

For General Release

REPORT TO:	CABINET 21st September 2015
AGENDA ITEM:	12
SUBJECT:	Croydon Congress 26 November 2015 Working with our communities to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation
LEAD OFFICER:	Nathan Elvery, Chief Executive
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Tony Newman Leader of the Council Councillor Mark Watson Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Justice
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT:	
The prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Croydon is a strategic priority for the Council as set out in the Corporate Plan 2015 - 2018. It is also a strategic priority for the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board.	
AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON & WHY ARE WE DOING THIS:	
The intention of the Council and the LSP is to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and develop actions to stop it from happening in the borough. Our ambition is to reduce the incidence of CSE and divert and protect young people whilst holding perpetrators to account. These are all outcomes in the Corporate Plan, which incorporates the council's ambitions for Croydon.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	
There is no financial impact arising directly from this report.	
KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.: This is not a key executive decision	

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to

1.1 Note the theme and draft proposals for the 9th meeting of Croydon Congress

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The 9th Croydon Congress is taking place on 26 November 2015. The theme is Child Sexual Exploitation and the aim is to raise awareness and develop actions to prevent it from happening to young people and disrupt it where it is happening by protecting children. These outcomes are aligned with the Safeguarding Croydon Children Board's CSE Action Plan and the Safer Croydon Community Safety Strategy. Indeed Croydon's Safeguarding Children Board's Action Plan is constructed around the three themes of prevent, disrupt and prevent.
- 2.2 Proposals arising from the meeting of Congress will be considered by the Local Strategic Partnership Board and Chief Executives Group, as well as its related themed Partnership Boards, the Council Leadership Team and Croydon's Safeguarding Children Board.

3. DETAIL

- 3.1 Croydon Congress is the over-arching consultative stakeholder group for Croydon's LSP and has a key role in informing the future direction of its work, particularly on cross-cutting issues. Croydon Congress brings together key local leaders, representatives from local businesses and the public, voluntary and faith sectors.
- 3.2 The Council and its partners consider preventing and stopping CSE a significant cross-cutting strategic priority for the borough. In particular, there is a need to raise awareness of the issue and the devastating impact it has on young people and their families, and ensure that stakeholders have the opportunity to work together to develop actions to stop it. Devoting Croydon Congress to this is part of the Council's work to change attitudes and behaviours of people and organisations in the borough and to better equip professionals and the community to take an active role to protect young people.

4. OFFICIAL DEFINITION OF CSE

- 4.1 CSE can be defined as involving 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 performing, and/or others performing on them sexual activities. CSE can occur through use of technology without the child's immediate recognition, for example the persuasion to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones with no 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 (National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People, 2010).

5. THE NATIONAL PICTURE

- 5.1 Although there has been a lot of research into the factors that are associated with CSE, very few national studies have been able to look into the numbers of children who have been exploited. This is partly because the issue is difficult to identify. There are a few headline national figures:
- The Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into CSE in Gangs and Groups Interim Report found that 16,500 children from across England were identified as being at high risk of sexual exploitation during the period April 2010 to March 2011. This figure was based on children who displayed three or more signs of behavior indicating that they were at risk of CSE.
 - Statistics From the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre tell us that in 2013, 2,083 victims of CSE were reported to them, the majority of whom were female victims, commonly at the age of 14 or 15 years.
 - Of those 2,083 victims, 40% had been reported from home or care as missing on at least one occasion.
- 5.2 Since the large scale CSE that took place in Rotherham between 1997 – 2013 came to light last year, the issue has raised up the agenda. Professor Alexis Jay’s report into CSE in Rotherham was published in August 2014 and highlighted the sheer scale of the abuse and the serious failings of statutory agencies. Louise Casey’s report Rotherham was published in February this year and compounded this criticism. Set against a backdrop of historical child abuse scandals and large scale organised grooming cases in Derby, Oxford and Rochdale being uncovered this issue is firmly in the spotlight.
- 5.3 Learning from Serious Case Reviews and the experience of Rotherham and other cities has 'opened the eyes' of organisations and professionals about the complexity of CSE and the need to learn from such events and address this through system changes.
- 5.4 At a landmark Downing Street summit in March 2015 the Prime Minister set out a number of new measures relating to CSE, including:
- A new national whistleblowing helpline for public sector workers to report bad practice;
 - New joint official health, police and education inspections;
 - A new Child Sexual Abuse Taskforce;
 - The clawback of exit payments for senior public sector staff when they are quickly re-employed in the same part of the public sector;
 - CSE to be prioritised as a national threat, meaning that police forces have a duty to collaborate across boundaries; and
 - £7M offered this year and in 2015 – 2016 to organisations which support the victims of sexual abuse.

6. THE LOCAL PICTURE

- 6.1 Whilst CSE can take multiple forms and varies from case to case, in Croydon the council and its partnerships are mostly aware of it as an issue amongst peer groups, often with older males exploiting younger females. Young females can also play a role in recruiting other young females for sexual exploitation.
- 6.2 In many cases young people are not aware that what they are experiencing is CSE, particularly when it is being perpetrated by someone of a similar age to them.

6.3 Croydon has one of the largest populations of children and young people out of all the London boroughs. With a high proportion of looked after children and asylum seeking children in the borough we need to be aware of that some of this population can be vulnerable to sexual exploitation. In addition, Croydon has the highest number of missing children in London and this has a strong connection to CSE.

7. RECENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS

7.1 Over the past year there have been significant developments locally to combat CSE, including the following:

- The appointment of a specific coordinator for sexually exploited and missing children whose role it is to manage services to children at risk of or suffering from exploitation;
- The Croydon Safeguarding Children Board establishing a specific sub-group to develop a strategic response and have oversight of the multi-agency operational response to CSE;
- Specific police and local authority operations being set up to investigate the scale of CSE in Croydon;
- The establishment of the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel which ensures children identified as at risk or subject to CSE are receiving the appropriate services whilst also gathering intelligence and targeting resources;
- The development of specific partnerships with the NSPCC and the Safer London Foundation to better coordinate resources;
- The NSPCC being commissioned to meet with children when they return from going missing from their home and to undertake direct work with young people to reduce risk taking behaviours and divert them from exploitation, as well as to contribute to intelligence about vulnerable young people and possible perpetrators; and
- The recruitment of specially trained support workers to engage vulnerable young people either at risk of or subject to CSE. These support workers are co-located with Children's Social Care, police services, Pupil Referral Units and sexual health clinics.

7.2 In April 2015 Railway Children, an international charity, agreed to fund a project, via the Safer London Foundation, to support and assist The Croydon Safeguarding Children's Board and Croydon's Children's Social Care and Family Support to implement its 'Prevent, Protect and Disrupt' CSE strategy for the borough.

7.3 The Railway Children funding also supports the council's work to better coordinate CSE prevention programmes in Croydon schools, complete return home interviews for children who are returning from going missing, train social workers and others working with vulnerable adolescents, as well as engage with young men who may have learnt sexually harmful behaviours. Existing research indicates that vulnerable adolescents are much more likely to be exploited by their peers than older males.

8. THE PROPOSED FORMAT OF CONGRESS

- 8.1 Congress will be Chaired by Cllr Mark Watson, Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Justice. It will follow a similar format to the LSP's last Congress which focused on domestic abuse and sexual violence. Feedback from that event suggested that delegates benefited from hearing the personal story of someone who had experienced the subject matter. As such, the intention is to ensure the 'voices' of young people are heard through our choice of keynote speakers and film/s which will be screened.
- 8.2 Croydon Congress brings together key local leaders, representatives from local businesses and the public, voluntary and faith sectors. As well as the usual delegates, the invitation list will be widened to include a variety of those who come into contact with young people who might benefit from attending and feeding into the discussions. This includes taxi firms and transport providers, fast food establishments and hoteliers, as well as social workers, foster carers and related charities and support services.
- 8.3 As well as hearing from subject experts and young people, a key part of Congress will be the table discussion sessions, where delegates will be facilitated to come together to help inform and shape actions as well as making a commitment to take action themselves.
- 8.4 Following the event, a full report on the discussions and recommendations made at Croydon Congress will be produced for consideration by the Local Strategic Partnership Board and Chief Executives Group, as well as its related themed Partnership Boards, the Council Leadership Team and Croydon's Safeguarding Children Board.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 Croydon Congress is the main consultative meeting in the borough, comprising leaders and stakeholders from the business, public, voluntary, faith and community sectors.

10 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 There are no financial considerations arising directly from this report.

Approved by: Lisa Taylor - Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer

11. COMMENTS OF THE BOROUGH SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

- 11.1 There are no legal considerations arising directly from this report.

Approved by: Gabriel Macgregor, Head of Corporate Law on behalf of the Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer.

12. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 12.1 There are no immediate HR considerations that arise from the recommendations of this report for HR staff.

Approved by: Michael Pichamuthu on behalf of the Director of Human Resources

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 13.1 Croydon has one of the largest populations of children and young people out of all the London boroughs. The borough also has a high proportion of looked after children and asylum seeking children and the council is aware that some of this population can be vulnerable to sexual exploitation. In addition, Croydon has the highest number of missing children in London and this has a strong connection to CSE.
- 13.2 Preventing and stopping CSE is a significant cross-cutting strategic priority for the council and its partners. Over the past year there have been significant developments locally to combat CSE. The November meeting of Congress will build on this work to develop a multi-agency approach to understand the scale and nature of CSE in the borough, and strengthen a partnership approach to raise awareness of CSE and the early identification of potential victims (mainly young people and girls) to prevent abuse, and provide effective and timely support to victims.
- 13.3 The Congress meeting will be used to raise awareness of the issue and the devastating impact CSE has on young people and their families, and ensure that local partners and community stakeholders have the opportunity to work together to develop actions to prevent it. Devoting a Congress meeting to this is part of the council's work to change attitudes and behaviours of people and organisations in the borough and to better equip professionals and the community to take an active role to protect young people.
- 13.4 The Congress meeting will also support the Council in taking forward initiatives that will help deliver the following key priorities that are set out in the our Equality and Inclusion Policy:
- Lead on and work in partnership with agencies and the community to change attitudes and behaviours towards domestic abuse, sexual violence and female genital mutilation;
 - Lead on strengthen the council's safeguarding processes for children and adults and working in partnership with the police, community, faith and voluntary sectors, hospitals and GPs, to make every effort to change attitudes and behaviours and prevent incidents of abuse taking place in our community.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 14.1 There is no environmental impact arising directly from this report.

15. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 15.1 Whilst CSE can often be hidden from view, everyone needs to be aware that it is not a private issue; it is a crime. The aim of this Congress is to raise awareness and develop actions to stop CSE in Croydon. Proposals from

Congress will be considered by the Local Strategic Partnership and Council Leadership Team. This outcome is aligned with the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board's CSE Action Plan and the Safer Croydon Community Safety Strategy.

16. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

16.1 We need to raise awareness of CSE in order to change attitudes and behaviours and better equip professionals and the community to take an active role and protect young people in the borough. This is a strategic priority for the Council, the LSP and the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board.

17. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

17.1 Not applicable.

CONTACT OFFICER: Sharon Godman, Head of Strategy and Communities. 020 8604 7034 Ext 47034

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None