

## **Report of the Chief Executive Office to the meeting of the Children Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting to be held on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

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**Subject: Child Sexual Exploitation Thematic Review 2021**

### **Summary statement:**

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The CSE Thematic Review was commissioned in 2019 by the Bradford Safeguarding Children Board, subsequently replaced by the Bradford Partnership – Working Together to Safeguard Children. The three statutory partners of the Partnership are the Council, Police and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and also a number of key agencies, designated as “relevant agencies” are also members. It has an independent chair and scrutineer- Jane Booth.

The review was commissioned in accordance with governmental guidance in force at the time and focuses on the response of the agencies in Bradford to Child Sexual Exploitation. Five specific cases formed the basis of the review, two non-recent cases of CSE which have already been in the public domain and the media and three more recent cases. The review also includes a review of three more recent cases. It was led by an independent author Clare Hyde MBE. The review looks in detail at the experiences of five children. It spans a 20-year period from 2001 through a range of political administrations and officers. No individuals are named- the report focuses on children and learning. The review was published on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 2021

**Appendix C – Is exempt under paragraph 7 (Crime Prevention) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972**

### **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:**

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) & Child Criminal Exploitation are crimes committed by predominantly male perpetrators from all different backgrounds. Victims of exploitation also come from all backgrounds. Nevertheless, local experience and national research indicates that recognised victims and perpetrators do not necessarily reflect the gender ethnicity and other characteristics of the district’s population.

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**Portfolio:**

**Children and Families**

**Overview & Scrutiny Area:**

**Children`s Services**

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The CSE Thematic Review was commissioned in 2019 by the Bradford Safeguarding Children Board, subsequently replaced by the Bradford Partnership – Working Together to Safeguard Children. The partnership includes the three statutory partners of Council, Police and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and also a number of key agencies. It has an independent chair and scrutineer- Jane Booth.
- 1.2 The review focuses on the response of the agencies in Bradford to Child Sexual Exploitation in response to two historical cases of CSE which have already been in the public domain and the media. The review also includes a review of three more recent cases. It was led by an independent author Clare Hyde MBE. The review looks in detail at service responses to the experiences of the five children. It spans a 20-year period from 2001 through a range of political administrations and officers. No individuals are named- the report focuses on children and learning.
- 1.3 The review was published on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 2021
- 1.4 The Partnership and its member agencies have accepted the findings of the review and are working to ensure the recommendations are carried out. A copy of the current developmental action plan is attached. It will be updated monthly, and actions may be amended and or added as required. The Chair and Independent Scrutineer has set a deadline for the completion of action plan by the end of December 2021 which is challenging. Extension of current targets for completion will only be accepted on evidence of justifiable delay.
- 1.5 A further review of actions is planned for mid-2022 to consider the evidence of outcome/impact and check necessary changes have been embedded in practice.
- 1.6 The review set out to look at three areas
  1. Whether lessons have been learnt from multi-agency responses to non-recent cases of CSE within the Bradford District and beyond and whether these lessons are embedded in current policies and procedures.
  2. The extent to which analysis of the responses of all agencies to current cases provide assurance that working practices and responses that exist now are robust, child-centred and effective in protecting children from sexual exploitation and related harms; and
  3. To what extent good practice lessons around placement provision for looked after children at high risk of, or experiencing, CSE are embedded in practice.
- 1.7 All the children's names have been anonymised in the report

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The issues that emerge in all the cases are distressing to read and the historic cases in particular demonstrate that significant learning was needed, and the children had not been kept safe.

2.2 While the review found that there had been substantial improvements in practice since the response to the non-recent cases, it found that there was also learning for agencies in the more recent sample and that the policy changes were not always embedded in practice.

2.3 None the less the review noted positive progress over the period of the review. During the period since 2011 there has been a significant focus on CSE in the Bradford District, with many perpetrators brought to justice; the formation of a multi-agency CSE hub; a systematic trawl of historic cases revisiting data on missing children through Operation Dalesway, and a number of victims have come forward as a result of this. Bradford had one of the first CSE hubs in the country. Current processes are in place to identify children, assess risk and to put services in place.

2.4 National understanding of CSE has improved significantly during this time. In 2002 for example the phrase “child prostitution” was in common usage. Bradford’s response to CSE has been recognised nationally and commented on positively in the 2018 ILACS inspection.

## **2.5 Summary Findings – Terms of reference 1**

**To what extent have lessons been learnt from the multi-agency responses to non-recent cases of Child Sexual Exploitation within the Bradford & how well is this embedded**

2.6 The review process reflected upon the learning from two previous local CSE Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and asked why, despite improvements, not all learning has been fully embedded into practice. This review also identified the impact of an adverse Ofsted Inspection of Children’s Social Care and the consequent instability in the children’s social care management and workforce.

