

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

Thursday, 8 September 2016

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor James Hill (Deputy Chair – In the Chair); Councillors Rufia Ashraf, Zoe Smith and Danielle Stone

Witnesses Rich Tomkins, RISE Team, Northants Police
Det. Sup. Steve Lingley, Head of Vulnerable People, Northants Police
Shirley Davies, Executive Director, NPH

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dennis Meredith (Chair), Janice Duffy, Catherine Russell, Brian Sargeant and Graham Walker.

Councillor James Hill, Deputy Chair, was in the Chair for the meeting.

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 7 July 2016 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) CHAIR, COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

A written response to the core questions was received from the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment and observations:

- Concerns were raised regarding over-crowding in properties and sexual activity; specific concerns were raised regarding children sharing bedrooms with their parents.

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

(B) SENIOR CASE MANAGER, ASB

The Chair advised the Scrutiny Panel that the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Unit had nothing further to add to the responses to the core questions that had been submitted by the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership.

The following information was provided by the Chair from the ASB Unit:

In the ASB Unit, Officers do occasionally deal with young people, both boys and girls, who cause concern regarding the possibility of them having been groomed and exploited. We are all mindful of CSE and where appropriate link in with the appropriate teams. Both the RISE team and the ASB Unit use one shared database called E-CINS which is for partnership work. Officers always share access to the RISE team for any of our shared cases, but acknowledge that their work is sensitive and confidential, so they do not share access to their work with the ASB. The ASB is happy to work together to address any welfare and safeguarding issues above action that it might take against the youths in all its work with both offenders and victims/witnesses.

The ASB is always looking at the best long-term solutions, at interventions and partnership working, long before we look at enforcement.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment:

- It was queried whether there was a link between the Northampton Diverse Communities Forum and other such Community Groups and whether such Groups are equipped with dealing with reports of CSE and not just “signposting” Groups.
- It was suggested that a potential recommendation of the final report could be around training for Community Groups on acknowledging and referring information regarding CSE. It was highlighted that sharing of information is key.

AGREED:

- 1 That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.
- 2 That a potential recommendation of the final report could be around training for Community Groups on acknowledging and referring information regarding CSE.

(C) SERVICE MANAGER, RISE CSE TEAM

Consideration of agenda items 5 (c) and 5(d) were taken together.

Det. Supt Steve Lingley, the Head of Protecting Vulnerable People, Northants Police, set the context advising on how the Police and various partners working together and operation in relation to CSE. He emphasised that the Safeguarding Board has the strategic oversight for CSE and has commissioned a sub group that has been running for around 18 months. The sub group comprises a high level Chair and it has responsibility for the delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan and ensuring joint working. It was highlighted that Rich Tompkins, Service Manager, Rise Team, reports to a Social Worker in his capacity of a Police Officer which shows excellent joint working.

Steve Lingley went on to explain about safeguarding, the Missing Persons Team and how intelligence analysis is undertaken. The Team looks at National Best Practice.

A written response to the core questions was received from The Service Manager, RISE CSE Team, Northants Police. Rich Tompkins elaborated on the key points contained within the response.

The Scrutiny Panel asked questions, made comment and heard:

- There is strong community safety engagement and a strong presence from Community Safety Partnerships
- Concerns were raised that sex education and the correct vocabulary is not compulsory in schools. It was reported that there are links between education and the Safeguarding Board. It was suggested that a potential recommendation of the final report could be around sex education and use of correct vocabulary in schools to be put to the Schools Forum
- Rich Tompkins advised that a publicity campaign had significantly raised awareness of CSE. There were now typically around 15-20 referrals per month.
- A young person is allocated an engagement worker for an average of six months.
- In response to a query whether the work of the RISE Team is preventative, Rich Tompkins advised that it is a combination of both. Many are already victims and he gave examples of young children that are not yet victims but potentially could be.
- The Health Nurse links in with schools and covers medical, mental and sexual health.
- There is a team of six Police Officers that do proactive work and develop intelligence.
- In response to a question about social media, Rich Tompkins confirmed that a large proportion of case work involves social media, especially around smart 'phone usage, for example Sexting. The opportunity to commit online offenses is prevalent.
- All CSE incidents, intelligence and new crimes are reviewed daily as an agenda item of the RISE daily meeting.
- The organisation, CAN, who operate as part of RISE provides a service conducting work to support young people involved with drugs and alcohol.
- A large proportion of the young people working with RISE are females but the team do work with males and currently have 2 such cases (4% of the total). It was acknowledged that young boys are less likely to report. An example was provided

