By: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children’s Services

Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

To: Corporate Parenting Panel – 26 May 2016

Subject: KENT COUNTY COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND MISSING CHILDREN.

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All

Summary: Following Professor Jay’s report into the widespread sexual exploitation of children in Rotherham, Ofsted set out to build a clearer picture of the strength of safeguarding in this area of child protection by arranging a range of thematic inspections looking at Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and the local response.

This briefing paper provides information about Kent County Council’s (KCC), in partnership with colleagues in other agencies, response to CSE and Missing Children.

Since October 2014, significant work has been undertaken by Specialist Children’s Services (SCS), Education and Young People’s Services (EYP), Public Health, Children’s Commissioning and the Kent Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) to raise awareness of CSE warning signs among partners, providers and front-line staff. This has been further supported by measures to evaluate the quality and responsiveness of interventions; ensuring vulnerable children and young people are appropriately safeguarded and that they receive the required help and support in a timely way.

Recommendations: Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to NOTE and COMMENT ON the content of this report.

1. Introduction

1.1 Between September and October 2014, Ofsted conducted eight thematic inspections of how Local Authorities were tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Rotherham, Rochdale, Bristol, Luton, Oldham, Camden and Brent as well as Kent, were all inspected. Kent’s CSE thematic inspection took place between 13 and 17 October 2014.

1.2 Actions arising from the thematic inspection, both nationally and locally were incorporated into Kent Children’s Services Development Plan.

1.3 Actions undertaken to recognise risks and likelihood, respond to and protect children from CSE have been incorporated into a CSE work-plan which details
the necessary actions professional agencies within Kent must undertake in order to robustly tackle and prevent sexual exploitation. It utilises analysis of all the national reports regarding CSE and Ofsted thematic inspection findings.

1.4 This work plan has been adapted and progress is managed by the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation Group (MASE). CSE remains at the forefront of officers’ minds, with Quality Assurance mechanisms such as Deep Dives and defined audits looking closely at the theme of CSE.

1.5 Communication and raising awareness

1.5.1 Substantial efforts have been undertaken by the Council to work with staff, providers and colleagues in other agencies to assess training needs, levels of awareness and actions required to ensure the safeguarding response is as robust as possible.

1.5.2 Children’s Commissioning has been working with supported lodgings providers, who deliver accommodation and support to over 130 young people leaving care, to ensure staff within these services are aware of the Kent CSE risk-assessment toolkit and access relevant training. New accommodation providers need to evidence consideration of the risks of CSE when tendering for any service.

1.5.3 There was a formal launch of the newly-formed specialist multi-agency Child Sexual Exploitation Team (CSET) and ‘Operation Willow’ on 2 December 2015. The launch was widely reported on local television, radio and newspapers, helping to raise the profile of both the issue and how Kent, with its partners, continues to respond. More details about Operation Willow can be found on the KSCB website.

1.5.4 The CSET is now in place and each agency has a CSE Champion within their agency to ensure that the CSE message is cascaded, raising awareness of what to do when CSE is suspected and to provide support to the CSET and MASE. There are currently 83 CSE Champions. Quarterly Champions’ Forums have been arranged where experiences will be shared and further developments within CSE disseminated. The KSCB has developed an online resource library and an enhanced training programme for CSE Champions.

1.6 Training

1.6.1 Following the CSE thematic inspection in October 2014, the Council committed to all front-line staff with responsibility for the safeguarding assessment of/ planning for children and young people undertaking CSE training. This training includes utilisation of the KSCB CSE risk-assessment toolkit and raising awareness of the particular vulnerability indicators specific to sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

1.6.2 A comprehensive range of training opportunities is open to front-line staff. By raising awareness of the issues by CSE Champions and other communication and presentations to SCS, Early Help and Young People’s Services (EH&PS) front-line staff and those in the multi-agency network, there has been an
increase in the numbers of front-line and other staff attending targeted training. The targeted training includes:

- multi-agency CSE training sessions run by the KSCB
- localised workshops run by Practice Development Officers
- KSCB e-learning “Safeguarding Children from Abuse by Sexual Exploitation” which is open to any member of staff within the safeguarding partnership, regardless of role.

1.6.3 A training workshop was also jointly hosted by KCC and Kent Police in April 2015 for KCC foster carers. The workshop shared KSCB’s procedures for missing children; and highlighted vulnerability factors and risks associated with children going missing, including the real risk of CSE. It also worked on developing good practice standards and raising confidence levels in foster carers in managing children who go missing from placement.