2.7 Policy changes had been made in relation to CSE in all agencies, but this was not always seen in sustained practice changes.

2.8 The short-term nature of funding for some CSE and family support services was also evident. This means that staff turnover can be high with experienced practitioners moving on to different roles or different areas. A further consequence of this is likely to be that ‘organisational memory’ across the system and learning from local SCRs and other reviews is lost too.

## **2.9 Summary Findings – Terms of reference 2**

**To what extent does analysis of responses from all agencies to current cases provide assurance that working practices and responses are robust, child centred, and are effective in protecting children from sexual exploitation and related harms?**

2.10 While there was evidence of good practice in strategic activity, the evidence of quality of practice was not there in all cases and all agencies.

2.11 A CSE risk assessment tool is used once a possible risk has been identified. There was however evidence that risk was not always recognised even where there were clear signs and indicators suggesting sexual exploitation and there were examples of assessments being very delayed.

- 2.12 The language used about the children did not always reflect their vulnerability and they were, on occasion, deemed to be making choices.
- 2.13 At times, the response and attitudes to the male victim was different to that of the female victims.
- 2.14 Where risk was identified, changing levels of risk were not always responded to quickly and there was variance in how different professionals interpreted risk.
- 2.15 Good supervision is critical to the quality of practice, particularly with cases where there is constant change and challenge.
- 2.16 Case load size is also a factor as working with CSE is complex and time consuming. High levels of staff turnover in children's social care have made it difficult to measure the take up and impact of essential training. All three factors were identified as an issue in the Ofsted inspection in 2018 and so it is no surprise that these were found in the review.
- 2.17 The role of drugs and alcohol in grooming, control and exploitation was identified but not addressed by a referral to specialist services.
- 2.18 A number of wider issues were evident. These related to the role of drugs and alcohol in grooming, control and exploitation; the response to young people with disabilities and with behavioural problems; recognising and responding to online abuse; and the lack of consideration of any possible grooming/ radicalisation or in the later cases a referral to Prevent.

**2.19 Summary Findings – Terms of reference 3**  
**To what extent are good practice lessons around placement provision for looked after children at high risk of experiencing child sexual exploitation embedded in practice?**

- 2.20 In the sample the review found many examples of children at risk of, or being, exploited being placed in expensive placements which could not meet their needs. They experienced many moves and went missing on a regular basis.
- 2.21 Two of the female children considered in this review became pregnant as a result of their abuse. Two of the babies were placed for adoption and all were subject to child protection arrangements.
- 2.22 Four of the five children in the case sample experienced being arrested and held in custody and some were convicted of offences in response to their behaviours. There was little contextualising of the offences. Research clearly demonstrates that a trauma informed response works best in these circumstances.
- 2.23 All the children considered in this review experienced significant disruption to their education causing them to miss out on a basic education, miss out on the protective factors provided by regularly attending school and miss out on social interactions with peers. Their

early histories of abuse, neglect and trauma resulted in them displaying very challenging behaviours.

- 2.24 The review did identify some good practice, but this was not always sustained. The children struggled to achieve their aspirations, such as attendance at college, and lacked the confidence and skills to engage successfully in the routines of everyday life.

## **2.25 Summary Recommendations**

The report contains a total of 20 recommendations. These recommendations are set out in full in the review but can broadly be grouped into key areas of action.

- 2.26 That the agencies work closely together to look at local and national learning and to ensure that the pervasive, long term and sustained impacts of CSE on children and then later as adults is understood
- 2.27 Agencies develop a system wide approach to jointly commissioned, long-term approaches which address the human and financial costs of a child's lifetime exposure to trauma, abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- 2.28 That the impact and relevance of substance misuse as part of CSE is recognised and understood by all services and professionals and that warning signs are recognised more quickly
- 2.29 That the additional vulnerability of disabled children is recognised and that services respond appropriately.
- 2.30 That services are professionally curious in relation to changes of cultural identity in children
- 2.31 That the impact of placement change is recognised, and the lack of enough suitable local placements is addressed by commissioners
- 2.32 That the vulnerability of children missing education is recognised as well as the impact on education that this has had.

## **2.33 What is being done to address these issues?**

- 2.34 The Bradford Partnership has a developmental action plan and is working with all partners to address the issues raised in the review.
- 2.35 The Bradford Partnership are in the process of establishing a specific monitoring group with external assistance to ensure the developmental action plan recommendations and actions are progressed and completed.
- 2.36 The Bradford Partnership have established links with the Centre of Expertise – Child Sexual Abuse. The nationally recognised and home office funded team have been supporting the development of processes and assurance / challenge sessions

with Police, Children Social Care, CCG and Health partners on the current response to CSE. Further sessions are being planned with other key partners.

