

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**22 JULY 2014**

**FINAL REPORT**

**PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

**'It's everybody's responsibility'**

**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To present the findings of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel on their review of the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2 Following national publicity regarding the growing problem of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). The panel's aim was to assess the extent of the problem in Middlesbrough, examine what services are in place to tackle this problem and if appropriate, what additional measures should be taken to combat this issue.
- 3 The panel had identified the topic of Child Sexual Exploitation within their proposed work programme approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Board. The panel identified this subject as it was apparent, through the media that unfortunately it is a growing problem nationally. The media had reported that helplines had seen a noticeable increase in calls from young people with an increase in incidences being reported to Police.
- 4 Against this background the panel wanted to know how significant this problem is in Middlesbrough and what can be done to arrest the problem and identify gaps where the Council and/or its partners could contribute to resolving this issue.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION**

- 5 The terms of reference for the Scrutiny investigation were as outlined below:
  - (a) To assess the level of the problem of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Middlesbrough.

- (b) To assess how effective the relevant agencies are in combating the problem and arresting any increase in the number of cases.
- (c) To identify areas where the Council or other agencies can contribute to tackling the exploitation of children.

## **METHODS OF INVESTIGATION**

6. Members of the Panel met formally between 7 November 2013 and 30 April 2014 to discuss/receive evidence relating to this investigation and a detailed record of the topics discussed at those meetings are available from the Council's website.
7. A brief summary of the methods of investigation are outlined below:
  - (a) Detailed officer presentations supplemented by verbal evidence.
  - (b) Meetings and detailed discussions with
    - Middlesbrough Council Children and Learning Department
    - Barnardo's – SECOS Project
    - Integrated Youth Support Service
    - Middlesbrough Safeguarding Children Board
    - Middlesbrough Secondary Schools
  - (c) A round table discussion with the Police, SECOS, Middlesbrough Local Safeguarding Children Board and Community Safety.
  - (d) Desktop research by the Scrutiny Support Officer
8. The report has been compiled on the basis of their evidence and other background information listed at the end of the report.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL**

9. The membership of the Panel, at the time of the review, was as detailed below:

Councillors F McIntyre (Chair), Councillor P Purvis, (Vice-Chair), Councillors S Biswas, R Brady, J Hobson, B A Hubbard, L Junier, R Kerr and R Lowes.

## **CHAIR'S FOREWORD**

10. The overall aim of this report is to highlight the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation, the panel doesn't claim it will solve this problem with this report, but what it does hope to do is clear up some of the myths surrounding it and to ensure that the topic is publicised so that as many people are made aware of the issue as possible. The panel also aims to ensure that preventing CSE from happening is placed firmly on

everyone's agenda. The bottom line is, and from all the evidence that the panel has received, protecting children from CSE is everyone's responsibility. The topic often gets highlighted in the media when there is a high profile case, as has happened in Middlesbrough, then once the furore has died down and media attention dissipates it becomes yesterday's news. It does not mean that it is not happening, it is real, it's here and preventing it from happening must continue to be one of the Council's top priorities. The panel has not shied away from any of the difficult issues and discussions that are associated with this topic and it is the panel's aim that the recommendations will go some way to assisting in preventing more cases occurring in Middlesbrough.

11. The panel's work will not end with the completion of this report, to ensure that it is kept on the agenda, the panel will expect regular updates on the position here in Middlesbrough. The panel wants to ensure that everything that can be done to prevent CSE is being done.

## **THE NATIONAL PICTURE**

### **Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation**

12. From the outset it helps to be clear about exactly what is meant by child sexual exploitation, so that it is fixed in everyone's minds. The definition as identified in the Children's Commission, Interim Report<sup>1</sup> (and what the panel have used to define the area for this review) is as follows

*[this] involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relations being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability'*

### **Barnardo's**

13. Barnardo's has found that CSE tends to be a hidden activity and much more likely to take place in private residences than visibly, on the streets. <sup>2</sup> Barnardo's have identified three different models of activity, although not exhaustive, show a spectrum of exploitation.

### **14. Diagram 1 – Barnardo's Spectrum of Exploitation**

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (CSEGG) – July 2012

<sup>2</sup> Barnardo's – Puppet on a String – The Urgent need to cut children free from sexual exploitation 2011

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1	Inappropriate relationships	Usually involving one perpetrator who has inappropriate power or control over a young person (physical, emotional or financial). One indicator may be a significant age gap. The young person may believe they are in a loving relationship.
2	'Boyfriend' model of exploitation and peer exploitation	The perpetrator befriends and grooms a young person in to a 'relationship' and then coerces or forces them to have sex with friends or associates. Sometimes associated with gang activity but not always.
3	Organised/networked sexual exploitation or trafficking	Young people (often connected) are passed through networks, possibly over geographical distances, between towns and cities where they may be forced/coerced into sexual activity with multiple men. Often this occurs at 'sex parties' and young men who are involved may be used as agents to recruit others into the network. Some of this activity is described as serious organised crime and can involve the organised 'buying and selling' of young people by perpetrators.

## The Tell Tale signs

15. Barnardo's highlight a number of tell-tale signs or indicators that a child is being groomed for sexual exploitation (additional information is available at Appendix 2). The panel wanted to highlight this because it is important that everybody, including parents, know what these signs are:

- Going missing for periods of time or returning home late
- Disengagement from education, children not in school during the day are more at risk of sexual exploitation
- Appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Association with other young people involved in exploitation
- Sexual health issues
- Changes in temperament/depression, mood swings
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviours, being over-familiar with strangers or sending sexualised images via the internet or mobile phones
- Involvement in exploitative relationships or association with risky adults

16. The reality is stark, the message the panel heard over and over was that any child or young person, from any background, could be at risk of exploitation. Boys and young men can be at risk as well as girls and young women. Of course other factors can increase a young person's vulnerability, for example, a disrupted family life and domestic violence, a history of physical or sexual abuse, disadvantage, poor mental health, problematic parenting, drug or alcohol misuse and parental mental health issues.
17. Barnardo's also outline that some groups are more vulnerable to targeting by the perpetrators of sexual exploitation. These include children living in care, particularly residential care, those who are excluded from mainstream school and those who misuse drugs and alcohol. Barnardo's concern was that those children are increasingly being targeted by abusers who are developing more sophisticated grooming techniques.

### **What is the Extent of Sexual Exploitation Across the Country?**

18. Nationally, it is very difficult to say how many children and young people are being sexually exploited in the UK because the hidden nature of the issues makes it difficult to identify. Practitioners often do not identify it and young people themselves frequently do not recognise themselves as victims of abuse. Leading to the conclusion that the figures that are available are likely to be underestimated.
19. The interim report, published in November 2012, found that at least 16,500 children were identified as being at risk of CSE during one year and 2,409 children were confirmed as victims of CSE in gangs and groups during the 14 month period from August 2010 to October 2011, although it warned that the scale of abuse was likely to be much larger.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Impact on CSE of the Increasing Use of Technology**

20. The increased use of technology to target and exploit children has been highlighted by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP). Barnardo's have also identified a significant rise in the use of the internet and social networking sites for grooming and direct exploitation as well as a significant rise in the use of mobile phones, including using Bluetooth technology, to target young people, alongside grooming and exploitation through texts and picture messages.

### **The Growing Problems Related to Social Media**

21. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) works with child protection partners across the UK and overseas to identify the main threats to children and coordinates activity against these threats to bring offenders to account. It aims to keep children safe from harm online and offline. CEOP pursue those who sexually exploit and abuse children, prevent people becoming involved in child sexual exploitation, protect children from becoming victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and prepare interventions to reduce the impact of child sexual exploitation and abuse through safeguarding and child protection work.

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<sup>3</sup> Office of the Children's Commissioner, Interim report – 'I thought I was the only one in the world' November 2012

22. CEOP works to track registered offenders who have a sexual interest in children and who have failed to comply with their notification requirements under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. This includes disrupting or preventing travel by offenders and disseminating intelligence to international forces and specifically targeting offenders while they remain overseas. It includes non UK nationals who travel to the UK.
23. CEOP focus on organised criminal groups profiteering from the publication or distribution of child abuse images, support local police forces with computer forensics and covert investigations and provide authoritative investigative advice and support to maximise UK law enforcement's response to crimes of child sexual abuse and exploitation.
24. They also liaise with the online and technological industries, fine-tuning guidelines to minimise the possibility of present and future technology increasing the risk of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse to children. Our training and education specialists work together to raise the knowledge, skills and understanding of parents, carers, children and young people.

