

REPORT TO:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE 14 OCTOBER 2014
AGENDA ITEM:	8
SUBJECT:	CHILDREN AT RISK OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
LEAD OFFICER:	PAUL GREENHALGH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING
CABINET MEMBER:	COUNCILLOR ALISA FLEMMING CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	PAUL GREENHALGH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	This item is contained in the sub-committee's agreed work programme.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	To examine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Groups of children at particular risk of sexual exploitation in Croydon (media reports have pointed to trafficked children, missing children and children involved in gangs) and known numbers of victims in the borough - Systems in place to help children report risk/cases of sexual exploitation and give them support - Monitoring and other systems to tackle the risk of sexual exploitation, including police work - The work of the Croydon Safeguarding Board carried out in the last few financial years to address the risk and occurrence of sexual exploitation

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report has been requested following the publication of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, published in August 2014. The inquiry found that children had been subject to widespread sexual exploitation and that there had been widespread failures across the Council and statutory agencies to address the problems.
- 1.2 A key message from the Inquiry is that no local authority area should be complacent about Child Sexual Exploitation and that all Councils should take steps to understand what is going on their area and to address the problem. In her statement to Parliament, the Home Secretary, Theresa May, acknowledged that child sexual exploitation takes place, to a greater or lesser extent, in all areas. It is vital that there is a culture of openness and enquiry in order to

protect children. Child sexual exploitation, by its very nature, is covert. Many of the children who are most at risk have had very difficult early life experiences; they can be hard to engage and such work takes time, determination and resource.

1.3 This report sets out:

- the early lessons from Rotherham and the risk factors which became apparent (section 2);
- the risk factors in the Croydon context (section 3);
- an overview of the measures taken in Croydon to deal with child sexual exploitation (section 4);
- an exploitation about how we reassure ourselves of the effectiveness of our practice, including evidence from a recent audit commissioned by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (section 5);
- a summary of further development work to be undertaken in Croydon (Section 6).

1.4 Croydon is fully committed to responding robustly to incidents of child sexual exploitation, preventing such activity where we can, thoroughly investigating where we become aware of allegations, and securing meaningful support for victims.

2. EARLY LESSONS OF THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN ROTHERHAM

2.1 Following rising concern about the history of Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, the Council commissioned an Independent Inquiry, chaired by Professor Alexis Jay, in September 2013. The Report was published in August 2014. This section sets out some lessons learned and risk factors identified in Rotherham.

2.2 Since the publication of Professor Jay's report, a further investigation has been commissioned by the Minister for Communities and Local Government. This will be chaired by Louise Casey, the Head of the national Troubled Families Programme, and will report in December. This report will also comment on the implications for all Councils.

2.3 The independent inquiry describes a systemic failure across agencies for more than a decade to protect children. Agencies failed to recognise children as survivors of abuse, believing that in some way there was implied consent by victims. There were examples within the authority and partner agencies of attempts to address the problems but these were insufficiently supported at senior levels.

2.4 Many of the case files analysed in the Rotherham Inquiry Report described children who had troubled family backgrounds, with a history of domestic violence, parental addiction, and in some cases serious mental health problems. In just over a third of cases, children affected by sexual exploitation were previously known to services because of child protection and child neglect. There was a history of domestic violence, truancy and school refusal

- and a large proportion of children had been reported missing more than once.
- 2.5 A significant number of the survivors had a history of child neglect and/or sexual abuse when they were younger. Some were insecurely attached (subsequently having a desperate need for attention and affection). Research into child sexual exploitation supports this description¹.
- 2.6 Young people were reluctant to approach statutory services for support and protection due to feelings of shame and guilt. What ameliorated this was the presence of a third sector organisation in Rotherham (*Risky Business*) which was able to attract referrals directly from children and parents affected by sexual exploitation. This agency was identified as the greatest advocate for sexually exploited children in Rotherham. This highlights the importance of work in partnership with larger, regional or national partner organisations, which bring an external perspective to the local area.
- 2.7 Many more females than males have been identified as having been sexually exploited. The latest Barnardo's research has identified an under reporting of boys who are survivors of child sexual exploitation². Some children are exposed to exploitation when they become looked after and in turn some exploited children are used by perpetrators to gain access to Looked After children. The cross boundary placement of children who were being sexually exploited was identified as particularly problematic.
- 2.8 The process of grooming has been well documented in national reports and research. Many of the Rotherham cases showed classic evidence of grooming. Many of the children were already vulnerable when grooming began. Children were courted by a young man whom they believed to be their boyfriend. Over a period of time, the child would be introduced to older men who cultivated them and supplied them with gifts, free alcohol and sometimes drugs. Over the course of the inquiry period methods of grooming evolved as mobile technology developed. Mobile phones, social networking sites and mobile apps have facilitated the identification and targeting of vulnerable children and young people by those engaging in grooming.
- 2.9 Schools were a key resource in the identification of children at risk of sexual exploitation. The report comments on schools raising alerts about children as young as 11 being picked up outside schools by cars and taxis, given presents and mobile phones and taken to meet large numbers of unknown males. Schools are also a key mechanism for communicating with children about risk.
- 2.10 In Rotherham social care services focused social work intervention towards infants and younger children. Limited resources, strategy or psychological attention was placed on older children (11 plus).
- 2.11 Research further indicates that outreach is a key strategy in the identification and intervention in child sexual exploitation. The *Risky Business* project took this role in Rotherham. However, the relationships between the project and the

