

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Decision Report

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	22 June 2015
<b>Title:</b>	Safeguarding Update
<b>Reference:</b>	6607
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

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#### 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Cabinet on safeguarding of children activity within the Council. Members will recall that a year ago, Ofsted carried out an inspection of Hampshire Children's Services' safeguarding practice and associated arrangements for children in care and adoption services under their new, explicitly tougher, Single Inspection Framework. The outcome of that inspection was that the local authority's performance was assessed as being 'good' with 'outstanding' leadership and management and adoption services. At the point of writing, with more than fifty local authorities having been inspected, this remains the best outcome of any inspection carried out under the new framework. One year on from this it is timely to bring to members attention an update on national developments, local performance and activity data and ongoing challenges.

#### 2. National Developments

2.1. Child Sexual Exploitation: Probably the main focus of national safeguarding activity in the last year has been in relation to child sexual exploitation (CSE). There has been much comment about CSE in national and local media. It is important to highlight the definition of child sexual exploitation as set out in statutory guidance:

2.2. "Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 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 relationships 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.”

- 2.3. Even this definition is relatively broad and it is important to remember that child sexual abuse has been a known form of abuse for many years. Equally, up until as recently as 2009 Home Office reports routinely referred to ‘child prostitution’. The term ‘child sexual exploitation’ is an attempt to define a set of abuse behaviours that are in some ways new, drawing on new technologies, gang cultures, elements of organised abuse etc but which also have similarities to behaviours which have been sadly common features of abusive behaviour in the past. Therefore, care needs to be taken in drawing distinctions between sexual exploitation and other forms of child abuse. Equally it would be wrong to seek to establish some form of hierarchy of abuse – all abuse of children is abhorrent.
- 2.4. The media focus on CSE was primarily initiated by the Jay and Casey reports on Rotherham and the Serious Case Review in Oxfordshire which led, in turn, to a government response ‘Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation’  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation--2>.
- 2.5. The key features of the national response are as follows:
  - A new whistleblowing national portal (presumably in addition to the existing Ofsted national whistleblowing line)
  - A national task force to offer expertise for areas which are ‘struggling’
  - An extension of the ‘wilful neglect’ law to children’s social care, education and elected members (but not Members of Parliament)
  - Enhanced status of CSE as a ‘national threat’
  - Additional support to survivors groups (£7m)
- 2.6. The report also contained further more detailed actions which are of interest. In particular the local Safeguarding Board will be required to ‘conduct regular assessment on the effectiveness of local responses to CSE’.
- 2.7. A new system of inspections (already being piloted) will be multi-agency with a clear focus on CSE and there will be greater scrutiny of Safeguarding Boards’ annual reports.
- 2.8. A letter was sent to all local authorities outlining how information can be better shared. This will require further review of our existing information sharing protocol although the letter is broadly positive and enabling for us as a local authority.
- 2.9. The report references four authorities receiving funding for innovation in the area of CSE and Hampshire is one of those authorities (see below).
- 2.10. Further recommendations include limitations on the use of settlement agreements (for staff), revision to the accountabilities statement for elected

members and Directors of Children's Services in statutory guidance, improvements to the police complaints and disciplinary process, new training and communications materials and improving data collection. There are further recommendations contained in the report which can be seen by following the link above.