### Myths vs Reality

25. People's awareness and understanding of this topic varies. Perhaps the only time that people hear about CSE it is when high profile cases hit the media and which makes people form a certain judgement about who CSE affects and who is perpetrating it. However it is important when considering this topic that people are aware of range of forms that CSE can take, to explore the myths and provide a bigger picture of the problem. The Local Government Association has produced a range of information for Councils designed to help inform Councillors about the topic. The document provides a useful outline of the myths and the reality, which are as follows.

### 26. Diagram 2 – Myths vs Reality

Myth	Reality
That there are very few 'models' of CSE	The grooming and sexual exploitation of young people can take many different forms. It can be carried out by individuals, street gangs or groups. It can be motivated by money, it can occur in a wide range of settings, but the common theme in all cases is the imbalance of power and the control exerted on young people.
It only happens in certain ethnic/cultural communities	Both perpetrators and victims are known to come from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. CSE is not a crime restricted to British Pakistani Muslim males or White British girls, despite media coverage of high profile cases. The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) found perpetrators and victims of CSE from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds.
It only happens to children in care	The majority of victims of CSE are living at home. However, looked after children account for a disproportionate number of victims and can be particularly vulnerable.
It only happens to girls and young women	Boys and young men are also targeted as victims of CSE by perpetrators. However, they may be less likely to disclose offences or seek support, often due to

	stigma, prejudice or embarrassment or the fear that they will not be believed.
It is only perpetrated by men	There is evidence that women can be perpetrators of this crime too. They may use different grooming methods. Where women were involved, the role was primarily, though not exclusively, to procure victims.
It only happens to young teenagers by men	Peer-on-peer CSE happens too. For example young people are sometimes used to 'recruit' others, by inviting them to locations for parties. Technology can also play a significant role, with young people known to use mobile technology as a way of distributing images of abuse
This only happens in large towns and cities	Evidence shows that CSE can and does happen in all parts of our country. It is not restricted to urban areas. Young people can also be transported between towns, cities and villages etc. This is known as trafficking (an offence punishable by up to 14 years imprisonment)
Some people can be both victims and perpetrators	The OCC inquiry found that around 6 per cent of victims reported in their call for evidence were also identified as perpetrators. However. Although victims may appear to be willing accomplices, this should be seen in the context exerted by the perpetrator.

## RECENT EXAMPLES OF NATIONAL RESEARCH

27. CSE, as a form of abuse, has only been fully recognised in recent years. However there have been a number of independent and governmental reviews which have provided information and recommendations on how to deal with the issue of CSE. In order to provide a fuller picture of what is taking place nationally a snapshot of the reviews that have been undertaken and their findings are provided here.

### What can be learnt from the Barnardo's puppet on a string review?

28. The report (from 2011) outlines what is known about the scale and nature of sexual exploitation across the UK and highlights some worrying new trends identified by Barnardo's. The report emphasises that child sexual exploitation is a child protection issue, the report calls for the Secretary of State for Education to appoint a minister to take forward a national action plan to tackle this crime against children

29. The report states that recent high-profile cases have meant that child protection has been focused on babies suffering abuse and neglect at the hands of their parents, relatives or carers in the family home, but the report demonstrates that there are many older children being preyed upon in communities and subjected to abuse. The report asks for CSE to be recognised as a mainstream child protection issue.

30. The report calls for 4 recommendations for agencies

- Raise awareness to improve early identification of child sexual exploitation
- Improve statutory responses and the provision of services
- Improve the evidence

- Improve prosecution procedures

31. The report, again, highlights the worrying lack of data available to present an accurate picture of the national scale and nature of CSE and the report calls for the Home Office to develop national reporting mechanisms so that a more accurate picture can be established.
32. The report does highlight that policy makers have become more aware of the issue, guidance in 2009 set out how police, teachers, youth workers and other professionals who come into contact with children should identify those at risk, protect and support them and take action against perpetrators. However, it was highlighted, that the guidance is only as effective as its implementation.
33. The report concluded with the recognition that local authorities have many demands and limited resources. Protecting children from sexual exploitation must be a top priority and, whilst there cannot be a CSE specialist service in every local authority, that authorities work creatively, they should be prepared to pool resources with other agencies and, where possible, work across geographical boundaries.
34. The report led to the Department of Education co-ordinating the cross-government Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action plan, first published in November 2011.

#### **What can be learnt from the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) Review?**

35. In January 2011, CEOP undertook a review of 'localised grooming' following the prosecutions of adult males in various towns and cities in the UK. Unfortunately CEOP did not get a good response from agencies about the numbers of children involved. It found that in many cases agencies did not have data on CSE, indications from service providers suggested that because victims frequently didn't not recognise they were being exploited they did not disclose abuse. The report pointed out agencies that do not proactively look for CSE will, as a result, fail to identify it. As a result the majority of incidents of CSE are unrecognised and unknown.
36. Evidence had shown that a number of Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) had not implemented key aspects of national guidance and had not established a relevant sub group, did not have a lead professional and did not have an up to date protocols. The panel were reassured to hear that in Middlesbrough the Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked (VEMT) group had been established and that objectives and targets were being agreed. (Further information about what agencies in Middlesbrough are doing are contained within the section on the Panel's Findings, from paragraph 42)
37. Evidence from that review had also showed that there was an increased need for improved awareness of the signs and symptoms of CSE across a range of services. More work is needed to ensure that all agencies are able to identify CSE, support children and escalate concerns. These agencies include sexual health clinics, child and adolescent mental health services, GPs, youth workers, teachers, school nurses, youth offending teams, specialist services for the homeless or drug abusing young people as well as various police teams.



38. Recommendations from that report noted that there should be clear protocols for sharing information. That those working with children understand the signs of exploitation and can refer children for tailored support and that there should be sufficient specialist training for front line service providers so they are equipped to identify children at risk. Ways of capturing and recording data should be developed and LSCBs should coordinate the development of a template for capturing information which is of use to both police and services for sexually exploited children.
39. The report is useful in that it highlights how difficult it is to get overall figures on numbers of CSE and it shows how important collecting and sharing information and intelligence is and then ensuring all professionals are aware of the issues of CSE. What it does conclude is that their research found that all agencies need to improve their ability to recognise CSE, multi-agency work is key and that there were no consistent patterns connected to culture or ethnicity in the profile of offenders.

### **If only someone had listened – The Office of the Children’s Commissioner**

40. The report (from November 2013) sets out the findings of a two year inquiry into CSE. It sets out seven principles which characterise an effective system of tracking CSE and the processes which professionals and agencies must work through in order that the focus remains on keeping children safe and securing their long term wellbeing. The seven principles which are proposed in the See Me Hear Me Framework are summarised as follows

- i. **The child’s best interests must be the top priority-** the child must be visible and must be heard.
- ii. **Participation of children and young people** – children and young people’s views should be at the heart of developing strategic plans to combat CSE.
- iii. **Enduring relationships and support** – children who are victims should have a consistent named professional, appropriate support should be given and support should be delivered through a partnership approach.
- iv. **Comprehensive ‘problem-profiling’** – central government and local areas must be able to interrogate and interpret the facts, the extent and the impact of CSE.
- v. **Effective information-sharing** within and between agencies – through the use of a local CSE co-ordinator by LSCBs. Developing a CSE strategy which influences local responses so that there is effective joined up working so that all information comes into a central hub.
- vi. **Supervision, support and training for staff** – all staff dealing with CSE should be offered regular supervision, attend regular training and be included in safeguarding training for all professionals who work with children and young people, including teachers, social workers and health professionals
- vii. **Evaluation and Review** - that CSE is tackled effectively from prevention through protection, enforcement, securing justice and long-term recovery, where there is a clear and committed leadership that provides unambiguous messages of the importance of this work.

41. The report makes a number of recommendations which include

- LSCBs should ensure that they are fully compliant with the current 'Working Together' guidance on CSE (DCSF 2009)
- That they review their strategic and operational plans against the seven principles of the document.
- Information protocols should be agreed and information should be shared. Every local authority should ensure that its Joint Strategic Needs Assessment includes evidence about the prevalence of CSE and this should determine commissioning decisions and priorities.
- Relationship and sex education must be provided by trained practitioners and be part of a holistic/whole-school approach to child protection.