¹ See Berelowitz, S et al 2013 or NSPCC
http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/resourcesforprofessionals/sexualabuse/sexual_exploitation_research_wda85130.html

² See Hidden in Plain Sight Barnardo's (August 2014).

statutory agencies, particularly Children's Social Care, were often antagonistic: there needs to be a culture in which all partners work together collaboratively and with determination to identify child sexual exploitation where it exists, investigate fully, prosecute perpetrators as appropriate and secure effective support to victims.

- 2.12 In Rotherham there appeared to be a presumption that short-term intervention was an intervention. Child Protection procedures clearly dictate that once child sexual exploitation has been identified then the child and his/her family would require continued support and safeguarding over a considerable period of time to ensure protection.
- 2.13 A significant lesson from Rotherham is that no local authority should be complacent about what is happening to children in their area.
- 2.14 In summary, learning from Rotherham clarifies a number of risk factors in relation to child sexual exploitation. These are summarized below, along with a comment about how each of these is managed in Croydon:
- Statutory services failed to recognize children as survivors of abuse: there appears to have been a belief that victims had given implied consent. In Croydon the Local Safeguarding Children Board and local agencies are clear that child sexual exploitation is abuse, which is expected to be rigorously followed up and investigated through due process.
 - In Rotherham a risk arose from the way in which statutory services developed a particular belief system about their approach to child sexual exploitation. The risk of this is ameliorated through the involvement of external agencies, such as national voluntary sector organisations, institutions of higher education and governmental departments. The involvement of such organisations in Croydon's work on child sexual exploitation is set out in paragraph 4.11 below.
 - The importance of outreach work to help find out situations of child sexual abuse may be taking place was identified in Rotherham: the outreach provision available in Croydon is covered by the comment in relation to the two workers referred to in paragraph 4.8 below.
 - The cross-boundary placement of looked after children was problematic in Rotherham: from a Croydon perspective this issue is addressed in 3.4.1 below.
 - The extent of the involvement of schools in the identification of children who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation: in Croydon, there is an education sub-group of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, to ensure that all relevant local issues are worked on in collaboration with schools (including private schools). We run a termly forum for designated teachers for child protection (again including private schools) which is well attended and which provides a mechanism for ensuring that all schools engage in safeguarding issues.

3 THE CROYDON CONTEXT

- 3.1 We are not aware in Croydon of evidence that the extent of the systematic and organised sexual exploitation of children evidenced in Rotherham is taking

place in Croydon. There is no evidence that reports have been suppressed or ignored.

- 3.2 However, Child Sexual Exploitation takes place in every authority and all agencies share a responsibility to take every step to protect children who may be at risk.
- 3.3 Many of the children who are most at risk are difficult to engage, especially by agencies that they perceive as representing authority. Such work takes time, determination and persistence.
- 3.4 Croydon has disproportionately high levels of vulnerable children, generating higher levels of risk than in many places. Hence Croydon faces **risk factors** related to the following:
 - 3.4.1 One of the lessons from Rotherham is that the cross-boundary placement of looked after children can be particularly problematic. There are high numbers of **children looked after by other local authorities placed within Croydon**. This means other local authorities children services, from across London, are placing vulnerable young people in Croydon. This is largely due to the thriving market for foster carers working for Independent Fostering Agencies: there is a disproportionately high level of such providers based in Croydon due to the historic favourable rent/accommodation market in the borough. A recent draft report for the Association of London Directors of Children's Services estimates that 475 children from other local authorities are placed in Croydon. This issue was recently discussed by Croydon's Local Strategic Partnership's Chief Executive Group: over the past year we have strengthened the communication between Croydon and placing authorities and we are currently working on ways of strengthening this further.
 - 3.4.2 **Children who go missing from home:** A disproportionately high number of children from the group of looked after children placed in Croydon by other authorities are reported missing to the Police. It can be the case these young people go missing and return to their home borough. There is a known relationship to children who are reported missing and those who are at risk of sexual exploitation. Croydon has reported the highest number of missing children in London. The multi-agency Missing Children Panel discusses those children who are assessed as being most at risk (see Para 4.3). This Panel has discussed 35 new referrals in 2014 to date (15.09.14). The processes we follow to work with children who are missing are set out in section 4 below; further reassurance provided in a recent audit is provided in section 5 below.
 - 3.4.3 **Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children:** Croydon has a significantly higher proportion of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children than almost all other authorities, due to the presence of the Home Office immigration functions at Lunar House. There are currently 387 unaccompanied children looked after by Croydon. This is a group