to the Panel. The RISE team manager is going to a workshop held by Blast in October – this is an organisation that works with young male victims of CSE. RISE will be seeking learning and ideas from the workshop.

- In response to a question regarding historical incidents of CSE in Children's homes and whether this is now in the past, Rich Tompkins advised that the ability to identify risky behaviour has improved people's confidence to come forward earlier. The officers pointed they recognised the vulnerabilities of children in care, the aim to prevent child abuse and the challenges to achieving this.
- In response to a query regarding minority ethnic group reporting, Rich Tompkins advised that reports are anonymised but 87% of young person's working with RISE are white British. It was suggested by the Police that there are opportunities to improve dialogue with LGBT and disabled people. Some work has been undertaken, for example CSE awareness raising to Pearls of Peace, a Muslim women's group based in Northampton. This was organised by the Police's two Community Engagement Officers.
- In answer to a question regarding missing children, the Scrutiny Panel heard that following every missing child episode in Northants an independent return home interview is conducted, ideally within 72 hours. This is to try and minimise future risk to those children by understanding why they went missing and taking safeguarding action. In the county around 3/4 children are missing each day, equating to approximately 120 per month. The RISE and IRT Team have robust procedures in place, as positively commented on by OFSTED in a review they conducted in February this year. RISE has links with all neighbouring authorities which works very well.
- In answer to a question regarding whether the RISE Team would let a community deal with an incident of CSE, i.e. let the Community Leaders deal with it, Steve Lingley advised that the Team has a duty to take positive action. It was acknowledged that there is a need to improve on language skills and that the various Communities could assist with this.
- In answer to a query regarding homeless children living as rough sleepers, Phil Harris confirmed that if a young person under 18 is homeless, Housing Services and Social Services have to house them.

Steve Lingley and Rich Tompkins were thanked for their comprehensive address.

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

(D) HEAD OF PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE, NORTHANTS POLICE

Consideration of this agenda item was taken together with 5(c).

(E) CHIEF EXECUTIVE, NPH

A written response to the core questions was received from the Chief Executive, and Executive Director, NPH. Shirley Davies elaborated on the key points contained within the response.

The Scrutiny Panel asked questions, made comment and heard:

- In response to a query regarding training for workmen, Shirley Davies advised that workmen have a card that they complete if they have any concerns. In addition, workmen have “Toolbox Talks” and awareness raising sessions. The Scrutiny Panel commented that it is important that all have training on awareness raising.
- The Scrutiny Panel suggested that there is a need to ensure that the outdoor environment is as safe as possible where children are likely to play in external communal areas.

Shirley Davies was thanked for her comprehensive address.

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

6. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Scrutiny Panel received a briefing note that detailed information about various published papers around CSE. The Scrutiny Officer highlighted the key points contained within the briefing note. The Panel supported the toolkits produced by the LGA and referred to a Toolkit put together by the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children’s Board (NSCB). It was suggested that a potential recommendation of the final report is that all Councillors are sent a copy of both Toolkits.

AGREED:

- (1) That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.
- (2) That a potential recommendation of the final report is that all Councillors are issued with a copy of the Toolkits - LGA “Tackling CSE – A resource pack for Councillors” and the NSPCC Toolkit “Solution Focussed Practice Toolkit – Helping Professionals use the approach when dealing with children and young people.”

The meeting concluded at 7:14 pm