### **Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming – House of Commons Home Affairs Committee**

42. The Committee (in June 2013) considered a wide range of evidence and it acknowledged that the phenomenon of child sexual abuse has only been fully recognised in the relatively recent past<sup>4</sup>. For many years the idea of 'stranger danger' prevailed, however it has now been recognised that abuse by people known to them was more common than abuse by a stranger. The growth of the internet has produced a new form of 'stranger danger' in the form of on-line grooming. Localised grooming, where abusers target vulnerable children, often in parks, takeaways, cinemas, on the street etc., and are offered gifts and treats and even drugs in exchange for sex, also exists, and the awareness of this model has increased significantly.

43. The report also highlighted the need for 'professional curiosity' in the high profile cases in Rochdale and Rotherham, professionals did not recognise the existence of that exploitation, were not aware of the scale of the abuse and were not sharing information. Partly due to the assumption around the fact that victims were engaging in consensual relationships and the inability to engage with the victims. The report condemns the woeful lack of professional curiosity or indifference from the Chief Executive, who claimed to know nothing about the problem.

44. The report made a number of recommendations for the Government which included the following which were pertinent to Local Government

- i. Ensuring that all frontline council workers, even those who do not work directly with children and young people should be trained to recognise the signs of localised grooming and the indicators of child sexual exploitation. Local Authority staff, and contractors working on their behalf, have a significant presence in public places where children and young people congregate, park wardens, staff at sports centres, libraries, environmental health officers and taxi and minicab licencing officers. They could act as a valuable early warning system if they report any behaviour which they think

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<sup>4</sup> House of Commons Home Affairs Committee – Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming June 2013

is linked to CSE. Councils should also set up an employee hotline where anything suspicious can be supported.

- ii. There should be a clear line of dialogue between children's social care departments and licensing boards and local authorities must make greater use of licensing to tackle the issue of grooming.
- iii. LSCB must collect data in a standard format so that it can be shared between them.
- iv. Every LCSB should publish an annual report on the work of the CSE team.
- v. Prevention and early intervention is essential, local authorities must ensure that there is sufficient funding in the budget of any multi-agency team to tackle CSE.
- vi. Teachers are more likely to see victims on a regular basis, it was recommended that all teachers are provided with a list of the warning signs and contact details of a named individual within the local authority that they can contact with any concerns.

45. In response to the report the Government have published its report on the independent Health Working Group on Child Sexual Exploitation. The report acknowledges the importance of the role of LSCB and that good strategic partnership working, gathering information through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), jointly commissioning services, sharing information links with health professionals are key to preventing CSE. The LSCB should also help ensure that CSE is appropriately prioritised by the Health and Well Being Board.

## **THE PANEL'S FINDINGS**

### **TERM OF REFERENCE 1 - TO ASSESS THE LEVEL OF THE PROBLEM OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN MIDDLESBROUGH**

46. The panel received information from the Deputy Director – Safeguarding, who confirmed that there were concerns in Middlesbrough around the number of vulnerable young people missing from home and at risk of being trafficked as part of a sexual exploitation industry. There are several groups which exist to identify and track vulnerable young people and share information.
47. Across the Cleveland areas there was a more significant problem than previously identified, which is the case nationally also, as the recent report by the Children's Commissioner on CSE identified. Exploitation had been identified as an emerging issue in Middlesbrough and the numbers were significantly higher than in the other Tees Valley areas. Although dozens of young people had been identified and assessed, there was a deeper concern about the exploitation networks that existed. As a result of these concerns a Vulnerable and Exploited, Missing and Trafficked (VEMT) group had been established and details are given further on in this report.
48. The scale of the problem was described to the panel as, there are agencies trying to build up a coloured jigsaw, but they only have half of the pieces at the moment.

49. When speaking to the Assistant Head Teacher from Acklam Grange school the panel learnt that the CSE in Middlesbrough was a 'growth industry' and that it was extremely prevalent in Middlesbrough. Worryingly Members heard that the risk was not only to secondary school pupils and that incidences of primary school pupils being targeted had been picked up in the transition process from primary to secondary school.

## **Trafficking**

50. With regard to trafficking, there have been six cases of children coming to Middlesbrough from outside the UK in the last five years. The young people were generally picked up by the Border Agency and usually coming to stay with extended family in Middlesbrough. The Deputy Director of Safeguarding commented that sometimes some of the families who were known to them, their lives were so chaotic that it was difficult not to be suspicious about their living arrangements.

## **TERM OF REFERENCE 2 - TO ASSESS HOW EFFECTIVE THE RELEVANT AGENCIES ARE IN COMBATING THE PROBLEM AND ARRESTING ANY INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CASES**

### **Background Information**

#### **Licensing**

51. On hearing evidence about some of the areas that perpetrators use to target young people and for CSE to take place, that include public places such as hotels, bars and fast food takeaways, the panel wanted to address areas relating to licensing and the approach taken by the licensing committee when addressing applications from such establishments. Members wanted to assess the department's awareness and/or their procedures for ensuring these premises are not used to facilitate the exploitation of children. Members also wanted to look at the process for receiving applications for taxi licences due to recent publicity and information presented to the panel.

#### **Taxi Licensing**

52. The panel was informed that when applications are received from people wishing to become taxi drivers they were interviewed by a Licensing Officer and had to pass various tests. All applicants had to undergo a Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) check (previously CRB). If there were any issues with regard to the granting of the licence, the Licensing Officer could refer the application to the Licensing Committee for a decision as to whether to grant the licence or not. The DBS check listed any convictions that the applicant had.
53. The Licensing Committee had a policy and guidelines in relation to the timescales for various convictions such as theft, violence, motoring offences and drug offences, and how much time must have elapsed since the conviction before considering granting a licence. For example, the Committee might consider that an applicant would have to be conviction free for a period of ten years where a drug related offence had been committed.
54. Sometimes additional information was provided by the Police in cases where there had not been a conviction. For example, a complaint of an incident of a sexual nature

against children. Even though a complaint may have been made, it was not always possible to proceed with a case because of lack of evidence. It was the Licensing Committee's decision as to how much consideration they gave to such information.

55. If intelligence was received from the Police concerning an applicant and children, where there was no conviction, a meeting would be arranged with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in Children's Services, the Licensing Officer and the Police Child Protection Team, in order to consider the particular circumstances. The Police could access the investigation records and provide the group with further information on a specific incident. It would be difficult for the Licensing Committee to make a decision if there was just one line in the report referring to an incident. If the Committee chose to refuse the licence, the applicant could appeal to the Magistrates and it was therefore vital that clear reasons were given for any refusal
56. In addition, any taxi licence holder who committed certain offences would be reported immediately to the Licensing Department by the Police. Where there was sufficient cause for concern, the Department had the power to suspend a licence with immediate effect. Previously, drivers could continue to drive until their case was heard in Court. The Licensing Department would also inform the driver's employer if their licence was suspended as there was the potential for the operator to be breaking the law if they were not aware that a driver's licence had been suspended.
57. The Local Authority only licenced private hire vehicles and hackney carriages up to 8 seats. Any larger vehicles, for example minibuses (ie vehicles over 8 seats), were licenced by the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA). An issue of concern had been raised locally that there was currently no requirement for a minibus driver to have a DBS check (formally known as a CRB check). Applicants were required to sign a Declaration to VOSA to notify their employer. A local hackney carriage driver had recently campaigned try and change the law on this issue.

### **Licensing of Premises**

58. With regard to the licensing of hotels, bars and restaurants, any issues or concerns that were raised in objection to a licence application being granted by the Council were mainly from the Police. One of the four licensing objectives that the Committee had to ensure was met, was the Protection of Children from Harm. Licenced premises had to have a Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS) who was required to have a personal licence. The DPS would have policies in place with regard to the sale of alcohol and regular staff training should take place. All bar staff had to be authorised by the DPS
59. Each licence application was examined by the Licensing Officer and included details of the type of premises, what activities would take place on the premises and the opening and closing hours. If it was proposed that the premises would open to accompanied children, the application and any proposed conditions would be forwarded to the Police and Children's Services for their comments. If no objections were received to the application, the Licensing Officer would grant the licence without referring it to the Committee. However, if, for example, the Police voiced concerns, the Committee would consider the application. Most objections generally came from the Police with regard to age policies.
60. If the Police raised a concern as to how a premises was being managed, the Committee could revoke the licence, or leave the premises open and remove the

DPS. It was highlighted that most problems with licenced premises tended to occur during the early hours of the morning. The Police maintained that the longer hours an establishment was open, there was a higher risk of incidents.