that is at higher risk than average to trafficking.

3.4.4 **Trafficking of children and young people:** The above groups of children are often some of the most vulnerable in our community, having suffered significant abuse and trauma. Intervening in these young peoples' lives can be highly complex and requires significant skill and ability. Research indicates that children who are sexually exploited can also be trafficked. In the 2013-14 financial year, Croydon made 10 referrals of suspected child victims of trafficking through the National Referral Mechanism. The nationalities of the suspected victims included Vietnam (3), Uganda (3), Albania (3), Ethiopia (1), Ghana (1). A case example of the link between sexual exploitation and trafficking is provided in Appendix 1.

3.4.5 **Sexual exploitation related to gangs:** Despite the success of Croydon's anti-gangs work, it is known that there is gang activity that takes place in Croydon and that some of these are involved in illegal drugs. The relationship between child sexual exploitation and illegal drug use and distribution, is clearly evidenced in Rotherham.

3.4.6 **Growing levels of deprivation and transience:** There are considerable demographic changes taking place within the authority. A recent Needs Analysis commissioned by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board has demonstrated the likelihood of rising pressures upon safeguarding services across all agencies. Transient populations are harder to track.

3.5 These factors mean that all agencies need to be highly alert to the possibilities of Child Sexual Exploitation in Croydon. Please see paragraph 4.6 for the current figures on those overseen through our Panel processes.

4 CURRENT WORK ON CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN CROYDON

4.1 In Croydon we have learnt from national research that you cannot separate missing children from children who are sexually exploited as these needs are often conjoined and coterminous. This is reflected in our practical approach, set out below.

4.2 **Croydon Safeguarding Children Board** identified missing children as a priority area for 2013/14. In 2013 the multi-agency **sub group for missing children was widened to include both missing children and those at risk of sexual exploitation**. This group was independently chaired up to July 2014 by the NSPCC and is now chaired by Safer London³. The group ensures that work on child sexual exploitation is co-ordinated so that agencies work together effectively, and that areas that need development are appropriately addressed. The group has recently revised the Croydon procedures for responding to child sexual exploitation, which are summarized below.

³ Safer London are a specialist charity based within Croydon Youth Offending Service that provide one to one support for survivors of sexual exploitation as well as training to the multi-agency children's workforce.

- 4.3 Croydon Children Social Care has established a **Children's Multi-Agency Missing Panel** which meets monthly and reviews the practice, procedure and multi-agency care plan for those children who have gone missing over the previous 4 weeks (including other borough's Looked After children) who are either missing for more than 48 hours or have been going missing repeatedly. (This is in addition to individual missing meetings that are undertaken on all ongoing missing children by their allocated social worker). Information about missing children at the highest levels of risk is escalated to the Executive Director, Chief Executive and Lead Member, so that there is the opportunity for challenge and for assurance to be secured that agencies are working together to do everything appropriate to find the missing child/young person.
- 4.4 Since January 2014 Croydon Police, in partnership with Croydon Children Social Care, established the **Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation Group (MASE)**. The MASE meets once a month and reviews all intelligence, practice, procedure, and multi-agency care plans for all children who are considered to be suffering sexual exploitation. In addition Croydon Children Social Care manages a **Child Sexual Exploitation Meeting**, which meets monthly and reviews all cases of children who may be at risk of sexual exploitation and considers referring to the MASE.
- 4.5 In all cases where there is CSE or it is suspected then the allocated social worker must hold a multi-agency meeting to reduce the risks as directed by statutory guidance in Working Together and the London Child Protection procedures.
- 4.6 From January to September 2014, a total of 67 children have been discussed at either the CSE Meeting or MASE Meeting. Some children will have been discussed at both. 22 children are currently actively reviewed through these processes. 5 of these children are seen as being at the highest level of risk.
- 4.7 The above means that there are three forums a month (on top of the statutory minimum) that allows police, CSC and other partners to identify children at risk of CSE, and to ensure that partners work together to provide a robust response in the interests of the children concerned. The recent independent audit (see section 5 below) identifies that these systems contribute positively to the safeguarding of children.
- 4.8 **Provision within the Youth Offending Service:** within the Youth Offending Services there are two workers whose role it is to seek out and support children and young people who may be subject to sexual exploitation.
- 4.9 Statutory guidance on missing children also dictates that we must provide children, who have **returned from missing, the opportunity to meet with an independent person and discuss the reasons why they have gone missing**.⁴ The CSCB and Croydon Children's Social Care have entered a new partnership with the NSPCC, who have agreed to provide qualified social