- 2.11. Hampshire has strong (as assessed by Ofsted) multi-agency arrangements in place to address the issue of children who go missing, are at risk of exploitation and trafficking via an operation working group which regularly meets to exchange information and draw up plans to protect any children at risk of these issues.
- 2.12. Membership includes Hampshire Constabulary, Children's Services, health, voluntary and third sector colleagues and a link to District Council groups. There is an established CSE assessment tool which is embedded in practice, and all children over 10 are screened by via Hantsdirect using a shortened version of the tool.
- 2.13. Lastly, Hampshire County Council has responded to a request from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and undertaken reviews into the historic response by all agencies to CSE. The Police, Children's Services and Health services across Hampshire have all undertaken their own internal reviews and audits and findings will be reported in due course. So far, none of that work is identifying either a systemic problem or a failure to respond to such a problem with regard to the local authority's responses. However, we must always retain an open mind and be prepared to 'think the unthinkable'. It cannot be emphasised enough that these findings are provisional, based on the evidence that we have available and based on a thorough search by the police based on their analytic tools.
- 2.14. Working Together 2013 update: In March 2015 , the Government published a limited revision of 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013' which is the main statutory guidance for safeguarding children. The main changes are relatively technical and included the routing of allegations against those who work with children, the role of the local Safeguarding Children Board in assessing partners' responses to CSE and a further revision to the criteria for Serious Case Reviews
- 2.15. The annual Hampshire Safeguarding Children Board report is due for publication in July 2015 and this will include an overview of all agencies' safeguarding activity during the past year. The report will also make reference to the participation of independent schools in the annual self-assessment of safeguarding practice as well as their participation in a new annual conference for independent schools sponsored by the Board. This represents a positive development in our engagement with the sector.
- 2.16. Innovation Programme: Hampshire Children's Services has been successful in a bid to the Department for Education's Innovation Fund. The purpose of the innovation programme is to transform children's social care in Hampshire in order to safely reduce the demand for high cost, complex placements for children in care through creating the conditions for more interventionist and change-oriented social work practice with families as well as ensuring that earlier help is available for families in local areas. As such

the programme builds upon the proven track record of Hampshire County Council in delivering high quality services for vulnerable children as well as building upon the work of our Supporting Troubled Families programme and the Early Help Hubs. The innovation programme in Hampshire has seven, inter-related elements:

- Family Intervention Teams – specialist domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health practitioners seconded to children in need teams to provide a service for adults in the family but which has a clear focus on the outcomes for the child.
- The creation of a major network of volunteers to work with children and families in their communities and support the above teams.
- Social work co-ordinators – highly skilled administrators who can release social worker's time to enable them to deliver more effective interventions.
- Rethinking services for children on the edge of care – including the use of respite care and activity centres.
- A new multi-agency service to identify, protect and reach out to victims of child sexual exploitation.
- Piloting social work surgeries in two areas to work with partners at the earliest stage to offer advice and guidance on social work thresholds and early help.
- Creating a partnership for excellence to provide the necessary workforce training and support for social workers and other professionals which is a precondition for system improvement.

2.17. The programme will be independently evaluated and forms part of our Transformation to 2017 programme.

### 3. Performance and Activity levels

3.1. Workloads, as evidenced in contacts, referrals and caseloads, continue to rise although not at the same pace as hitherto. The table below sets this out along with source of referrals received via Hantsdirect.

3.2.

<b>Contacts and Referrals</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>Feb 2015</b>
<b>No. of open social work cases</b>	6502	8020	8537
<b>Number of initial contacts</b>	61174	68789	71434
<b>Number of referrals</b>	10297	16217	16898
<b>Referral Source : Individual</b>	<i>N/A</i>	11.2%	11.1%
<b>Education</b>	<i>N/A</i>	18.7%	21.9%
<b>Health Services</b>	<i>N/A</i>	13.7%	14.2%

<b>Housing</b>	<i>N/A</i>	0.0%	1.7%
<b>Local Authority Services</b>	<i>N/A</i>	11.2%	8.4%
<b>Police</b>	<i>N/A</i>	29.1%	28.2%
<b>Other legal agency</b>	<i>N/A</i>	3.3%	3.0%
<b>Other</b>	<i>N/A</i>	7.4%	7.9%
<b>Anonymous</b>	<i>N/A</i>	2.2%	2.6%
<b>Unknown</b>	<i>N/A</i>	1.8%	1.1%
<b>Not Recorded</b>	<i>N/A</i>	1.4%	0.0%

3.3. With regards to assessments we have gone through a period where more assessments have been classified as child abuse investigations (s47) but a lower percentage of those have progressed to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC).

3.4.