61. The panel were reassured that there were good links between the Local Authority Designated Officer, the Licencing Team and the police child protection team and did not underestimate how important it was to have strong protocols and dialogue between those services. However they did highlight the need not to be complacent in this area given its importance in tackling the issue of grooming.

### **Evidence from Barnardos**

62. The panel was informed that Barnardo's had been working on exploitation in Middlesbrough since 2000. Approximately fifteen years ago, prostitution was a problem in parts of the town with girls and women usually being picked up by men in cars. The Police, Barnardo's, MSCB and the LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board) had taken a robust stance on the whole issue of tackling prostitution and had probably done more for supporting women than any other area in the country to stop the flow of young children going into prostitution.
63. Now the scene had changed, the way in which perpetrators groomed children is entirely different and perhaps not as obvious. Members heard that children might be groomed via the internet, befriended via social networking sites or a perpetrator might even groom (or befriend) their parents first, they might be targeted whilst sat in the park going about their business as young people. In some cases it has been reported that the children that had been targeted were as young as eleven years old.

### **Safeguarding Young People in Pubs and Clubs**

64. There was a programme in operation to check on pubs entitled 'Operation Pubs and Clubs' – a partnership safeguarding approach between Barnardo's and the Police. The operation usually takes place three to four times a year on a Friday or Saturday evening. When a young person is found in a public house they are removed from the pub by a Barnardo's member of staff and the landlord is then given a written warning. Any young person found in a pub is transported to the (Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Streets project) SECOS and parents are contacted to collect their children from the project. Whilst at the Centre, Barnardo's discuss risks, concern and safety with the child and parent surrounding the incident.
65. If parent/s are not contactable by telephone or if they present in a manner that raises Barnardo's concern and or there is a concern about the young person the project will follow this up with an appropriate referral to the local authority, for example CAF - Common Assessment Framework, Child in Need or Child Protection if the young person is at risk of significant harm. If there was an immediate concern about the young person and it was not safe for them to return home Emergency Duty Team would be contacted to intervene.
66. If a pub has had a written warning and a young person is found again in their premises the licence will then be taken for review with the local authority.
67. The panel were assured that there was a robust plan was in place for sexual exploitation in Middlesbrough and many victims and perpetrators were known. Intelligence on nightclubs, pubs, hotels and taxi firms was also shared across

neighbouring authorities.

### **Examples of Barnardo's Work**

68. Barnardo's had a specialist Sexual Exploitation Worker in every Local Authority. Staff in every school in Middlesbrough had been offered training on sexual exploitation and internet abuse. Middlesbrough school children had also received training on internet safety.
69. Members were informed that Barnardo's was working with established BME communities and new migrant communities. For example looking at communities' of attitudes towards children, young people and women and assisting young gay men from BME communities had been abused or forced into a marriage. Training and education has also been delivered to the BME community.

### **Outreach**

70. The panel was also informed that Barnardo's provided an outreach service four nights per week in Middlesbrough, taking young people off the streets and in partnership with the Youth Service, providing positive activities. In addition, there was Stay Safe, where Social Workers, Youth Workers and Police would visit pubs and clubs in the town centre and pick up any vulnerable or under-age young people and take them home. Through this approach, pub landlords were reminded of their responsibilities to protect young people and be vigilant about what could be taking place in their premises.
71. The panel was pleased to hear that Barnardo's had reached the second round of bidding for funding from the Big Lottery Fund for an initiative called 'Fulfilling Lives' to help support parents and children from 0-3 years of age. If successful, the bid was potentially £50 million over a period of ten years. The initiative would focus on working with families as early as possible, so that children would grow up in families learning about empathy, attachment and bonding.
72. Over the last four years Barnardo's had trained approximately 8000 people on internet safety and sexual exploitation including 382 parents, and 684 young people who were considered to be at risk had received specific one-to-one support
73. In terms of the way forward, the representative from Barnardo's stated that multi-agency working and sharing of information was the key. There was an absolute necessity to drive multi-agency and partnership working through every aspect of the Council and ensure that child protection remained a priority. It was also considered important to keep trying to influence hotels, businesses and taxi firms about being aware of exploitation and about keeping vigilant and to report incidents to the Police.
74. The panel felt that it was important to be aware of the work of Health, Education, Youth and Police services in the area of safeguarding and exploitation of children and to be satisfied that what needed to be done was being done. The panel were supportive of the work of Barnardo's and accepted their view that a multi-agency approach was the best way of tackling CSE.

### **Barnardo's - National Work**

75. During the period of the review Barnardo's launched a smart phone app which was designed to educate young people on the dangers of CSE. The free app called 'Wud U' has been developed for social workers, teachers and other professionals working

with young people to encourage conversation and to raise awareness and was described as an ideal starting point for teaching children how to keep safe.<sup>5</sup> The app is designed to help children identify what a health relationship should look like and provides them with the knowledge and skills to spot a dangerous situation and keep themselves safe.

### **Local Authority responsibility for Children**

76. In order to set the scene, the Local Authority's Children's Department outlined how they worked with children from pre-birth up to the age of twenty one and sometimes beyond. There were also children in the youth justice system living in secure accommodation out of the area for whom the Local Authority retained responsibility.
77. The Local Authority had a designated Child Protection Officer who was a Member of the Middlesbrough Local Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) and who shared any issues in schools with the Board. Every school had designated members of staff for Children Looked After and Child Protection who were trained to understand signs and motivations for sexual exploitation. However, as schools converted to Academies and the Local Authority relinquished control over those schools it was considered vital that there was a process to ensure that Headteachers were kept up to date with safeguarding issues.
78. The panel was informed about the issue of families that moved around the country, especially the difficulties in tracking them and sharing information. If a child was looked after by Middlesbrough, they would stay looked after with Middlesbrough even if they were placed outside of the Authority. If a family was being offered support and moved out of the area, the Authority would ensure a full planning meeting took place before the case was transferred to the new Authority. A 'Running and Missing' Group had been established a few years ago in partnership with Barnardo's to track young people who sometimes moved around the area often staying at friends' houses.

### **Evidence from the Middlesbrough Safeguarding and Children Board (MSCB)**

79. Members were appraised that every Local Authority has a statutory duty to establish a Safeguarding Children Board and the role and function of MSCB was outlined. This was essentially to ensure effective front line safeguarding practices across agencies including Social Services, Health, Police and the Voluntary Sector.
80. The role of the MSCB was set out in primary legislation and supported by the Government guidance 'Working Together'. The MSCB co-ordinated the work of local agencies for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority and ensure their effectiveness. Safeguarding was defined for the purposes of the guidance as: protecting children from maltreatment, preventing the impairment of children's health and/or development and ensuring that children grew up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care. The MSCB had a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Once this core business was secure, the MSCB sought to extend its work to a wider remit to include preventative work to avoid harm being suffered.

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<sup>5</sup> Community Care – April 25 2014



81. The MSCB meets every two months with the key partners specifically to scrutinise child deaths to ascertain whether any improvements could be made to front-line practice. If a child had died and abuse was suspected, a serious case review would be commissioned to establish whether agencies had been working effectively together and whether any lessons could be learned. No serious case reviews had been commissioned during the current Independent Chair's three year tenure. However, to date in the current year, £35,000 had been spent on other reviews.
82. The scope of the MSCB included safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in three broad areas. In summary, these are as follows-
- Activity that affected all children which is aimed to identify and prevent maltreatment, or impairment of health or development, to ensure children were growing up in circumstances consistent with safe and effective care.
  - Proactive work that aimed to target particular groups.
  - Responsive work to protect children who were suffering, or were likely to suffer, significant harm.
83. The panel found that the groups of children who were potentially more vulnerable included children living away from home, those who had run away from home, children missing from school or childcare, young people in the youth justice system or custody, those with disabilities and young people affected by gangs. It was confirmed to the panel that although there were some social groupings in the Middlesbrough area there was no evidence in Middlesbrough of the gang on gang warfare which did exist in other areas of the country.
84. The MSCB worked with children who were abused and neglected within families, including those harmed in the context of domestic violence, as a consequence of the impact of substance misuse, or of parental ill health. Responsive work was also undertaken with children who were abused outside families by adults known to them, by professional carers, strangers and other young people. Young perpetrators of crime, victims of crime and children abused through sexual exploitation were also supported. A great deal of work had also been undertaken to respond to bullying, the majority of which now took place on-line and could have devastating consequences for young people.
85. The panel was informed that in a recent child exploitation trial in Middlesbrough where there was a significant difference to other national cases in that, when disclosures were made by the young people involved, they were listened to, their evidence was believed and action was taken. In this particular case over forty young people were interviewed and five gave evidence in Court.
86. For the young people involved the case in Middlesbrough who had given evidence in Court, it had been an extremely difficult process for them, but for which they had received excellent support to help them to do so, especially from their school. It is thought that many victims do not have the confidence to go to the Police or Social Services for fear of not being believed or taken seriously. It was hoped that this outcome would give other victims the confidence to report crimes against them especially having seen that the victims' evidence in the case in Middlesbrough had led to convictions and prison sentences for the perpetrators. However it was thought

that some young people might feel more comfortable using the option of contacting Childline or the NSPCC as a way of reporting CSE.