⁴ Research indicates that children go missing from home due to bullying, abuse within the home, sexual identity, pregnancy and involvement in gangs.

workers to undertake these return home interviews. These independent NSPCC social workers provide a flexible service to children and young people and will meet them at a time and place that is convenient to the child / young person. These independent NSPCC social workers will be based in the MASH as well as with social workers within Croydon CSC to improve joint working and joint planning. They will also base themselves with Croydon Police Missing Persons Unit again to improve joined up work to improve service to young people. This project is due to start in October 2014. This will enhance our ability to listen to the voice and experience of children who have gone missing, and to take account of the learning from this to further improve future service delivery.

4.10 **Joint work between Croydon Police and Children's Social Care:** Croydon Children Social Care has joined Operation Voliania, which is a Police-led project aimed at collecting and analysing London wide trends in missing children. Croydon CSC and Croydon Police have developed a joint approach to missing and sexual exploited children. For example, the police provide Croydon CSC with daily reports of children missing. In relation to missing and sexually exploited children from other boroughs placed in Croydon we now contact other boroughs jointly and at a senior level, outlining our joint concerns for individual children placed in Croydon. This strategy has meant children have been moved out of Croydon for their own safety. Croydon CSC and Croydon police conduct joint trainings about missing processes and practices to residential care staff and independent foster care provides.

4.11 **Partnership with the voluntary sector** is a crucial component of Croydon's Missing and CSE strategy. Croydon CSCB and CSC have entered into the following partnerships:

- The **NSPCC** is based in Croydon and provides specific therapeutic services to survivors of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.
- **Safer London** is based in Croydon and similarly provide therapeutic services to young people involved in gang activity and CSE.
- The national charity **Missing People** has agreed to partner Croydon and develop new techniques to contact missing children. Missing People will also deliver a conference on the needs of missing children in Croydon in early 2015.
- The **English Coalition for Runaway Children** is a group of Children Charities including the NSPCC, Barnardo's, Safer London, the Children's Society and the Railway Children who are working together to advance the interests of missing and sexual exploited children. Croydon has joined this group (the only statutory partner) in an attempt to ensure Croydon is at the 'cutting edge' of practice as well as identify any further opportunities for partnership working and additional resources.
- Croydon has entered a joint work programme with the **MsUnderstood** Partnership. MsUnderstood is a partnership between the University of Bedfordshire, Imkaan, and the Girls against Gangs project to address young people's experiences of gender inequality⁵. For

⁵6. Imkaan is a UK-based, black feminist organisation dedicated to addressing violence against women and girls.

further details about the partnership, visit www.msunderstood.org.uk. The partnership has been funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Trust for London, and the Samworth Foundation to deliver a three year programme of work on peer-on-peer abuse: teenage relationship violence, peer-on-peer exploitation, and serious youth violence. The local site support programme involves an audit of the current response to peer-on-peer abuse; a bespoke work programme of support, devised from the evidence generated by the audit process; quarterly monitoring updates for the site, an annual report; and engagement of young people about their experiences of, and views about, local service provision and contact with professionals.