1.6.4 The Safeguarding Unit has recently completed an audit of a number of children’s cases where CSE has been identified as a risk factor. The outcome of this audit will enable the team to identify both good quality practice as well as areas that require practice improvement.

1.7 Strategic needs assessment - analysis of prevalence

1.7.1 Information-sharing and assessing the impact our prevention efforts have made has become clearer with the advent of the MASE, the co-located CSE team and the Missing Children Single Point (SPOC).

1.7.2 There are good systems that collate multi-agency concern about CSE, which is then compiled within a dataset in the co-located CSE team; police analysts collate both soft and hard data and work on creating profiles of the key hot spots in Kent. A number of work streams have been developed to seek to improve intelligence capture. There is still some distance to travel before there is a complete picture of the true prevalence of CSE vulnerabilities within the county, but the trajectory is going in the right direction.

1.8 Information sharing

1.8.1 The Early Help Triage and Central Referral Unit (CRU) have been co-located since the end of June 2015. This ensures that contacts and referrals received are appropriately directed to the service which best meets the needs of individual children, but also means that, with the multi-agency presence within the CRU, information about emerging vulnerabilities around CSE can be flagged at an earlier stage.

1.9 MASE Panel

1.9.1 The MASE has been in place since May 2015 with a clear focus on strategic leadership and management in identifying vulnerabilities and reducing the prevalence of CSE. The Panel has a clear action plan which is regularly reviewed in light of emerging intelligence or other challenges around CSE within the County.
2. Missing children and Other Local Authority (OLA) children

2.1 As Kent has a high number of children placed by other local authorities within its boundaries, there are specific challenges related to this group of young people. Children who run away or go missing are particularly vulnerable to suffering harm - including an increased risk of sexual exploitation. The Missing Children Single Point of Contact (SPOC) is fully integrated in the Central Referral Unit. The SPOC, in partnership with Kent Police, collates notifications regarding any child that goes missing in Kent on to a single database. These notifications relate to children known to a KCC service and those children placed in Kent by other local authorities, as well as that wider population of young people who have had no contact with our services. As a result, children who are vulnerable as a result of running away are given support and help at the earliest opportunity. Work is underway in partnership with Kent Police to build an ability to cross-reference those children who go missing with those who are known to be at risk of sexual exploitation.

2.2 An OLA placement officer has been appointed who sits within the Safeguarding Unit. The OLA placement officer ensures placing authorities have sufficient information on the statutory, specialist and universal services available. They will also work with placing authorities to ensure there is strong intelligence on OLA children who go missing in Kent, and work with the SPOC to escalate any non-compliance by OLAs in respect of requested information, including Return Interview forms.

2.3 The Safeguarding Unit completes a weekly audit of missing children to ensure an appropriate response from operational staff.

3. Recent Progress

3.1 A conference specifically on the issues of sexual exploitation was held in October 2015, jointly with Kent Police, highlighting the range of exploitation issues including online (e-safety) risks, gangs, trafficking and organised crime, as well as the sexual exploitation and abuse of children and young people by peer networks.

3.2 Multi-agency CSE team

3.2.1 The multi-agency CSE team led by Kent Police is a strategic and operational team of experts, which will support investigations anywhere in Kent.

3.2.2 The team includes representatives from the Police, Data Analysts and staff from SCS and EHPS in Kent and social work staff from Medway, as well as from Health. The team is co-located at Kent Police Headquarters to aid integration and effective partnership working.

3.2.3 SCS have provided two Practice Development Officers (PDO) to the CSE team to assist in sharing expertise and knowledge and to develop practice. There are good examples of how the PDOs are collecting soft and hard data and sharing this with the team to protect vulnerable children.
3.3 Universal CSE Case training for foster carers

3.3.1 As part of the Council’s efforts to establish a preventative and self-protection programme on CSE for children in care (national recommendation), led by fostering, plans are in place for all foster carers approved for ages 10 and upwards, and all fostering service social workers, to complete a CSE preventative training programme. Training includes the direct views of young people who have experienced CSE. Outcomes are that foster carers are able to discuss proactively with their children the risks of exploitation and what it means, in terms relevant and appropriate to the age and lives and lifestyles of individual children in care. The PDO, with the lead for CSE, has also delivered ‘Missing from Care’ workshops to Kent foster carers to enable them to intervene more effectively with children who go missing. Completed foster carer training will be included in the carer’s training profile and assessed as part of their annual review.

3.4 Commissioning and procurement

3.4.1 In order to set contractual quality standards and to monitor commissioned providers regarding their organisation’s response to CSE, the Council’s legal team drafted additional clauses relating to CSE for inclusion in contract terms and conditions.