## **Awareness Raising**

87. The Tees Child Protection website ([www.teescpp.org.uk](http://www.teescpp.org.uk)) continued to be extensively updated with policies on Forced Marriage, Abuse etc. Between April 2012 and March 2013 approximately 750 staff across Middlesbrough attended training courses and drop in sessions. Drop in session topics included Multi-Agency Public Protection procedures, awareness of procedures when working with sexually active children and young people and the work of Child Death Overview Panels. E learning continued to expand with the introduction of courses in child protection, hidden harm and safeguarding children with disabilities.
88. The MSCB had run a Silent Victims campaign but unfortunately it had not received as much publicity as had been hoped for. The intention of the appeal was for victims to come forward and at the very least get some therapeutic help, even if they did not wish to pursue a prosecution. Cleveland Police, with the assistance of Barnardo's had undertaken a significant piece of work creating an intelligence profile to identify victims and the extent of the issues in order to help identify suspected perpetrators.

## **MSCB Priorities**

89. The business plan for the MSCB contained a number of priorities around CSE to ensure that the Board understands CSE and its impact. On-going work is listed in the plan as reviewing and revising procedural guidance and joint working protocols. Outstanding areas of work include setting clearly defined targets for the VEMT and developing demonstrable impact/outcome measures and ensuring the VEMT strategy demonstrates clear links to relevant national/regional/Tees-wide multi agency objectives.

## **The VEMT**

90. The panel learnt that within the Local Safeguarding Children Board, there was a multi-agency group, the Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked Group (VEMT), which was an amalgamation of statutory and voluntary agencies who were involved with vulnerable children and specifically, young people either at risk or who had been a victim of sexual exploitation. The VEMT included representative from the Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS), Youth Offending Service, Police, MSCB, Community Enforcement Service, the Department for Work and Pensions and the UK Border Agency when appropriate. The safeguarding lead for Middlesbrough Schools was also involved and was able to use the database information to check if there had been any previous interventions with families.
91. The VEMT met every six weeks and would discuss every young person that had been identified as possibly being at risk. The VEMT would decide on the action which should be taken and which organisation the most appropriate organisation. The group could also signpost young people to other organisations which could help them. Unfortunately the group that dealt with perpetrators had not met as regularly due to changes in police personnel, however the group had now been re-invigorated and intelligence was being shared on who perpetrators were and their different modes of operation.

92. There was another group that also met regularly to help identify victims, share intelligence, identify known associates and areas where they met in order to help build a profile of young people who could be potential victims. There were currently fifty to sixty young people identified by this group. A plan of safety had been put in place around each of these young people, including monitoring and referral to the safeguarding team.
93. The objectives of the VEMT, as outlined in their Multi agency Strategy 2013-16 are as follows
- To develop a strategy to operate across Tees designed to safeguard Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing or Trafficked children and/or young people.
  - To develop an action plan for dissemination to the four locally based VEMT groups for operational delivery that will address the following:
    - To identify, investigate, prosecute and disrupt perpetrators.
    - To identify victims and others perceived to be 'at risk.
    - To provide appropriate support to victims and families.
    - To raise awareness in both the public and professional conscience.
    - To co-ordinate interventions that are designed to reduce risk.
    - To develop demonstrable impact/outcome measures.
94. At the time of the panel's meeting there were currently forty two vulnerable young people being monitored by the VEMT, 5 of which were almost eighteen years old. During the past year, the numbers had been as high as sixty-eight.
95. Members of the VEMT recognised the need to share intelligence between agencies, although this does not happen as yet.
96. The panel reassured to hear that in Middlesbrough the VEMT group had a strategy which included the development of an Action Plan, the panel were keen to see how the action plan develops, how it would be monitored and how effective the strategy will be.

## **Referrals**

97. Barnardo's had offered a robust training programme for a number of years, which had highlighted the issue of exploitation with professionals and others working with young people and families. As such, referrals would come from the Police, Youth Workers, Social Workers and even training centres. The referrals would then be discussed at the VEMT and its risk would be assessed as high, medium or low and actions would then be put in place to ensure that the child/young person would be safeguarded. Barnardo's also worked closely with children and young people in

residential care who were particularly vulnerable. It was known that Looked After Children in foster placements and residential care homes had been targeted by perpetrators, however foster carers and care home staff received training to enable them to be vigilant and understand how to give evidence to the Police if they had any concerns.

## **Information Sharing**

98. The Chair of the MSCB also sat on the strategic VEMT which included Stockton, Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland and information would be shared across the Tees Valley.
99. The panel were of the view that the effective sharing of data between agencies was a key part of preventing CSE. Whilst appreciating each organisation may hold information in different forms, and that there can often be concerns about Data Protection, Members thought it was in the public interest for organisations to consider how they can share information about CSE more effectively.

## **Training**

100. It was highlighted to the panel that training people to respond appropriately with regard to sharing intelligence was an area that could be improved amongst the wider community, including private sector areas such as hotels, fast food outlets, taxi companies. For example, a hotelier may be aware of young people staying at their hotel and it would be useful if they had been made aware of the signs of sexual exploitation so if they have any suspicions that they know that their information would be taken seriously and that they should report those suspicions to the Police. The panel heard that the next area of focus for the VEMT would be to provide information to guest houses, hotels and taxi firms and a structured programme of publicity and awareness areas in these areas was planned.
101. The Safeguarding training group met twice monthly to discuss emerging themes and changes to legislation and it constantly reviewed and evaluated the training on offer. The Authority was to carry out a mapping exercise to establish all the measures and action plans that were in place in terms of addressing the issue of CSE in Middlesbrough.
102. A recent exercise had been carried out to map exactly who was attending training offered by the Authority to enable certain disciplines to be targeted. It has been identified that schools staff did not attend training regularly, possibly because the training was held during the day. It was stated that if the training offer was not suitable, it would be altered accordingly.

## **Evidence from the Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS)**

### **Operation Stay Safe**

103. The panel made enquiries regarding the operation and involvement of the Youth Support Service in safeguarding and preventing CSE. The panel were informed that Operation Stay Safe was a multi-agency approach, funded from the Youth Crime Action Plan, to protect vulnerable children in Middlesbrough. Approximately twenty nights per year a team of two Police Officers, a Social Worker, an Integrated Youth

Support Service (IYSS) Worker and a Worker from Barnardo's would travel around Middlesbrough in a van looking for children and young people who were walking around the streets at night. The team operated from 10.00 pm until 4.00 am and would stop every young person and ask them what they were doing and where they were going. If the young person was in possession of alcohol and underage, the alcohol would be removed and the young person taken home.

104. The panel thought it was a valuable service which should take place more regularly. Although it was acknowledged by the panel that it appeared that Operation Stay Safe was an effective function there was a wide range of resource, staffing or financial pressures which are preventing the programme being extended.
105. Details of all the young people who were stopped and checked were logged. If a young person had been stopped before, further action might be taken. An example was given of a young girl aged 12 who had been stopped on more than one occasion and taken home. The girl was with two others of a similar age and three 18 year old males. Support, advice and a programme about family awareness of sexual exploitation was provided to the young person and to her parents. Again it was highlighted that young people were often not aware that the people they were involved with could potentially lead to them being exploited. No further action was taken in relation to the other two girls as when they were returned home and the Workers spoke to their parents, it was clear that they had lied about their whereabouts. For those families there was no further action because it was evident that the family support network was there.
106. Any young person picked up who was in a vulnerable position would have an assessment called a CAF (Common Assessment Form) completed. The CAF would remain on file until that young person was considered to be out of vulnerability. The SECOS project, provided by Barnardo's, focussed on support for sexual exploitation and the IYSS focussed on other issues. Counselling could also be provided. Barnardo's also worked with the perpetrators of sexual exploitation and provided a 12 week intensive programme. Perpetrators did not always see the implications of being with younger children.