<b>Section 47 and Assessments</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>Feb 2015</b>
<b>% of S47 going to ICPC - Jan to Dec 2014 latest figures</b>	53.3%	53.5%	44.5%
<b>Initial Assessments Timeliness</b>	64.9%	68.1%	<i>N/A</i>
<b>Core Assessments Timeliness</b>	66.8%	66.6%	<i>N/A</i>
<b>CFA Timeliness</b>	<i>N/A</i>	91.4%	74.6%
<b>Assessments Total</b>	65.7%	74.8%	74.6%

3.5. In part, our analysis has been that this has been due to insufficient police resource in MASH which led to over-categorisation. This can be seen in the reduction in the percentage of those investigations which then go forward to initial child protection conferences. This was a known problem and has been addressed by the police and additional police staff are now in MASH. We would anticipate that number of s47 assessments to decline and the percentage of those which then go on to initial child protection conferences to increase in line with previous data.

3.6. During the last year, the assessment process has changed in line with national guidance and we no longer carry out 'initial' and 'core' assessments but instead have a single Child and Family Assessment (CFA) with a different timescale for completion. The timeliness of our assessments has remained steady at around 75% of all cases falling within the guidelines. Benchmarking

against other authorities this appears to be good. Our aim is to get this figure over 80%. The complex nature of some assessments mean that they will necessarily fall outside the timescale.

- 3.7. Our work within the child protection planning process remains robust although the numbers have again risen. We have seen a rise in the number of children subject to a plan for neglect (although a word of caution in that categorisation between neglect and emotional abuse is often variable). Fewer plans are lasting beyond 2 years (which is good as it indicates proactive work) and relatively few require a repeat plan within 2 years. The number of visits made within the required dates has dropped and this is an area for focus for the Department. In part this reflects better data gathering (and some limitations within the data gathering system) but also pressures in the system. It should be noted that all late/missed Child Protection visits are followed up by managers and reported back to senior managers and generally they are sessions that have had to be delayed because of the child's commitments, by agreed variation (eg where there is a genuine need to rearrange or where there is a conflicting appointment with another professional) or sickness by the worker or very occasionally other priorities.

- 3.8.

<b>Child Protection Plans (CPP) and visits</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>Feb 2015</b>
<b>No of children on CPP</b>	909	1111	1357
<b>New CPP in the Year %: Neglect</b>	46.6%	49.0%	58.5%
<b>Physical</b>	26.9%	21.6%	15.4%
<b>Sexual</b>	7.6%	4.9%	5.0%
<b>Emotional</b>	18.9%	24.6%	21.1%
<b>New CPP in Year Rate Per 10,000 : Neglect</b>	19	20.7	37.4
<b>Physical</b>	10.9	8.2	9.9
<b>Sexual</b>	3.1	1.9	3.2
<b>Emotional</b>	7.7	8.7	13.6
<b>CPP's ending after 2 or more years</b>	5.2%	3.2%	2.8%
<b>Current CPs lasting 2 or more years</b>	2.1%	1.8%	2.5%
<b>Children requiring a repeat CPP within 2 yrs</b>	N/A	10.0%	8.1%

<b>Visits made in accordance with CPP - 14 day</b>	N/A	84.4%	72.5%

3.9. With regards to children in care, the number of such children has continued to rise, with all the attendant financial difficulties that that brings, although the rate of increase may be showing some signs of slowing. However, given the national picture of demand outstripping supply of places, the costs of placements are continuing to rise significantly. The data also shows that the stability of placements has improved, in part through better data collection and analysis.

3.10.

<b>Full Time Children Looked After (CLA)</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>Feb 2015</b>
<b>No of full time CLA</b>	1131	1267	1354
<b>% of CLA with 3+ moves during the year</b>	16.2%	13.7%	13.6%

3.11. Managers in Children’s Services also use a range of qualitative data to ensure that services continue to deliver good outcomes for children. In particular there is a regular programme of case audits.

