

REPORT TO:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE 3 FEBRUARY 2015
AGENDA ITEM:	9
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 follows up safeguarding discussions at the 14 October and 25 November meetings 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, as set out in paragraph 3

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 and reach a consensus on future action and recommendations. At that meeting, it was agreed that the item should be deferred to the 3 February 2015 meeting of the sub-committee.
- 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 and relevant agencies on safeguarding and child sexual exploitation issues.
- 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 and draft recommendations reflecting discussions held at the 14 October sub-committee meeting. Members are invited to ratify these or agree amendments to them.

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 due to increasing levels of deprivation, high and increasing numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and high numbers of looked after children placed in Croydon by other authorities
- the high staff turnover, which constitutes a challenge throughout the country and particularly in London
- the challenge of recruiting and retaining high quality permanent social services staff, particularly in the area of children's child protection
- the need to continue to embed learning from serious case reviews into everyday practice
- the need for quality assurance needed to be strengthened further by implementing plans in the Local Safeguarding Board and reporting regularly on a wider set of data from across agencies
- 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

2.2 Children and young people at risk

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 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

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

Officers highlighted the key improvements needed to take place in order to ensure that the situation in Rotherham could not be replicated in Croydon, which were set out in detail in section 6 of the report to the 14 October meeting and identified the respective roles of council Members, the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board, the police and children's social care officers in combating child sexual exploitation in the borough.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with discussions held at the 14 October and 25 November 2014 meetings, Members are invited to confirm or amend the following draft recommendations.

The Council should:

1. Run a greater range of learning and development events to help Members improve their understanding of the specific issues involved in child protection, including child sexual exploitation and missing children, and ensure that opportunities are provided to non-executive Members to carry out visits to gain a deeper understanding of child protection and safeguarding work
2. Provide Members with written guidance to clarify their role in safeguarding, covering the safeguarding of children and adults, and procedures to follow to raise and track concerns
3. Consider the appointment of a safeguarding champion to work alongside the portfolio holder and deputy to work across children's and adults' safeguarding issues and to champion the needs of children, young people and adults who are in need of protection
4. Provide Members, and in particular the Cabinet Member and deputy, with more opportunities to directly hear the voice of the child or young person on child protection issues while recognising the sensitivity of engaging with children and young people at risk
5. Strengthen the link between Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee and the Corporate Parenting Panel by sharing Part A papers to the constituents of both groups
6. Ask senior officers to provide assurances to Scrutiny that staff are able to appropriately escalate concerns where this may be necessary

The Croydon Safeguarding Children Board should be asked to consider the following:

1. To provide more explicit regular reporting to Members on child sexual exploitation, for example, through additional reports to Cabinet or Scrutiny for discussion rather than for noting, and through fuller reporting of this issue in the annual report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board
2. To provide assurance to Scrutiny Members that procedures are in place which enable effective communication channels between meetings so that urgent action can be taken where necessary
3. To conduct an annual survey of non-statutory organisations about any concerns or trends that need to be voiced, to represent the voice of the child

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None