### **Cultural Differences**

107. It was also highlighted that people from other countries and cultures did not always recognise the dangers for young people wandering the streets at night. An example was given where four Romanian children aged between six and fourteen were found at 3.25 am. When returned home their mother was found at a party at a nearby house. (This case was referred to Social Services as a child protection issue).

### **Promoting Child Safety**

108. The IYSS was currently working in Prince Bishop, Ashdale and Acklam Grange Schools to promote child safety. The programme had been well received and it was hoped to extend it to other schools. A group of sexually exploited girls was in the process of making a film about their experiences which would be shown in schools and youth centres. This type of peer mentoring had a very powerful message because personal experiences and understanding could be shared with other young people and young people were able to relate to their peers. The IYSS also provided an outreach service three nights a week.

109. The IYSS offered a universal provision and tried to track all young people until they reached the age of twenty. Some received intensive interventions whilst others might only receive a phone call. It was acknowledged however that it was difficult to track all young people, particularly when they left education or changed address. The approach was targeted and so those who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) would receive more attention. It was emphasised to the panel that the vast majority of young people living and working in Middlesbrough were well integrated into society and in full time education up to University or in employment or uniformed organisations.
110. The panel also considered the early intervention work the IYSS undertook. The fact that the service is proactively involved with young people ensures that they can get involved in the early stages of what could potentially be CSE. This early approach was described as low cost and one which achieves good results. Any changes to these sort of preventative measures need to be considered carefully in the light of austerity measures, ensuring prevention, rather than cure, is the key.
111. The panel were concerned that the Council needed to continue to be proactive rather than reactive to this issue. However, the panel was informed that the IYSS was currently under review and would shortly merge with Surestart and would in future cover the age range from birth to nineteen. The implications of this on the IYSS's proactive role were not known at this stage.

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE 3 - TO IDENTIFY ANY AREAS WHERE THE COUNCIL OR OTHER AGENCIES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO TACKLING THE EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN**

#### **Effect of austerity measures**

112. The panel discussed the effect of the current austerity measures on this topic. The panel heard that every agency was being required to do more for less and as a consequence weaknesses might occur. The key for the future is that agencies need to ensure that the safeguarding agenda was a top priority for everyone. The Chair of the MSCB stated that he was satisfied that from the Middlesbrough Council and associated agencies' point of view that it was high on people's agenda and that there had not been a dilution of services. As the Chair of the MSCB if there were any weaknesses that became apparent, he would challenge them.
113. Concern was raised in relation to the current austerity measures and organisational change and how this might affect the potential options for frontline staff having regular access into people's homes. The Independent Chair confirmed that from the Council perspective, he was satisfied that child protection was a top priority. However it was vital that multi-agency working continued to develop and that models of good practice were shared.
114. A further effect of budget cuts could be that some agencies would only be able to meet their statutory responsibilities and no more. It might no longer be possible to carry out for example, preventative work, due to lack of resources.
115. A concern was raised in relation to the Council buildings that were being transferred to private operators and provision of safeguarding advice and support to volunteers

who took over the running of community centres and youth clubs. It was confirmed that the training offered by MSCB was open to anyone in Middlesbrough who worked with children.

116. Concern was also raised about the changes being made to the Missing Persons Officer post. Five years ago the officer took up the role of Missing Person Police Investigator, this post was due to cease in its current form from April and become more of a co-ordination and problem solving role, rather than an investigatory one. Involvement with the Local Authority Residential Care Homes would continue as would involvement in all of the partnership agencies. Barnardo's highlighted how important the links were to the officer in this post. The panel were concerned that the changes would result in a dilution of service however the Chair of the MSCB confirmed that if he did see any dilution of funding in Middlesbrough or any weakening in the processes he would challenge it.

### **The Role of Schools in Combatting Child Sexual Exploitation**

117. The House of Commons Select Committee report<sup>6</sup> highlighted that teachers are more likely to see victims on a regular basis than almost any other professional. They will notice recurrent or prolonged absences and significant changes in behaviour. They are therefore key in identifying children at risk at an early stage and, by raising concerns at an early stage, being able to potentially stop the grooming process before CSE has begun.

### **Preventative Work**

118. The panel learnt of the preventative work in schools which was provided by Barnardo's. Information had been provided in school assemblies and training had been provided in relation to grooming, examples of what a safe relationship was and generally encouraging young people to keep safe and protect themselves. Barnardo's also work to raise awareness of exploitation issues with parents.
119. Barnardo's informed the panel that they had undertaken an awareness raising programme in schools, entitled Chelsea's Choice. However funding for this work had ceased in December. Although the sessions had been well received there was no more funding available for general education work and they were only able to do more targeted training. The LSCB had undertaken a cyber-safety event and had been encouraged by the children's awareness; the training had taught children to think about their own safety when using the internet.
120. The panel were informed that schools may need to pool money to ensure preventative awareness and training sessions could be maintained, showing a commitment by the education sector to child protection.

### **Evidence from Discussions with Secondary Schools**

121. The panel thought that it was important to speak to schools to get their views on the topic. All of the secondary schools were invited to attend and the panel spoke to the Assistant Head Teacher from Acklam Grange School.

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<sup>6</sup> Home Affairs Committee – Child Sexual Exploitation and the response to localised grooming – June 2013

122. The panel wanted to gain more information about what is being done in schools to raise awareness of the issue of CSE, how staff were trained to recognise it and what more support do schools need to help them address this issue.

### **Advice and Support for Pupils**

123. The panel learnt that, in Acklam School, information, advice and training was offered to pupils from year 6 (age 11) right through to year 11 (aged 16) and is offered throughout the year to keep giving students the message. Training is tailored to the age of the pupil and can be done in smaller groups, individually or with a year group. Training has been provided by Barnardo's, the NSPCC and the Assistant Head Teacher had attended national training. Issues are also discussed in pupils' PSYCHE classes (Personal Skills for You In Careers and Health Education)

124. The panel learnt that, in the school's experience, CSE is extremely prevalent in Middlesbrough but schools were not 'burying their heads in the sand' and were developing ways to address CSE. The training for staff at Acklam Grange was described as 'robust', teachers were trained to a high level and the school was confident that the staff are aware of the signs and that their approach, which has been developed over 12 years, is the right approach.

125. The school is part of a bid for Big Lottery Funding for the 'Head Start' programme where it was hoped more resources would be forthcoming from this project to enable the school to employ 2 workers (non-teaching) to provide full time support to the school and some of their role would be to deal with CSE.

126. The mentioned previously, the school has highlighted that CSE was a 'growth industry' and that perpetrators are very clever in choosing the young people that they 'groom'. There are tried and tested patterns which perpetrators use to target and gain access to young people and the school has provided pupils with video information on how this can happen and how to recognise the signs.

127. Acklam Grange is a very multi-cultural school with 32% of its school population coming from a BME background. Whilst beneficial in many ways this diverse population can have their own community views and norms regarding sexual behaviour. For example in some of the Eastern European countries it is not unacceptable for young people to have sex from 12/13 years old. The school is working very hard at building links with these communities and are guided by advice from community leaders across a range of communities. The schools' 'co-co' group, which works across a range of cultures to improve community cohesion and raise awareness of issues.

128. The school highlighted that they had personal experience of working with young girls who had been victims of exploitation. They had found the multi-agency working between the police, the council and social workers could not be faulted and that this exemplary model ended in a very positive development for the victims. The model of approach that was used had been highlighted as good practice.

129. Every school has a designated officer responsible for safeguarding and who would be the contact for CSE issues. Acklam Grange's Inclusion and Progression system, which works to identify and provide mechanisms for early intervention has been given a 'good' rating with elements of outstanding from OFSTED for the pastoral work that has taken place at the school.



