

Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation

Cabinet

Date: 4th February 2014

Author: Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Head of Children, Families and Community Health

Wards: All Wards

Locality Affected: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is among the most serious and challenging issues that any Council will face. This report sets out how the Council will further enhance its work in this area and proposes a strategy and associated delivery plan for the agreement of the Cabinet and Council. The Strategy does not pre-empt any new recommendations that may come out from any new national reports, research documents, local case reviews or other new learning. It does however take into account the national guidance, reports of recent high profile cases across the Country, the Ofsted thematic CSE Review and other research of note.
- 1.2 Over the past few years there have been a number of high profile trials and we know that CSE has a risk of taking place in virtually every town and city across the country. In this instance, Swindon is no different and we wish to take a zero tolerance approach to this crime.
- 1.3 Tackling CSE is vital to support the Council's Corporate Priority of reducing vulnerability. It also contributes to the One Swindon Priority: Living independently, protected from harm, leading healthy lives and making a positive contribution. There are also links to the Crime and Disorder Act whereby Section 17 of the Act 1998 makes it a statutory responsibility for all local authorities to consider community safety as part of its core business.

2. Recommendations

Council is recommended to:

- 2.1 Agree the Child Exploitation Strategy for Swindon Borough Council as set out in Appendix 1

Note the associated delivery plan that will be monitored and updated at regular intervals.
- 2.2 Agree to support the introduction of a pledge: Zero tolerance of CSE in Swindon.
- 2.3 Authorise the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to sign the Zero tolerance of CSE pledge on behalf of Swindon Borough Council and invite other Councillors to do so.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Karen Reeve, Tel: 01793463200. KReeve@swindon.gov.uk

Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation

Cabinet

Date: 4th February 2014

3. Detail

Background

- 3.1 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a national issue. It involves the exploitation of children and young people whereby they receive 'something' (e.g. affection, food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, gifts, money) as a result of their performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. In all cases, those exploiting the child have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.
- 3.2 A national response is needed in order for these issues to be tackled in a coherent way that will lead to effective action and prevention across the country. However, we need to do everything we can to address the issue locally and pro-actively prevent as well as pursue perpetrators and protect children and young people.
- 3.3 We know that CSE can take many different forms including:
- Exploitation by family members, including being 'sold for sex',
 - Sexually exploitative relationships with older adults,
 - Sexually exploitative relationships with peers,
 - Sexual exploitation through technology including grooming through social media and the taking and circulation of sexually explicit images of the child.
- 3.4 The Swindon Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) developed in 2012 a strategy that outlined how partner agencies will work together. This is based broadly on three strands – Prevent, Protect and Pursue. It was developed following the work of the Board's Sexual Exploitation and Runaways sub group. CSE has been a strategic priority for the Board since 2012/13 and the Board monitors an associated action plan.
- 3.5 Swindon Borough Council is a very active partner in this work and has led several areas of its activity. There is also positive engagement by all the partner agencies across the area. The Council has funded a new full time permanent post to take forward its work in this area and also enhanced the numbers of social workers it employs.
- 3.6 The LSCB has affirmed its expectation that all agencies will work together using the agreed multi-agency child protection and CSE procedures and having a Swindon Council Strategy and delivery plan identifies how our services will support and enhance the work of the Board to further protect the children and young people of Swindon.
-

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Karen Reeve, Tel: 01793463200. KReeve@swindon.gov.uk

Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation

Cabinet

Date: 4th February 2014

- 3.7 Whilst those who have worked in children's services for many years know that CSE is not a new phenomenon what is new is the level of professional and public awareness. This has been generated by recent high profile cases and what has been discovered about what may be new and more organised patterns of abuse. i.e. networks of offending. Hence it has become everybody's responsibility to identify, prevent, and protect children and young people from this form of abuse.
- 3.8 Swindon Borough Council is committed to the same three LSCB strands of activity for its strategy and delivery plan, that being to Prevent, Protect and Pursue. It is fully committed to working with the LSCB and its partners, both statutory, voluntary and community based in order to provide an effective response. We wish to take a zero tolerance approach to this crime.
- 3.9 The strategy identifies that we will need an effective response that we will:
- maintain good strategic leadership,
 - ensure excellence in the management of our service delivery and provide good services to children and young people that need it,
 - involve and engage the community to raise awareness,
 - support the police to prosecute offenders whenever and wherever possible, and
 - ensure we learn from good practice and relate this back to our own provision.
- 3.10 Some areas of the Council's activity already demonstrate a good understanding of the forms of CSE and provide good services, some less so and practice is developing across the Country, not just in Swindon. We want to learn from the challenges highlighted nationally and apply the learning locally to ensure we support staff to be open to the issues of CSE in their day to day activity.
- 3.11 We want to challenge where needed whilst fully supporting the need for excellence in partnership working and intelligence gathering. Consistency in each of the three strands of the strategy will be the challenge in what is an incredibly difficult form of abuse to identify and support young people to disclose especially when some young people do not see themselves as victims at all and can be difficult to engage.
- 3.12 Although CSE is not solely a children's issue and requires effective work and engagement from across the whole of the Council's services the delivery plan will be led by and regularly reviewed by Children's Services senior management team in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the delivery plan adapted as required to enable a robust response and approach to CSE (and Missing Children). However, they will rely on service leaders from across the Council to engage with them and support activity or lead activity to address the need to prevent, protect and pursue.
-

Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation

Cabinet

Date: 4th February 2014

- 3.13 Much work has already taken place with schools, providers of services, raising children and young people awareness and across agencies and Council departments. Training is being offered extensively and a range of practice tools for staff are available. But we are not complacent and more can and will be done to secure an excellence in our services and a zero tolerance approach to CSE. We are committed to refine further and develop our approach and work with our partners as more becomes known about this form of child abuse.
- 3.14 It is also recommended that we introduce a Pledge that supports the concept of a 'Zero Tolerance of CSE', an approach launched recently in the Wiltshire. As we share a number of services across the area having a Pledge is one way that others can also engage in helping protect children and young people.
- 3.15 Accordingly, given the importance of building awareness and tackling this issue, it is recommended that Council be invited to adopt the Strategy and authorise the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to sign the Zero tolerance of CSE pledge on behalf of Swindon Borough Council and invite other Councillors to do so. The Pledge 'Zero tolerance of CSE in Swindon' will commit the signatory to find out more about what CSE is: sign up and complete an on-line training course and tell 5 other people about CSE and encourage them to complete the course and also sign the pledge.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 There is no statutory requirement to have a CSE Strategy although it would be considered good practice to have one and it can be adapted as thought appropriate.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The Council has already provided some additional resources to fund a CSE Operational Manager and provided some additional social work resources to meet service demand. No further new financial resources are being sought at this time.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are compatible with Convention Rights

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 None have been identified other than as covered in Section One of the main body of the report.

Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation

Cabinet

Date: 4th February 2014

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been completed. No adverse or other significant issues were found. Indeed the strategy will positively impact on vulnerable children living in Swindon's community. A copy of the DIA can be obtained from the report author via kreeve@swindon.gov.uk

Risk Management

- 5.5 CSE is appropriately registered on the Risk Register for the services.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 No unpublished papers

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and Delivery Plan

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is not a Key Decision as it is recommended that full Council be asked to adopt the Strategy. It is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for February 2015.