

REPORT TO:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE 25 NOVEMBER 2014
AGENDA ITEM:	7
SUBJECT:	CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING
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 was agreed at the 14 October meeting of this sub-committee
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	To agree recommendations and future work to be carried out by the sub-committee and other council members on safeguarding

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the 14 October 2014 meeting of this sub-committee, members scrutinised the work of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board and the risk of Child Sexual Exploitation in the borough.
- 1.2 At the end of these two agenda items, the sub-committee agreed to add an agenda item to the 25 November sub-committee to consider their conclusions regarding the above two agenda items and reach a consensus on future action and recommendations.
- 1.3 Members are invited to agree what recommendations they wish to make for future improvement and what further work should be carried out by members on safeguarding and child sexual exploitation issues in particular.
- 1.4 The following paragraphs set out the key points of discussions held at the 14 October sub-committee meeting, which may underpin their decisions for further work. These are the current challenges for Croydon, particular groups of children and young people at risk, areas for improvements and options for member involvement in safeguarding.

2. DETAIL

2.1 Key challenges

Key challenges highlighted at the 14 October sub-committee meeting were as follows:

- the rising numbers of safeguarding cases and demands on local resources to carry out safeguarding duties to a satisfactory standard
- the rising level of risk which children and young people in the borough are vulnerable to
- the high staff turnover, which constitutes a challenge throughout the country and ways of recruiting and retaining high quality permanent social services staff, particularly in the area of children's safeguarding
- the need to embed learning from serious case reviews into everyday practice
- the need for quality assurance needed to be strengthened further by identifying gaps in safeguarding across the organisations working in the borough, by developing a framework allowing for a variety of different referral or reporting routes regarding safeguarding issues
- the need to improve partnership work further, and to develop better links to the borough's communities to maximise safeguarding
- the need for the voice of children and young people at risk to be heard and to be taken into account in developing and scrutinising services
- the challenge of ensuring that safeguarding is embedded in all parts of the borough, including small groups such as sports clubs or Saturday schools
- difficulties encountered by members in obtaining information from staff when making enquiries about the progress of safeguarding cases

2.2 Children and young people at risk

At the 14 October meeting, officers highlighted that out of borough placements of looked after children were particularly hard to monitor and in particular, the cohort of 475 looked after children and young people from other boroughs, who were less likely to be closely monitored by their social services staff. Members heard that the Council's social services and the Police were currently working to ascertain how they could work with relevant boroughs concerned to maximise resources for services to these children and young people

Members were advised that the following groups were felt to be at highest risk of child sexual exploitation:

- unaccompanied asylum seeking young people leaving care and thus no longer under the supervision of social services
- looked after children from other authorities (see above)

Officers stated that there was no evidence in Croydon of large-scale organised sexual exploitation of children. In this borough, many cases occur through online contacts and peer on peer violence. There are also cases of trafficked children in the borough. some of whom may be forced to work in brothels.

Officers highlighted the challenges of identifying them and providing them the appropriate support and protection.

2.3 Areas for improvement

In addition to addressing the key challenges outlined in paragraph 2.1, officers highlighted the key improvements needed to take place in order to ensure that the situation in Rotherham could not be replicated in Croydon:

- developing the right culture among local agencies, a particular challenge for the Croydon Children's Safeguarding Board
- ensuring that front line staff and managers are accountable to the Board for their services and actions
- improving and implementing good practice, including outreach work carried out by the voluntary sector and community leaders, such as members

2.4 Member involvement in safeguarding

A number of action points for members were suggested at the meeting.

Members put forward the following solutions to their information needs:

- training to help members gain a better understanding of the issues and legislation involved
- providing members with a user-friendly outline of the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies involved in children's safeguarding
- training to work with local agencies on CSE issues or cases that are reported to them

To monitor safeguarding issues and services, it is suggested that:

- the Council should clarify the role and responsibilities of non-executive councillors in children's safeguarding so that appropriate steps may be taken to meet these responsibilities
- safeguarding reports should come to cabinet more frequently than once a year and recommend a more substantial member response than simply to note its contents
- members should be cognisant of the minutes of corporate parenting panel, Croydon Safeguarding Children Board and other relevant networks
- members should gain an understanding of existing pathways of communications in work on children's safeguarding
- members be given the opportunity to monitor the progress of cases to find out how effectively children and young people at risk have been protected, how pro-actively missing children were dealt with and whether perpetrators had been prosecuted
- members should carry out visits to gain a deeper understanding of safeguarding work and to ascertain the quality of safeguarding work
- while members acknowledge the difficulty and sensitivity of engaging with children and young people at risk, they recognize the need to agree a feasible approach to hear their voices and obtain feedback on their experience of safeguarding services- possibly through intermediaries such as voluntary organisations engaged in children's safeguarding

- A Safeguarding Champion be appointed each year, possibly from the membership of this sub-committee, to take a lead on arrangements to scrutinise the effectiveness of children's safeguarding in the borough.
- **Officers** should receive training on how to engage better with members' reporting of safeguarding or making enquiries about safeguarding cases

It is suggested that the above elements be implemented as part of a coherent framework for monitoring the effectiveness of children's safeguarding in Croydon.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None