130. Acklam Grange also has a counsellor attached to the school, originally this was 1 day a week rising to 2 days, it was hoped that this would be made up to a full time post if the Big Lottery bid was successful. It was not thought that every secondary school in Middlesbrough had a counsellor.
131. A peer mentoring programme was also mentioned, the programme had introduced anti bullying ambassadors – which are pupils who can act as the ‘eyes and ears’ of the school and prevent bullying.
132. The panel wanted to know if parents were made aware of the issues of CSE. It was explained to the panel that there was a fine line in what information was shared with parents. Parents whose children may be at risk or may be victims are of course informed, but the school does not wish to promote a problem that doesn’t need promoting. The preferred option is working with the community, with community leaders from every culture including the Catholic Church, Church of England and the BME community to use their discretion to raise awareness.
133. The panel were keen to see the model developed by Acklam Grange, and which was developed through their first hand experiences of dealing with CSE, being used as a model of good practice. The panel agreed that there should be a consistent approach by schools in the prevention of CSE across in Middlesbrough. Middlesbrough children and Middlesbrough children and that they need the same opportunities afforded to them whatever school they go to.
134. It was noted that the schools do share information and examples of good practice between them where possible. However since the reduction in local authority staff the number of some of those regular meetings had reduced.
135. The panel agreed that a crucial factor in schools provision of services to deal with CSE must be support for the staff involved. The panel learnt that in social care, social workers have regular ‘supervision’ with senior members of staff, where they can offload any concerns, seek direction and get support from senior staff. There is no such formal support for school staff. There was a consensus that there should be an official recognised system of supervision of staff, to help them deal with what can be very distressing evidence and information.
136. The panel had some concerns that as schools transfer to academies that links with local authorities would not be as strong. Members wondered how the authority and indeed elected members, who may not now have representation on academy governing bodies, could ensure that safeguarding issues were high on academies’ agendas.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

137. Based on evidence given throughout the investigation the Panel concluded:
  - a) That impact of sexual exploitation cannot be underestimated. It can have serious long term impacts on every aspect of a child’s life, their health and their education and indeed their future. It can devastate lives and lead to family breakdown. As the panel heard ‘to get this wrong is too much of a risk’. Councillors agreed that they must ensure that the safeguarding agenda is

promoted. In order for the good work to continue the Council must ensure that it is appropriately resourced.

- b) That the message the panel sends out is one of – child sexual exploitation will not be tolerated in our area. Work will carry on seeking out, investigating and stopping perpetrators of this horrible crime.
- c) What concerned the panel in its early stages was that this alarming problem was on the increase nationally and that trend was reflected in Middlesbrough. Consequently, the panel sought to meet with representatives from a range of organisations and services who were presently endeavouring to deal with this problem. What became evident from the outset was that there was no dispute that this is a growing problem and that various organisations were indeed applying their skills and time to address it. Information such as how children are being groomed and the seriousness of the problem were disturbing yet on a positive side the panel found that the agencies demonstrated commitment and indeed were having an impact.
- d) What was not clear was the exact scale of the problem and therefore as a result of that it is difficult to assess if the work to reduce the problem is having an impact. Is the application of resources simply holding the problem at a static position, slowing its development or reducing the problem? This can only be judged if detailed figures are kept and information is shared. Success in combating the issues also has to be taken in the context of ‘the more you look, the more you fund’ so successful measures to raise awareness might make numbers rise.
- e) Information and statistics on number of people affected by CSE and the numbers of perpetrators is key. Data collection and information sharing must be improved. Where nervousness about data protection exists, this must be overcome and organisations must have a duty to share information where they suspect CSE is occurring.
- f) The importance of the whole community looking out for evidence of CSE cannot be underestimated and this must begin with Councillors as the ‘eyes and ears’ of the town. The role of other front line council workers is also paramount, in that they should be made aware of the signs of CSE and how to report it so that if they do suspect suspicious behaviour it can be acted on.
- g) The panel found that if there was any reference made to when a child is found to be groomed in a taxi, then the taxi driver’s licence is suspended by the Council’s licensing department. However, due to different legislation this would not prevent the taxi driver from then applying for a PSV licence and legitimately driving a mini bus (over 9 seated vehicle) which is licenced under the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (formally VOSA) the application for a PSV licence does not currently require drivers to undergo a DBS check, effectively the driver could continue their contact with children. The panel considered that this legislation and control should be revised and representation made to Government regarding this.
- h) The panel found that the van which travelled the streets between 10.00pm and 4.00am and returned young children found ‘roaming’ the streets to their home,

was indeed a positive service and potentially saving young children from harm. However, upon enquiry the panel found that the van was only used 20 days per year. In recognition of the seriousness of this problem and the potential benefit the van can have to safeguarding children the panel considered that effort should be made to increase its usage.

- i) The panel were pleased to hear that every secondary school had a designated member of staff who was trained to understand the signs of, and the motivation for, CSE. Schools are key to preventing CSE because they see children on a daily basis. However Schools and Teachers must continue to be equipped to deal with the issue, whether that is through training, information awareness and preventative work with pupils.
- j) That Acklam Grange should be commended for their work in tackling CSE and that model they have developed around preventing and dealing with this issue should be regarded as a model of good practice.
- k) The panel were concerned to hear that the problem is a growing one in schools and that more resources are needed to tackle the issue. Members considered that assisting schools to fund non-teaching posts to help tackle safeguarding and CSE issues should be a priority.
- l) The panel were concerned about the lack of supervision for school staff who have had to deal with distressing cases of CSE. This is also highlighted by the Office of the Children's Commissioner as a national issue and one which should be dealt with by offering all staff dealing with CSE regular supervision and training (paragraph 44, vi)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

138. That the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive: (Please note - The paragraph pertaining to the evidence for the recommendations is noted in bold).

- a) That the MSCB and the Wellbeing, Care and Learning departments undertake a short sharp review of their operational and strategic plans against the 7 principles of the See Me Hear Me framework contained within the Office of the Children's Commissioner Document- 'If only someone had listened' and any other appropriate national guidance to ensure that and that officers are confident that their policies and procedures are robust. The MSCB and the Wellbeing, Care and Learning department should report back to the panel in 6 months on this matter. **(para 40)**
- b) That the Council consider adding information to the JSNA about the prevalence of CSE and determine appropriate commissioning decisions and priorities. **(para 45)**
- c) That the Council makes representation to the Government to ask them to alter the process for applications made to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency – DVSA (formally Vehicle and Operator Services Agency - VOSA) for a Public Service Vehicle (PSV) licence to operate a public hire vehicle of 9 seats or more. The Council would suggest that the DVSA process is aligned to the Council's licence application process (for private hire licences for vehicles of less than 8

seats) which ensures that all drivers have undertaken a DBS check and that any drivers involved with the exploitation of children would have their licence suspended. **(para 57)**

- d) That the Licensing Team and the Council's safeguarding team review their lines of communication to ensure that there is a robust method of sharing information between the teams and ensure that the teams are confident that their process of information sharing is fit for purpose. In particular when details are received by the licencing team that these are shared with the VEMT – Perpetrators group **(para 61)**
- e) That a 6 monthly update is provided to the panel from the Executive Member for Children's Services and the Deputy Director - Safeguarding on how the problem is being addressed and if the objectives of the VEMT are being implemented and an update on progress against targets with regard to CSE. **(para 96)**
- f) The panel were extremely supportive of the work of the VEMT. The panel would like to see that, through the Council's representative on the VEMT group,
  - i. That the VEMT explore methods of improving information sharing, especially between the LSCB and the health sector. **(para 99)**
  - ii. The VEMT's work to engage with local businesses to raise the awareness of CSE is given a high priority. **(para 100)**
- g) Following the mapping exercise on CSE training that the Council is undertaking the Wellbeing, Care and Learning Department should ensure **(para 102)**
  - i. That all foster carers and residential care home staff have received up to date training on spotting the signs of sexual exploitation and know who to contact if they have suspicions or an incident to report.
  - ii. That an e-learning training course on CSE awareness should be offered to all Councillors and council staff, especially front line workers. Details should be kept of who has received the training and when any refresher training needs to be offered.
  - iii. That a well-publicised dedicated contact officer is named so that that people can contact should they suspect that CSE is taking place. **(para 44 (i))**
- h) That the agencies involved in Operation Stay Safe, which had been funded by the Youth Crime Action Plan, be asked to consider if it is possible to increase the number of nights they undertake the operation which is currently 20 nights per year. **Para 104)**
- i) Whilst recognising that a number of Middlesbrough's secondary schools are now independently run academies, the panel want the Children, Families and Learning Department to consider:
  - i. How schools can be assisted to employ non-teaching staff who can maintain the preventative work around safeguarding and CSE and have the capacity to deal with any CSE issues where they may occur. Schools may wish explore ways to pool budgets to ensure that they have sufficient funding for training and can share costs to maximise resources. **(Para 137 (i))**

