

7 March 2018		ITEM: 5
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Missing Children and Child Sexual Exploitation		
Wards and communities affected: All Wards	Key Decision: Not Applicable	
Report of: Claire Pascoe, Child Sexual Exploitation Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director Children's Care & Targeted Outcomes		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is: Public		

Executive Summary:

This report sets out the actions Thurrock Social Care have taken over the past year, and are planning for the coming year, to work tenaciously and collaboratively to safeguard the children of Thurrock from Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), and associated harms. It outlines how we are challenging ourselves to demonstrate that learning from councils such as Rotherham, Oxfordshire and latterly, Newcastle, are being embedded to safeguard the children of Thurrock. To this end, the report will firstly outline achievements to date; secondly, it will review the current CSE, Missing and Trafficking position as assessed by Thurrock Children's Social Care. Finally, the report will conclude with outlining key elements of our 2017/2018 '*CSE, Missing and Trafficking Action Plan*', based on the Southend, Essex and Thurrock, (SET), CSE '*Plan on a Page*' to further develop our understanding; improve recognition of and response to CSE and related risks and vulnerabilities. As this report is a public document, details of current operations and measures to disrupt CSE have not been provided.

To set the context for this report, the definitions of CSE, Missing and Trafficking are as follows:

- '*CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and / or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.*' (Department for Education, 2017)
- '*Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at*

risk of harm to themselves or another.
(Essex Police, 2017)

- *“Trafficking in persons” shall mean the ... recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons ... for the purpose of exploitation*”.
(Modern Slavery Act, 2015)

This report has been prepared to keep the Corporate Parenting Committee Members apprised of the developments relating to CSE, Missing Children and Trafficking achieved, underway and planned in Thurrock.

1. Recommendation(s):

1.1 That the Corporate Parenting Committee note the report.

2. Introduction and Background

The interrelated ‘hidden’ harms of Child Sexual and wider Exploitation, children Missing from Home and Care, and Trafficking continue to attract close political, public and professional attention and scrutiny. Professor Alexis Jay in her report published August 2014 identified, as have others, the potentially elevated vulnerability of Looked After children to these harms. The current Thematic Ofsted Joint Targeted Area Inspection is, as of February 2018, focussed upon these harms. Opportunity is taken to update Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee of achievements to safeguard our children to date, challenges, and plans to overcome these in the coming year.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Key Achievements:

Thurrock council have taken significant steps to identify and tackle Child Sexual, and wider Exploitation both internally, and across Thurrock. Not exhaustively, these include the following:

CSE Manager Role: In May 2015, Thurrock established a dedicated CSE role within children’s services - initially as CSE Practitioner, and latterly, converted to CSE Manager. This was in recognition of the need to develop, and embed inter-agency recognition, understanding and collaborative practice and response relating to CSE victims. In 2017, the role was made substantive, reflecting Thurrock Social Care’s ongoing commitment to relentless focus on CSE and wider exploitative harms.

Awareness Raising Training: Coordinated by the CSE Manager, bespoke CSE, Missing and Trafficking awareness training has been written and delivered in collaboration with Essex Police, Open Door and South Essex Rape Incest Crisis Centre, (SERICC) variously, to 1153 professionals, (excluding those present at conferences). Agencies and numbers trained so far comprise: Social and Support Workers: 304; Adult Social Care: 47; Thurrock Foster Carers: 68; Thurrock Housing staff: 201; Independent

Fostering Association Providers and Residential Staff: 71; Thurrock GPs: 27; Music Service Staff : 25; Thurrock Licenced Taxi Operators, Drivers and Passenger Assistants: 410, leaving only 5 existing drivers needing to be trained as of 09.02.18.. Words repeatedly used in response to all of these training sessions include: "Shocking", 'Powerful', 'Informative', 'Enlightening', 'Relevant' and 'Insightful'.

Impact in practice, can be demonstrated in a disclosure to the CSE Manager by a Thurrock Licenced Taxi driver immediately following a training session delivered. The training, the driver said, helped him understand the gravity and significance of what he had seen. With the support of the CSE Manager and in collaboration with Essex Police CSE Triage Team, the driver made a comprehensive disclosure to Essex Police, which resulted in the matter becoming a live criminal investigation.