- 2.37 Earlier this year, (February 21) the district held a virtual CSE conference with nationally recognised speakers including survivors of exploitation. The event had over 300 delegates.
- 2.38 The Specialist Exploitation Hub is in the process of being developed. The new hub will enhance existing practice and processes. The Hub development is being supported by a strategic mobilisation sub group with membership from statutory partners and VCS. Additional resources have been recruited to support the hub, and these include Health worker and Educational Safeguarding Officers.
- 2.39 Bradford District has a well-established multi -agency child exploitation (MACE) process in place. Partner agencies meet every 6 weeks and is co-chaired by the head of services and a Police Chief Inspector. The meeting considers cases deemed to high risk and other cases where progress has stalled.
- 2.40 The district also holds a daily multi- agency risk assessment meeting (DRAM) to review new and existing cases known to agencies where there is evidence of exploitation. Exploitation and missing strategies are put in place with agreed points of review to mitigate the risk of harm.
- 2.41 The All-Age Exploitation sub group, chaired by a Police Superintendent are hosting a unique workshop conference on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 21 to undertake an assessment of exploitation in its broader sense. The facilitated event will aim to gather feedback from practitioners and community partners to enhance our response to exploitation in Bradford. The event is being supported by colleagues from the National Police Foundation and the National Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP)
- 2.42 Training on CSE has continued to be delivered by partner agencies to frontline practitioners. The Bradford Partnership have also commissioned bespoke training sessions on exploitation in response to this report by a specialist trainer. These will commence in November and early December 21 for frontline practitioners.
- 2.43 The Bradford Partnership will submit a further report on exploitation in November 2021

### **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no other considerations.

### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

### **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

- 5.1 The protection of Children and Vulnerable adults is the highest priority for the Council and its partners when considering the implications of exploitation, as is the provision of services to support those who are victims of this abuse. Failure to protect and provide appropriate services significantly increases the risk to children and vulnerable adults in the district. It would lead to significantly reduced public confidence in Bradford Council, West Yorkshire Police, the Health economy and other partners, as has been demonstrated nationally.

## **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

- 6.1 The Council has a general duty to safeguard children in its area that are at risk of harm and that includes child sexual exploitation pursuant to the Children Act 1989 and in cases of trafficking and abduction, Modern Day Slavery Act 2015.

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.11 None

### **7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

- 7.21 None.

### **7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.31 Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults is a criminal offence. The consequences of exploitation can be long standing for the victim and there is growing research evidence that victims of criminal exploitation are themselves over represented among young people coming to the attention of police services as potential perpetrators. In addition, exploitation has lasting consequences for families of both victims and perpetrators and has the potential to impact of community relations.

- 7.32 The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) oversees the commissioning of funding from the passporting of Police and Crime Commissioner and the Violence Reduction Unit funding against key priorities related to exploitation.

#### **7.3.1 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

- 7.41 Sexual and Criminal Exploitation is a violation of the rights of the child/adult under the Human Rights Act. The multi-agency partnership arrangements are intended to prevent the rights of the child/adult being violated in this way

#### **7.5.1 TRADE UNION**

- 7.51 None

#### **7.5.2 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

An annual report on the Bradford Partnership Response to exploitation will be presented in the Autumn to both Executive, O&S Panel and Area Committees

## **7.7 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS (For reports to Area Committees only)**

N/A

## **7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING**

7.81 National and local evidence shows that children who are looked after by the local authority are more likely to become victims of Child Exploitation than other groups. This means that in relation to safeguarding and corporate parenting responsibilities, partners have a responsibility to understand the safeguarding risks facing children, and especially in relation to Child Exploitation.

## **7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

7.10 The nature of Sexual and Criminal Exploitation work requires partners to manage confidential matters and data under GDPR regulations in accordance with individual agency guidelines. There is no sensitive data included in this report that requires a Privacy Impact Assessment None.

## **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

8.1 Appendix C – CSE Thematic Action Plan - Is exempt under paragraph 7 (Crime Prevention) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

## **9. OPTIONS**

9.1 None

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 The Committee is invited to note the report

That Committee receive a full report in November on current work in relation to exploitation of both children and adults and that this includes updated details of work in relation to the CSE actions in the Thematic review.

10.2 The Committee commit to working closely with partners to deliver on the actions within the developmental action plan and progressing the extensive wider work presently on going in Bradford

## **11. APPENDICES**

Appendix A – CSE Thematic Review Executive Summary & Main Report

Appendix B – CSE Thematic Review appendices including main report chronology

Appendix C Not For Publication– CSE Thematic Action Plan