- ii. Finding a small amount of funding to provide trained counsellors for schools (again this could be completed with pooled budgets and schools sharing the resource. **(para 130)**)
- iii. Helping and encouraging schools to introduce mechanism for an officially recognised system of supervision for teaching staff involved in dealing with CSE. **(Paras 40 (vi) and 135)**
- iv. Entering into a dialogue with schools and other agencies which involve working with young people in order to share the best practice and experiences in Acklam School across the town. **(para 134)**
- v. Ensuring all schools are regularly reminded of the warning signs of child sexual exploitation

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

139. The Panel is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. Without their evidence, the production of this report would not have been possible. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:

- Sam Addison – Service Manager, Intervention - Middlesbrough Council
- Mark Braithwaite – Independent Chair of Middlesbrough Safeguarding Children Board
- Martin Burnett – Assistant Headteacher, Acklam Grange School
- Elaine Carter – Integrated Youth Support Services
- PC Dave Greaves, Cleveland Police
- Tim Hodgkinson – Licensing Department, Middlesbrough Council
- Neil Pocklington – Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Children’s Care, Middlesbrough Council
- Mary Robinson – Barnardo’s
- Wendy Shepherd, Barnardo’s – SECOS Project
- Andy Shippey – Community Safety, Middlesbrough Council
- Bernie Taylor – Chair of the Licensing Committee
- Gary Watson – MSCB Business Manager, Middlesbrough Council

**COUNCILLOR FRANCES MCINTYRE  
CHAIR OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL**

Date – June 2014

Contact: Elise Pout, Scrutiny Support Officer,  
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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:

- (a) ‘Puppet on a String’ – The urgent need to cut children free from sexual exploitation – Barnardos 2011

- (b) Out of Mind, Out of Sight – breaking down the barriers to understanding child sexual exploitation, CEOP, June 2011
- (c) House of Commons Home Affairs Committee – Child Sexual Exploitation and the response to Localised Grooming June 2013
- (d) 'If Only Someone Had Listened' Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual exploitation in Gangs and Groups – November 2013
- (e) Local Government Association – Child Sexual Exploitation – Myth vs Reality
- (f) Minutes of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel

## **Appendix 1 – Glossary**

CEOP – Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre

CSE – Child Sexual Exploitation

DBS – Disclosure and Baring Service (Replaces CRB – Criminal Records Bureau check)

DPS - Designated Premises Supervisor

DVSA – Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (formally VOSA)

IYSS – Integrated Youth Support Services

JSNA – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

LADO – Local Authority Designated Officer

LSCB – Local Safeguarding Children Board

MSCB – Middlesbrough Safeguarding Children Board

OCC – Office of the Children’s Commissioner

SECOS – Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Streets

VEMT Group – Vulnerable Exploited Missing and Trafficked

VOSA – Vehicle and Operator Services Agency

## **Appendix 2 - Further Information - Advice and Support**

<b>Childline</b> If you are a child or young person affected by abuse or exploitation you can call Childline for advice and support 24 hours a day on 0800 1111
<b>NSPCC</b> If you are an adult who needs support or information, or are concerned about a child or young person, call the NSPCC helpline on 0800 800 5000
<b>CEOP – Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre</b> Link for support to parents to help them be involved in their child's online life <a href="https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Secondary/">https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Secondary/</a>
<b>Tees Local Child Safeguarding Board's Procedures</b> Advice on safeguarding issues. <a href="http://www.teescpp.org.uk/">http://www.teescpp.org.uk/</a>

## **NHS Choices – Background Information**

Each year in England thousands of children and young people are raped or sexually abused. This includes children who have been abducted and trafficked, or beaten, threatened or bribed into having sex.

Media coverage of police investigations into the crimes of Jimmy Savile and other prominent figures have brought child sexual abuse and exploitation to public attention.

But while police tackle the problem, child sexual exploitation continues to happen every day. It's important to understand what child sexual exploitation is and to be aware of warning signs that may indicate that a child you know is being exploited.

### **What is child sexual exploitation?**

#### **The age of consent**

The age of consent (the age at which it is legal to have sex) is 16 for everyone in the UK. Under the age of 16 any sort of sexual touching is illegal.

It is illegal to take, show or distribute indecent photographs of children or to pay or arrange for sexual services from children.

It is also against the law if someone in a position of trust (such as a teacher) has sex with a person under 18 that they have responsibility for.

Child sexual exploitation is when people use the power they have over young people to sexually abuse them. Their power may result from a difference in age, gender, intellect, strength, money or other resources.



People often think of child sexual exploitation in terms of serious organised crime, but it also covers abuse within relationships and may involve informal exchanges of sex for something a child wants or needs, such as accommodation, gifts, cigarettes or attention. Some children are 'groomed' through 'boyfriends' who then force the child or young person into having sex with friends or associates.

Sexual abuse covers penetrative sexual acts, sexual touching, masturbation and misuse of sexual images, for example on the internet or by mobile phone.

Part of the challenge of tackling child sexual exploitation is that the children and young people involved may not understand that non-consensual sex (sex they haven't agreed to) or forced sex – including oral sex – is rape.

### **Which children are affected?**

Any child or young person can be a victim of sexual exploitation, but children are believed to be at greater risk of being sexually exploited if they:

- are homeless
- have feelings of low self-esteem
- have had a recent bereavement or loss
- are in care
- are a young carer

However, there are many more ways that a child may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation, and these are outlined in a report by the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

The signs of child sexual exploitation may be hard to spot, particularly if a child is being threatened. To make sure that children are protected, it's worth being aware of the signs that might suggest a child is being sexually exploited.

### **Signs of grooming and child sexual exploitation**

Signs of child sexual exploitation include the child or young person:

- going missing for periods of time or regularly returning home late
- skipping school or being disruptive in class
- appearing with unexplained gifts or possessions that can't be accounted for
- experiencing health problems that may indicate a sexually transmitted infection
- having mood swings and changes in temperament
- using drugs and alcohol
- displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviors, such as over familiarity with strangers, dressing in a sexualised manner or sending sexualised images by mobile phone ('sexting')
- they may also show signs of unexplained physical harm such as bruising and cigarette marks

## **Preventing abuse**

The NSPCC offers advice on how to protect children. It advises:

- helping children understand their bodies and sex in a way that is appropriate to their age
- developing an open and trusting relationship so that they feel they can talk to you about anything
- explaining the difference between safe secrets (such as a surprise party) and unsafe secrets (things that make them unhappy or uncomfortable)
- teaching children to respect family boundaries such as privacy in sleeping, dressing and bathing
- teaching them self-respect and how to say no
- supervising internet and television use

## **Who is sexually exploiting children?**

People of all backgrounds and ethnicities and of many different ages are involved in sexually exploiting children. Although most are male, women are sometimes involved in befriending victims.

Criminals can be hard to identify because the victims are often only given nicknames rather than the real name of the abuser.

Some children and young people are sexually exploited by criminal gangs specifically set up for child sexual exploitation.

## **What to do if you suspect a child is being sexually exploited**

If you suspect that a child or young person has been or is being sexually exploited, the NSPCC recommends you should not confront the alleged abuser. Confronting them may place the child in greater physical danger and may give the abuser time to confuse or threaten them into silence.

Instead, seek professional advice. Discuss your concerns with your local authority children's services (safeguarding team), the police or an independent organisation such as the NSPCC. They may be able to provide advice on how to prevent further abuse and how to talk to your child to get an understanding of the situation.

If you know for certain that a child has been or is being sexually exploited report this directly to the police.

## **What health professionals can do to help exploited children?**

One of the best ways that health professionals can help a child who is at risk of sexual exploitation is to be aware of what to look out for.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has updated its [guidance on when to suspect child maltreatment](#).

## **How common is child sexual exploitation?**

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) estimates that between August 2010 and October 2011, around 2,409 children were confirmed as having been sexually exploited, with a further 16,500 being identified as at risk. However, the OCC says that evidence suggests that the number is far greater.