

The Highland Council

14 May 2015

Agenda Item	4
Report No	HC/15/15

Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report outlines the response in Highland to national reports on Child Sexual Exploitation and describes the action plan endorsed by the Highland Child Protection Committee. It will be supported by a joint presentation at Committee, with Police Scotland.

1. Background

- 1.1 Concerns about Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) rose to prominence in 2014 with the publication of the report by Professor Alexis Jay into the issues in Rotherham spanning 1997 to 2013. However, there had already been recognition of CSE, and some criminal trials involving perpetrators in other local authority areas prior to this, including Derby and Oxfordshire. In most cases, the focus was on exploitation of girls but Barnardo's have also highlighted the risks to boys.
- 1.2 The Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee carried out an Inquiry into CSE in 2013, to explore its scale and nature. It heard from the National Working Group, about estimates from Scottish agencies of the likelihood of child sexual exploitation victims, ranging from 64 to 300 for each agency. It also highlighted concern around under-recognition of the issue, including in rural areas
- 1.3 *With Scotland* (a national child protection agency) published a paper in October 2013, and some of the key messages included:
 - The research evidence indicates vulnerability to child sexual exploitation across a range of deprived groups, including those excluded from school, those looked after and those who are delinquent or gang-involved.
 - It can take place through internet grooming, via online technology, through peer exploitation and through organised/networked child trafficking.
 - There is some evidence demonstrating the vulnerability of gang-involved young women and young people with learning difficulties to sexual exploitation.
 - Going missing (whether from the family home or from care placements)

is a strong indicator of children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

- A number of factors can increase a young person's vulnerability to sexual exploitation including a history of physical or sexual abuse; poor mental health; problematic parenting; parental drug or alcohol misuse; parental mental health problems and the experience of disrupted family lives and domestic violence.
- There is a need to raise awareness amongst professionals to improve early identification of child exploitation including training around factors that may increase vulnerability to child sexual exploitation, as well as signs and symptoms that is occurring.

1.4 The Scottish Government published a national action plan in November 2014, with wide-ranging recommendations for a number of agencies:

- Increase frontline practitioners' understanding of CSE, including medical staff and teachers;
- Develop guidance for taxi-drivers, hotel workers and others in the 'night-time' economy to help identify and report suspicions of CSE;
- Develop protocols for local authorities to be used as best practice and establish consistency across the country in supporting CSE services;
- Establish a children & young people steering group on CSE to advise on key issues such as areas for support; and
- Review current civil preventative orders on sexual offences.

1.5 The Government also held a recent national summit, with the following findings:

- A culture change in services is required – to move away from 'problem children' with 'bad behaviour';
- We should not compartmentalise CSE at national or local level, but look at in the context of Child Sexual Abuse;
- There is potential to confuse CSE with what happened in Rotherham – it does not need to be organised;
- Each local authority/health board area should assess the extent of the problem in their locality and the capacity of services to deal with CSE. While there is a lack of data in relation to CSE, local areas think it is a significant concern;
- In terms of improving service provision, consideration should be given to including an elected member on the Child Protection Committee.
- Online grooming and offline contact are of significant concern. Rapidly moving technology means that parents (and others) aren't catching up.
- We should consider messaging at national and local level. We can learn from previous experience about what works and what doesn't.
- A range of complex issues around preventing, identifying and supporting victims of CSE were also raised.

1.6 Police Scotland have developed a protocol for children missing from care, which is being piloted in three Scottish authorities prior to a national roll-out and they are taking action to brief all Police Officers about CSE, including reference to the range of legal measures available, both to protect young people and disrupt perpetrators.

- 1.7 The Scottish Government has commissioned Barnardo's to produce a training pack for use by all local authorities.

2. Highland Action Plan

- 2.1 A working group of the Highland Child Protection Committee (CPC) produced an action plan which was endorsed by the Committee on 17th March. This is based on the national action plan.

- 2.2 The actions will be incorporated into the Improvement plan for the Child Protection Committee and so will be reviewed and revised over time. See the attached plan for details.

- 2.3 The working group identified the key issues for Highland as being:

1. Awareness-raising.
2. Identification, record-keeping and data-sharing.
3. Missing children.

- 2.4 A definition of CSE was agreed as follows:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse, in which a young person is manipulated or forced into taking part in a sexual act by someone who has power over them. This could be as part of a seemingly consensual relationship, or in return for attention, affection, money, drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay. The young person may think that their abuser is their friend, or even their boyfriend or girlfriend but they will put them into dangerous situations, forcing the young person to do things they don't fully understand or want to do. Young people can be exploited through use of substances or being tricked or the use of technology through social media sites, instant messaging, etc. This could involve getting young people to post sexually explicit images or take part in sexual activity or sexual conversations using technology. The abuser may be male or female; they may physically or verbally threaten the young person, or be violent towards them. They will control and manipulate them, and try to isolate them from friends and family.

3. Training and briefing workshops

- 3.1 Two groups of practitioners and managers have been identified, and it is proposed that the national training pack commissioned from Barnardo's will be adapted for those who work closely with vulnerable young people, and built into the multi-agency training programme. This will include:

- Social workers
- Police officers in Family Protection and specialist teams
- School years functions in Family Teams
- Youth Action Team
- Barnardo's Throughcare service
- Residential staff

- Adult services staff working with vulnerable young people

3.2 The second group require a shorter workshop-based input, which will also be derived from the Barnardo's training pack. Recognising that this needs to extend beyond the usual participants in child protection training, the following groups have been identified:

- Housing services
- Foster carers
- Schools
- Licensing staff
- GPs
- Police Officers (not part of specialist teams)
- Elected members
- Community Planning Partnership
- Youth workers
- Night time economy workers e.g. taxi drivers.

4. Implications

4.1 Legal

The plan enhances the existing children's wellbeing and child protection arrangements in Highland.

4.2 Resource

There are no new financial implications.

4.3 Risk

The plan increases the likelihood of risk to young people in Highland being identified at an earlier stage.

4.4 Equalities

The plan is focused on the most vulnerable young people regardless of gender, age, race or sexual orientation.

4.5 Gaelic

There are no specific implication for Gaelic-speaking young people.

4.6 Rural

Rural areas may also experience examples of CSE and therefore agencies need to be aware that this is not an exclusively urban issue.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the plan and to support the awareness-raising proposals.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 22nd April 2015

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Appendix: Action plan

**Appendix 1:
Highland Child Protection Committee Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan**

ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	PROGRESS
Awareness raising			
CPC autumn conference to include presentation on CSE	C&L Children's Services	November 2015	
Agree training pack for key practitioners/managers and build into multi-agency training programme	C&L Children's Services	May 2015	Completed
Deliver half-day stand-alone sessions	C&L Children's Services	From August 2015	
Agree awareness raising briefing pack	Working group	April 2015	Completed
Deliver briefing to identified groups	Working group	June to December 2015	
Agree media briefing and deliver it through Highland Council and Police Scotland media teams	Working group	May 2015	

ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	PROGRESS
Identification, record-keeping and data-sharing			
Implement mechanism for record-keeping on Care First and through CP register checks	C&L Children's Services	April 2015	Completed
Set up local data-sharing mechanism to identify any hotspots or developing issues	Police Scotland and C&L Children's Services	May 2015	
Review Highland Practice Model Guidance to incorporate risk assessment tool for CSE	C&L Children's Services	May 2015	Completed
Missing Children			
Implement national Police Scotland Missing Protocol for Looked After Children	Police Scotland and C&L Children's Services	To be confirmed by Police Scotland	
Report on missing children to CPC	Police Scotland and C&L Children's Services	From June 2015	