

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY



SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS

NORTHAMPTON PARTNERSHIP HOMES

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a review that is investigating Northampton Borough Council (NBC) plays an active role in tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Key Lines of Enquiry

- To gain an understanding of the work currently being undertaken by partnerships, statutory and voluntary organisations, and the Police to address these issues
- To investigate how NBC contributes to the above work
- To raise awareness of CSE, human trafficking and domestic slavery of children in Northampton
- To explore best practice elsewhere in identifying and providing support to victims of CSE
- To understand what NBC is doing outside the Scrutiny process in relation to human trafficking and domestic slavery of children

The expected outcomes of this Scrutiny Review are:

- To make evidence based recommendations to improve the role that NBC has in tackling CSE
- To make recommendations, as appropriate, regarding partnership working in tackling CSE

CORE QUESTIONS:

A series of key questions have been put together to inform the evidence base of the Scrutiny Panel:

1. Please provide details of the work currently being undertaken by your organisation to address child sexual exploitation (CSE)

Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) has a range of staff within the Rehousing and Support Team who have attended Northamptonshire County Council's CSE conferences/training to obtain an understanding of the signs of CSE and appropriate safeguarding mechanisms.

There are appointed Safeguarding Officers across the organisation and a Safeguarding lead in case an individual officer has concerns about a particular case. All staff are trained on Safeguarding procedures.

Rehousing Case Officers carry out robust assessments of individuals referred into the service which covers a broad spectrum of personal issues from drug/alcohol misuse to domestic abuse and mental health issues. They are adequately trained to determine if there is cause for concern that CSE may be present within households/extended networks.

Staff are also aware of the appropriate Safeguarding procedures to raise concerns. All Rehousing Case Officers and Support Officers are required to complete a Safeguarding assessment as part of the Case/Support process. NPH has a culture of supervision for complex cases and staff discuss any concerning cases with their line manager.

Monthly 'Serious Risk Register' meetings are held by senior staff within Housing Management with representation from the Rehousing and Support Team to monitor tenancies that have been raised by officers to be of concern with a pro-active approach to case management.

These cases are risk assessed and logged with a sliding scale of 'risk' indication, (red, amber, green), with legacy information held on cases that have been removed from the register. Solutions and actions required to ensure safety are considered at the meetings and information is shared and gained with/from relevant partner agencies wherever appropriate to effectively case manage, such as the police and social services.

NPH also regularly runs its own Domestic Abuse Panel specifically to monitor domestic abuse cases. This panel also meets ad-hoc should an emergency case present and require urgent consideration. CSE risks are also be fully considered within this format where relevant.

NPH also attends Oasis House Multi Agency Panel meetings and full consideration to action required pertaining to any risk to children in the cases raised, albeit CSE or any form of abuse and/or neglect would be managed as described.

We also attend the two-weekly Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) - a multi-agency platform for managing high risk cases of Domestic Abuse in Northampton. Due to the presence at these conferences of agencies such Social Services, the Police and Northampton General Hospital, we are made aware of any known risk to children related to the cases heard and share any information we have with these organisations to assist them in their work.

NPH are allocated actions from MARAC such as welfare checks, or checks on household occupancy within tenancies which serve in the provision of intelligence to relevant agencies in establishing level of risk. Case Officers who attend MARAC are experienced and also debrief on cases with a line manager and further guidance on any additional beneficial actions to ensure adult/child safety is given.

NPH collaborates effectively and positively with a range of statutory and voluntary organisations in an open and honest way in order to address the issues concerning CSE.

NPH has developed its own Safeguarding and Supporting Vulnerable Adults Policy which makes specific mention of CSE. The Policy will be approved by the NPH Operations Committee in September 2016.

2. Is there a clear and robust multi-Agency strategy for information sharing, preventing and managing CSE?

As above.

3. What other multi-Agency forums exist to facilitate joint working?

There are a variety of other forums to discuss both specific cases as well strategic issues. In terms of strategic and specific case management, NPH is an active member of both the Northampton Anti-

Social Behaviour Action Group (which is attended by both key Housing staff and the Police) and the Northampton Community Safety Partnership. NPH also actively participates in any Serious Case Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews as required.

4. What is the extent and profile of CSE in Northampton? How do we know this?

NPH are not the lead organisation in dealing with this issue and therefore have limited intelligence and details.

5. How effective has NBC, its partners and the Police, been in engaging with the local community and other organisations in raising awareness of CSE?

A range of awareness and training events have been arranged and hosted by NBC and its partners. The communication around events has been cascaded well within Northampton. NPH has raised the issue directly with its customers and has publicised its approach on their website. It is unclear at present how other local communities are being engaged.

6. How can awareness be raised further of CSE, human trafficking and domestic slavery of children in Northampton?

Further training for professionals working with potentially affected families/children with mandatory refresher courses. More information available for the general public on signs of CSE and how to report concerns tailored to age range target i.e.: adults/teenagers. Greater emphasis on multi-agency working and clear guidelines on information sharing to encourage officer confidence in doing so.

7. How is CSE incorporated into local training programmes, and who is able to access this training?

Safeguarding forms part of the NPH corporate induction programme and this approach may be more widely adopted. All NPH Heads of Service have a responsibility ensure that safeguarding is embedded within their service area. NPH has designed and issued “concern cards” to front line operatives and raised awareness with contractors to ensure issues of concern or potential concern are formally raised, recorded, referred (where appropriate) and investigated.

8. What support is available to current, potential and historic victims of CSE?

NPH is committed to providing help and support to victims of abuse or exploitation and currently has support service to which victims who are tenants of NPH can be referred. There are specialist officers specific to this area.

9. Do you have further information regarding the role of NBC in tackling CSE?

The Tenancy Agreements have a specific clause which refers to the “imprisonment of another person” and makes it clear that the tenant, another member of their household, guest or visitor to the property should not engage in such activity.