3.12. Each social work team is regularly required to audit cases against set criteria. Around 100 cases per month are audited. For example, outcomes from file audits indicate the following:

Increasing participation of children and young people in their plans – evidenced in 91%, 93% of files in the previous two quarters but with a fall to 82% for the current quarter of files (December 2014).

90% of audits showed evidence that the assessment had informed the intervention in the last two quarters, but with a decrease to 87% in the current quarter (December 2014).

8% of files have evidence that ethnicity and culture have informed intervention (December 2014).

3.13. Complaints are also monitored as part of the quality assurance process. The total number of representations handled by Children’s Services Complaints Team in 2014/15 was 871. The total number of statutory complaints increased from 262 in 2013/14 to 289 in 2014/15. The number progressing to Stage Two was 15, and Stage Three complaints increased from 0 in 2013/14 to 2 in 2014/15. The low number of Stage Two and Stage Three complaints can be attributed to visits carried out by the Complaints Team, to try and resolve the issue. Visits reduced from 20 last year to 12 being undertaken during the reporting period. During the reporting period 98% of Stage 1 complaints were handled within the statutory timescales, timescale compliance remains attributable to the high degrees of collaborative working

between local managers and the Complaints Team. As for last year, for statutory complaints the largest number were related to professional conduct followed by quality of service.

- 3.14. The proportion of complaints received directly from children and young people remains low, with work underway with local teams to try and establish the reasons for this alongside potential solutions. Nineteen complaints were received from children and young people in 2013/14 but only twelve were received for 2014/15 to date.
- 3.15. Advocacy is used where a child or young person requests an independent advocate to represent them over a particular issue. Children and young people can be referred by their social workers or other key workers or can self refer. From March to October 2014, there were 42 referrals and 37 cases were accepted and received advocacy.
- 3.16. As well as the Ofsted inspection referred to above, Hampshire's children's homes are routinely subject to inspection twice per year by Ofsted. The latest outcomes for these are as follows:  
  
Swanwick Lodge secure unit was inspected on 9th-10th December 2014 and was graded good.  
  
The Mead: good (November 2014)  
Cypress Lodge: outstanding (November 2014)  
Milesdown: outstanding (October 2014)  
The Green House; good (November 2014)  
Godbey House: good (November 2014)  
  
Glendalyn is currently mothballed pending relocation as part of the residential strategy.
- 3.17. Respite care units for disabled children were also inspected:  
  
Firvale: good (January 2015)  
Merrydale: adequate (October 14)  
Sunbeams: inspected in February 2015 awaiting confirmation.

#### **4. Local Developments**

- 4.1. MASH: The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) became operational in January 2014, and operates alongside existing services provided by hantsdirect and Children's Reception Team (CRT). Its purpose is to provide multiagency assessment and triaging of safeguarding concerns at the point of referral, protecting vulnerable children from harm, neglect and abuse.
- 4.2. CRT continues to complete the initial screening from both professionals and members of the public. Referrals meeting the threshold for statutory intervention will be transferred into the MASH for a multi agency decision regarding the level of intervention. MASH includes CSD, Hampshire Constabulary, and Southern Health with virtual partners including Hampshire

Probation, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, Southern Central Ambulance Service and district councils.

