

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

Thursday, 10 November 2016

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Dennis Meredith (Chair); Councillor James Hill (Deputy Chair); Councillors Rufia Ashraf, Muna Cali, Janice Duffy, Cathrine Russell, Brian Sargeant, Zoe Smith, Danielle Stone and Graham Walker

WITNESSES Iain Low, Strategic Manager, Safeguarding and Children's Services Northamptonshire County Council (agenda item 5b)
Debbie Ferguson, Community Safety Manger, and Ruth Austen, Environmental Health and Licensing Manager, NBC, (agenda item 5f)

OFFICERS
Phil Harris, Head of Housing and Wellbeing
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2016 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES, NCC

The Scrutiny Panel received a written report and further details from the Director of Children's Services, Northamptonshire County Council.

The Scrutiny Panel watched the trailer to the short video that will be shown in schools.

AGREED: (1) That the Chair asks the Director of Children's Services, Northamptonshire County Council, to attend the next meeting of the Scrutiny Panel to provide details on the written response and presentation.

(B) CHAIR, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SAFEGUARDING BOARD

The Scrutiny Panel received two written reports from the Chair, Northamptonshire Safeguarding Board. Iain Low, Strategic Manager, Safeguarding and Children's Services, Northamptonshire County Council, highlighted the salient points contained within the reports.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- Iain Low confirmed that he could provide details of the problem profile to a future meeting this document will not be for public view only for elected members.
- All young people, who are open to the multi-disciplinary specialist RISE service have an allocated social worker.
- In response to a query regarding where parents can obtain advice, Iain Low advised that although there is currently no plans for recruiting a 'Parents Worker'; to engage with parents. The RISE practitioners engage with a young person's families and parents can be signposted to a range of resources on the web.
- In answer to a comment about the night time economy, Iain Low informed that the CSE and Missing Sub Group are working with District and Borough Councils and focusing on the Night Time economy – night clubs, taxis, take ways for example.
- The Scrutiny Panel heard that the Police, on behalf of the NSCB, lead on communications and the recent "*Say Something if you See Something*" campaign has been successful - detailed feedback is being gathered.
- A huge amount of work takes place in schools including engagement from NCC's E Safety Officer. Television programmes often relay stories about issues such as CSE which is useful in getting messages out to children and young people.
- The Scrutiny Panel highlighted the need to promote on-line and telephone services available for young people. A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested "the services and information portals where young people can receive information and support is publicised. The production of an "App." was suggested.
- A lot of young people see Child line useful as a help line in respect of bullying issues. Regarding CSE, young people will often prefer to talk to their friends.
- Iain Low referred to Oxfordshire's initiative "hotel watch" whereby an adult and child try to book a room. If successful, officers will then approach the hotel and work with them to ensure they recognise and understand the risks of CSE. Phil Harris confirmed that Officers from NBC have held discussions with Northants Police regarding how such initiatives could be supported in Northampton.
- The Scrutiny Panel was referred to the RISE report and Iain Low confirmed that in September 2016 there was 198 episodes of children missing or absent.
- It was suggested that the Chair and Deputy Chair would meet with Officers to look over the RISE report in more detail.

The Chair thanked Iain Low for his informative address.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(C) CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SERVICES ,NCC

Consideration of this agenda item was taken at 5(d).

(D) DIRECTOR, EDUCATION SERVICES, NCC

The Scrutiny Panel received a written report from the Director, Education Services, Northamptonshire County Council.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(E) CHILDREN'S RIGHTS OFFICER, CHILDREN'S RIGHTS GROUP

A written response was not received, however, a comprehensive report was provided at agenda 5(b).

(F) LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY, DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND LICENSING MANAGER, NBC

The Scrutiny Panel asked questions, made comment and heard:

- The Chair commented on the need to keep a “watching eye” on known hotspots in the town.
- The Scrutiny Panel heard that when the “Rotherham report” had been published, NBC was very proactive in picking up on its responsibilities and actions. A Multi Agency conference had been held. NBC works in partnership with all the relevant Agencies. Frontline Officers have received the relevant awareness training. Training has also being rolled out to Taxi and Private Hire drivers. Such training is now part of the induction process for all new Hackney and Private Hire taxi drivers.
- CSE is a key priority for the Community Safety Partnership under the vulnerability agenda.
- CSE information and flyers have been distributed to all Taxi Operators for distribution to divers and for placing in staff rooms.
- Training has been provided to CCTV operatives and this is assisting in identifying and reporting suspicious and inappropriate behaviour.
- NPH frontline staff have received CSE awareness training.
- Exploitation and vulnerability in take away outlets is investigated. Mechanisms are in place for referrals to the relevant Agencies.
- Test purchases for cigarettes and alcohol takes place. Intelligence from Officers is also received.
- On-line safety is the biggest concern. A lot of work is taking place in schools. It is important to get the messages across to parents and restrictions put on young people’s ICT devices. Grooming via social media is now more common place and is causing the most concern.
- The Chair commented that from the evidence received so far, it was evident of the huge amount of work already done by Officers.

It was suggested that the E-Safety Officer is asked to attend the next meeting and provide an update of the work he does.

A discussion was held regarding licensed premises. Sharing intelligence is key.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

6. BACKGROUND DATA

The briefing papers were noted.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

The meeting concluded at 7:45 pm