resource issues on police and social services.

Councillor Potts confirmed that Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be undertaking a review of private children's homes in County Durham.

Resolved:

- (i) That an update report be presented to Overview and Scrutiny in 12 months.
- (ii) That a response containing Members' comments from the meeting be sent to the respective Cabinet Portfolio Holders and relevant partnership boards.