- 4.3. Referrals that do not meet the thresholds for a statutory service will be transferred into the Early Help Hubs. Increases in referral to assessment are attributable to the information sharing within MASH.
- 4.4. Early Help Hubs: The first hub in Eastleigh went live in January 2014 and all 10 were live by 17 November 2014. The early help hubs consists of a range of practitioners and agencies, who come together on a weekly basis to discuss cases and allocate them to the most appropriate lead professional, with other agencies supporting work as necessary. Services signed up to the hub provision include Children's Services (Locality teams, Youth Support Services, Ethnic Minority Traveller Services), Adult Services (Substance misuse), health visiting and school nursing, children's centres, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Catch 22 Substance Misuse service, young carers services, Hampshire Constabulary, Department of Work and Pensions, Transform (part of Supporting Troubled Families Programme), housing and sexual health services. Weekly allocation and discussion meetings take place, coordinated by the Early Help Hub Manager.
- 4.5. Completion of the Early Help assessment, which mirrors the Child and Family Assessment, results in a Family Plan. A range of agencies may contribute to the plan which is co-ordinated by an early help coordinator who will ensure regular reviews of the plan and progress reports.
- 4.6. Early Help Hub managers have spent time with both CRT/MASH to develop a more efficient step down of work, and CRT have observed Early Help Hub allocation meetings to increase their understanding of thresholds around early help.
- 4.7. Social Worker feedback: The annual social worker survey that has been carried out in Hampshire for the last four years has been completed and the results are currently being collated.
- 4.8. The most significant challenge for the Department will be the recruitment and retention of social workers. Nationally vacancy rates are now at around 20% of all posts and, at times in the past year, we have had similar rates in Hampshire although these have now fallen. In part this has been due to very aggressive recruitment tactics by agencies which have played on the insecurity in social work posts brought about by critical Ofsted judgements (sometimes in neighbouring authorities) or national reports. Social workers report being offered very high hourly rates to switch to an agency and to then work in a neighbouring authority. A recruitment and retention strategy has been put in place to enable the department to address these issues. The strategy includes measures to develop more 'home grown' social workers through our successful partnership with Winchester University on the 'Step Up to Social Work' programme which has delivered 11 newly qualified social workers to Hampshire recently; piloting various flexible working arrangements; the development of the Social Care Recruitment Microsite to make this more attractive to potential applicants; the use of Social Media and Google Search to increase awareness and applications from experienced social workers; and measures to improve ways of working with agencies with

a view to addressing cost, performance and quality concerns. We are also exploring a range of other means by which social workers can be retained and have looked closely at comparator authorities.

## **5. Future Challenges and Operational Priorities**

5.1. The future challenges and priorities can be summarised as follows (this is not an exhaustive list and the history of this type of work is that new priorities will emerge such as CSE).

- There has been a very significant upturn in child protection and associated children looked after activity since 2011 which is creating a significant financial risk.
- The recruitment and retention of social workers will need to be addressed. Nationally vacancy rates are now at around 20% of all posts and, at times, we have had similar rates in Hampshire. A strategy is being developed to enable the Department to respond to changing patterns of employment within the workplace.
- MASH – the model has had a highly successful start but needs to be reviewed and refreshed to ensure that the model is sustainable in terms of recruitment and retention. We also need to review whether the process is well enough managed to ensure that decision making is balanced and sound.
- The Innovation Fund bid was successful and now needs to be implemented which, although exciting in terms of social care practice and with long term potential to address capacity issues, in the short term will inevitably be an additional pressure on staff and management capacity.
- Implementing a new social care IT system. The new system will be created and implemented via a development partnership rather than an 'off the shelf' solution. This will therefore involve a greater lead time and as a partnership approach will require significant staff input into the research, design and testing phases of the project. The benefits are that we will be able to heavily influence the design of the system and how electronic case recording is organised, reducing administration time required by social workers.
- Continuing to develop capacity and sustain improvement in the Isle of Wight.
- Because of the likely increase in the number of Serious Case Reviews, ensuring that learning is gained, actions completed and maintaining a strong public facing position will be a challenge for all agencies.

## **6. Recommendations**

6.1. That Cabinet notes the update on safeguarding children in Hampshire.

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:****Links to the Corporate Strategy**

<b>Hampshire safer and more secure for all:</b>	yes/no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Maximising well-being:</b>	yes/no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>	yes/no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

#### **Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:**

The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;

Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

This report is for Cabinet to note Hampshire County Council's progress and performance with regards to safeguarding vulnerable children. As such it creates no disadvantage or inequality and the activity described serves to reduce inequality for some of the county's most vulnerable children

### **2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

The report is for Cabinet to note and so does not create any impact on crime and disorder although the activity described herein serves to reduce the impact of crime on the most vulnerable children.

### **3. Climate Change:**

How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

3.1 It is not anticipated that this decision will have any impact on Climate Change.