3.4.2 The additional clauses focus upon:-

a) Stipulating that each provider has clear policies and procedures for dealing with CSE;

b) Placing a requirement on commissioned providers that all staff working with children and young people have received CSE training, and that this is regularly updated; and

c) Linking the provider to the resources, information and training available via the KSCB.

3.5 Information and guidance for parents and carers

3.5.1 A wealth of e-safety information is publically available to professionals, parents and carers alike. KCC is one of only a handful of local authorities with a dedicated e-safety officer, able to work in schools and education settings to share resources to help children be safe online. This is particularly relevant, given that child sexual exploitation may be as result of online grooming or ‘sexting’.

3.5.2 Information leaflets for parents, carers and young people are available via the KSCB website.

3.6 CSE Case Audits

3.6.1 As part of the Child Sexual Exploitation Strategic Action Plan 2015 – 2016, follow-up audits and a review of children and young people identified as being at risk, or potential risk, of sexual exploitation were undertaken, using data gathered between December 2015 and February 2016. 70 children and young people were randomly selected and audited by a PDO in Kent SCS Safeguarding Unit. The results are currently being analysed but earlier indicators suggest that there are noted improvements compared to the recent
CSE audit undertaken in summer 2015, led by an external consultant, following the earlier Ofsted thematic inspection.

3.6.2 Going forward, the learning points will inform the work plan of the PDOs with the lead for CSE based at the multi-agency CSET.

3.6.3 At the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) Preparation meeting held on 21 April 2016, the multi-agency representatives agreed to undertake a “mock” audit of up to 15 cases, using the current CSE theme for JTAIs. This would involve all agencies undertaking an audit of casework identified as having a CSE component by Specialist Children’s Services. Each agency will identify an audit lead and the group will come together to map out the process, including the parameters of the audit which is likely to mirror that used by Ofsted et al in a JTAI Inspection. The audit will take place at the beginning of June 2016 and will follow the timeframes found in an Inspection scenario, with an overview report on completion.

4. Policy and Procedure

4.1 Children’s Services Child Protection Procedures have been and continue to be reviewed and, where necessary, changed to address the specific challenges posed by CSE, such as that posed by highly-organised and criminal abuse networks. The Kent Inter-Agency Threshold Criteria for Children and Young People has been refreshed to take into account the challenge of CSE, as well as the impact of gangs which have their own CSE issues, and the Prevent agenda.

4.2 A multi-agency task and finish group has recently been established to refresh the Missing procedures.

4.3 PDOs have also worked closely with a number of CSE Champions to explore the care planning process for children identified as being at risk of CSE. The aim is to ensure that the Council’s response is effective and robust.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The Council has actively engaged with the CSE agenda and has sought to ensure that awareness of the issues is raised through training, workshops and bulletins with staff. There are currently 83 CSE Champions embedded throughout the Council and an ongoing training programme via the KSCB to develop this further.

5.2 The CSE Team is fully operational and staff from SCS and EHPS are co-located with staff from other relevant agencies to provide a comprehensive response to CSE vulnerabilities within Kent. The CSET is in place and the collation of soft and hard data allows much stronger profiling of the concerns across the County in relation to CSE, leading to a targeting of resources where they are needed and the identification of particular areas of vulnerability or risk.

5.3 There is a concerted effort to provide CSE training across all agencies within the Safeguarding network in Kent.
5.4 The MASE Panel is now the strategic arm to the CSE agenda and is co-chaired by Police and SCS.

5.5 Operation Willow has been launched as a partnership between Kent Police, Kent County Council, Medway Council and the NHS to respond to concerns and promote awareness of CSE across the spectrum of schools, GPs, taxi firms, hotels and pubs etc.

5.6 There are excellent examples of good information sharing but CSE is an extremely complex and hidden activity and it will be this information sharing between agencies and teams that will have the greatest impact in preventing abuse and exploitation. Where information sharing shortfalls have been identified, plans are in place to address these issues.

5.7 The roll out and embedding of systemic approaches such as Signs of Safety is assisting social workers and first-line case managers to address the complexities associated with identifying, working and engaging with families and victims of children at risk of sexual exploitation.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations: Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to NOTE and COMMENT ON the content of this report.

7. Background Documents

None

8. Contact Details

Lead Officer
Nicki Shaw
Practice Development Officer/CSE Lead
Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit
0754 0672281
Nicki.shaw@kent.gov.uk

Lead Director
Philip Segurola
Director, Specialist Children's Services
03000 413120
philip.segurola@kent.gov.uk