- 4.12 Croydon Council has entered into a **pilot project with the Home Office** commencing in summer 2014 to support children and young people who have been identified as trafficked. These children will be allocated **independent advocates**. This project is being evaluated by the University of Bedfordshire.
- 4.13 Croydon has a well-embedded relationship with the **National Referral Mechanism for trafficking**, both in respect of children and adults.
- 4.14 Croydon Safeguarding Children Board is currently developing a **campaign to prevent on-line abuse**. The campaign's objective is to support parents better protect their children from on-line abuse and grooming. This activity is undertaken in partnership with the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP).
- 4.15 The Learning and Development Unit shared by the CSCB and Council is currently designing a **training programme** which will include indicators and intervention in cases of missing and CSE. The development of our training programme is carefully linked to the LSCB's work on quality assurance, to ensure that we can see if training is having an impact, and to make sure that areas that are flagged through the quality assurance process as needing more development are covered in the training programme.
- 4.16 The children's **Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service** is currently being reconfigured to create the possibility of establishing a missing children's coordinator and/or a CSE coordinator. It is intended that these roles will coordinate and manage data, intelligence and track the whereabouts, activities and care plans for all children identified as missing and subject to CSE.

5 HOW WE REASSURE OURSELVES OF THE IMPACT OF OUR PRACTICE

- 5.1 The Local Safeguarding Children Board has a quality assurance sub-group, which is responsible for collecting data from all the relevant agencies and analysing this data so that the partnership can understand the impact of our work and make improvements where necessary. A range of different sources of information is used for this process: these include performance data, so-

called 'Section 11' audits undertaken by each agency into its safeguarding practices, and audits which are commissioned on particular themes. This information is reported into the Executive and Board of the LSCB so that agencies use it to inform their joint work and so that they can hold each other to account.

Summer 2014 audit on vulnerable young people

- 5.2 One of the most useful ways of understanding the quality and impact of our collective practice is through audits. In spring 2014 Croydon's Safeguarding Children's Board commissioned an independent evaluation of the needs of vulnerable young people in the borough, which was carried out during summer 2014. The audit was undertaken by a two independent consultants as part of the Board's Quality Assurance Framework. The auditors submitted an early draft of their report in September 2014.
- 5.3 The brief for the report included questions as to missing children and child sexual exploitation. The terms of reference for this report were:
1. What is the evidence about the number of children who go missing in Croydon?
 2. Is there a connection between children who go missing in Croydon and child sexual exploitation?
 3. What are the needs of children who go missing?
 4. Is there a connection between these needs and young people going missing?
 5. How might children's needs be better addressed so as to reduce the incidence of children going missing?
 6. Are plans for vulnerable young people multi-agency and evidenced based and do they flow from the assessment?
 7. What is the quality of the multi-agency plan; is it reviewed and revised and what outcomes are achieved?
 8. What is the quality of engagement of young people and their families?
- 5.4 The children subject to audit were identified by agencies in Croydon as those considered most vulnerable on a variety of indices. They were not primarily identified on the basis of concerns that they were at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation: some of the cases involved in the audit had this profile.
- 5.5 Children in the study were those who are particularly vulnerable: 52 of the 73 children (71%) in the sample for the audit of missing children are deemed to have reached the significant harm threshold as defined in the Children Act 1989. There was consensus that nine of these children were at very high risk of significant harm. They have multiple problems many of which existed long before they began to go missing or were identified as highly vulnerable. These problems include family breakdown; neglect and/or abuse and other early traumatic experiences; serious behaviour problems; difficulties in attending school and learning; physical health difficulties including sexually transmitted

infections and unplanned pregnancies at a very young age; mental health problems arising from traumatic experiences; substance misuse; offending and sexual exploitation.

- 5.6 73 cases were audited and reviewed. Of these cases the ages of children ranged from 12 to 17. There were 29 boys and 44 girls in the sample. In terms of ethnicity this mirrored the demographics of the Borough in that 40% were White British, 29% Black Caribbean or Black other, 10% Asian, 8% White other 10% mixed ethnicities and 1% African and 1% other.
- 5.7 81 professionals, drawn from across agencies providing services for children and families have been directly involved in the two studies: 50 were involved in the audit and a further 31 in the planning workshops.
- 5.8 *The audit found that there is good communication across agencies, and that professionals demonstrate a clear commitment to improving outcomes for children, work collaboratively across agencies, and show a capacity to analyse and think critically together about children's needs. For example, the report found evidence of good communication between the police and children's social care in relation to missing children. In the judgement of professionals taking part in the audit the needs of 74% of children, in the audit sample which includes seven of the nine children in the study of extremely vulnerable children, have been met either fully or partially by the services they are providing. The audit findings indicated a link between children who go missing and child sexual exploitation, particularly for girls.*
- 5.9 Croydon's Local Safeguarding Children Board has agreed to consider this audit in detail, to help inform further improvement work.

6 AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT IN CROYDON TO COMBAT CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

- 6.1 By its nature Child Sexual exploitation is difficult to identify. In analysing the learning from the independent inquiry in CSE from Rotherham and the other activities already underway in Croydon, we have identified the following areas of development, which will now be considered by the Council and the LSCB.
- 6.2 **The role of Council Members:** Council members can take a key strategic role in working with local communities, businesses and partnerships. This is not a problem that can be solved through child protection agencies alone. Council members should consider further how to exercise this role. The report being undertaken by Louise Casey referred to above will give further assistance in how Council members should exercise this role.
- 6.3 **The role of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board:**
- The Child Sexual Exploitation and missing children sub-group will consider whether any further amendments need to be made to our strategic approach and operational delivery.
 - The CSCB and the sub-group on Quality Assurance will consider how to further strengthen the provision of performance and QA information on

child sexual exploitation to the LSCB.

- The Croydon Safeguarding Children Board will continue to challenge local partners, quality assuring and checking that Child Protection, Missing and CSE procedures are being implemented and are working.
- We will develop our training relating to children who go missing or are subject to child sexual exploitation, including the role played by schools and colleges.
- We need to engage more communities in the protection of children from child sexual exploitation.

At its meeting of 25 September 2014 the LSCB Board considered this report and accepted the above recommendations.

- 6.4 **The role of the Police:** Child Sexual Exploitation is a crime. The Police are the key statutory partner in working with the Council to protect children who are at risk of being exploited and seeking to prosecute those who are responsible. It is vital that we maintain these and continue to develop learning and expertise in protecting vulnerable children.
- 6.5 **The role of Children's Social Care:** Government guidance is clear that CSE should be dealt with as a safeguarding issue. We need to ensure that all child survivors of CSE in Croydon are dealt with through safeguarding procedures. Croydon applies the London Child Protection Procedures. We need to develop and or improve the quality of risk assessments and interventions in cases of CSE. The issue of the extent of looked children being placed in Croydon by other local authorities will be addressed through the Association of Directors of Children's Services.
- 6.6 **Peer reviews:** Directors of Children's Services across London have agreed to work with each other to undertake peer reviews of our work on child sexual exploitation. This will provide an opportunity to learn from other authorities and to be challenged by them. Croydon has indicated that it wishes to be part of this process, which will take place over forthcoming months.
- 6.7 Croydon is fully committed to responding robustly to incidents of child sexual exploitation, preventing such activity where we can, thoroughly investigating where we become aware of allegations, and securing meaningful support for victims.

CONTACT OFFICER: Ian Lewis, Director of Children's Social Care and Family Support

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, the Council commissioned an Independent Inquiry, chaired by Professor Alexis Jay:

http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1407/independent_inquiry_cse_in_rotherham

Appendix 1: Case example of child sexual abuse linked to trafficking

This is a story of 3 sisters who were reunited in July 2013, under very unusual circumstances. Three sisters were raised in an unhappy home in Albania after their father left them in destitute circumstances. The older sister left home 5 years ago with a boyfriend who promised a better life in Italy but he led her into a life of prostitution there. Meanwhile, middle sister was sold into prostitution by step-father 3 years ago. She managed to escape last year with the help of a client who brought her and youngest sister to the UK last year August 2012. The youngest sister is currently in a foster placement and middle sister is currently in NASS accommodation. They always wondered what happened to their eldest sister.

The eldest sister was sold to two Romanian men who sent her on a lorry in April this year. She didn't know where she was going, but found herself in the UK. When the lorry stopped she ran for her life until she found a kind woman who took her to the Police Station in Brixton. The police referred her to the Salvation Army who contacted Hestia project who run a safe house and outreach work across London. The project is subcontracted out by the Salvation Army. A Caseworker and Independent Sexual Violence Advocate provided eldest sister with assistance, advice and support since her arrival.

A Detective Sergeant from Lambeth Metropolitan Police, who was investigating the eldest sister being trafficked to the UK, telephoned the allocated Croydon social worker to confirm whether the middle and younger sister had an older sister. The social worker was able to confirm the information shared by the Detective Sergeant was correct.

The caseworker from Hestia and allocated social worker from Croydon reunited the sisters in a very emotional reunion. The social worker also supported with the reunion and captured some of the reunion on camera. The eldest sister said that "I have been dreaming of this day for 5 years". There wasn't a dry eye in the house! To say that this was the happiest day of their lives would be an understatement!!!

A positive National Referral Mechanism decision was returned by the UK Human Trafficking Centre on this case.