LSCB-led training: Stranger Danger and Walk Online: In directly communicating with Thurrock's children and their parents to raise awareness of grooming and exploitation on line, the Thurrock LSCB have, between the 1st August 2016 and 1st August 2017, arranged the delivery of the 'Walk Online Roadshow' to 2207 children and 241 teachers / parents. 'The Stranger Danger/Walk Online Roadshow' was attended by 337 parents and professionals. Ofsted positively commended this training in the 2016 Thurrock Ofsted report.

Development of the Missing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU): The CSE manager has contributed to writing the *'Missing from Care Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between Essex Police, Southend, Essex and Thurrock Children's Social Care and Residential Care Home / Supported Lodgings / Foster Care Provider / Independent Fostering Agency'*. This MoU seeks to improve the quality and timeliness of information sharing between carers and providers, and Essex Police relating to children at risk of going missing from care, being trafficked, who are gang associated and at risk, or who have been and / or are victims of CSE. This document has been sent by Thurrock Commissioning team to all providers.

'I Didn't Know' Essex CSE Campaign, March 2017: The award-winning *'I Didn't Know'* Child Sexual Exploitation Campaign, written by Thurrock CSE Manager, SET partners and Essex Police, was a public awareness campaign re-launched in 2017 for a week on 13th March in the lead up to National CSE Awareness Day, on Saturday 18th March. Recognising that the exploitation of children is not confined solely to sexual exploitation, but frequently linked to other implicitly threatening and explicitly violent contexts into which children are groomed, the campaign shone a spotlight on how grooming and sexual exploitation can manifest in the wider exploitation of children, such as trafficking, criminal exploitation by gangs and organised crime networks.

Last year's campaign identified with young people who may have felt trapped through the grooming process to commit crime and abuse other young people - importantly emphasising that they could get help and support too. In addition, it sought to educate the public how to spot exploitation and directed

all three audience groups to support pages and embedded links. For each day of the campaign week, key messages were published on social media using the hashtag #KnowAboutCSE, to reach young people and parents. A link to the Campaign can be found at <https://www.essex.police.uk/.../i-didn-t-know-campaign-2017>.

The campaign was widely promoted, notably, via the National Working Group (NWG) and Essex Police. The Essex Police impact assessment confirmed the total social media posts posted throughout the week totaled 740,233 with shares totaling 1,077. Between 13 and 17th March 2017, 5881 people viewed the CSE section of the Essex Police website, representing 26% of the total number of people who were on the Essex Police website during that period (22,921). On the <https://www.essex.police.uk/advice/child-sexual-exploitation/gettinghelp> link, there were 491 users - an increase of 9,720% on the previous week (Essex Police).

The Thurrock Picture:

CSE: The CSE report run from Liquid Logic, our children's information system, on 12th February 2018, identified 29 Thurrock children currently assessed to be at high risk of CSE. Of these, 11 are boys, 17 are girls and one child identifies as male. The ages range from 14 to 17 years old. The average age is 15 years and 7 months.

On the 12th February, there were 39 children assessed as medium risk, 18 being boys, and 21 girls. The age range is one 12 year old female, to 17 years olds. The average age is 15 years and 4 months.

Given the widely-publicised 'invisibility' of boys as being at risk of CSE in professional perception, it is positive to see that this unconscious bias against boys is not immediately apparent in Thurrock, with boys being potential victims of CSE being 'on the radar' (Barnardos, 2016).

Whilst children can be moved through a range of different CSE models, the 'Boyfriend' model of CSE is typified by perpetrators, who can be of similar age, and who target children posing as 'boyfriends / girlfriends', showering the child with attention, 'love' and gifts, activating the child's attachment system. Initiating a sexual relationship with the child, the child is effectively told that they owe the perpetrators money for cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, car rides etc. and that sexual activities are one way of repaying the 'debt' (PACE UK, 2017). The gang model of CSE is used variously, to exert power and control over children to initiate children into gangs; exchange sexual activity for status / protection; used to entrap rival gang members by exploiting girls and young women, often related to or associated with them, and inflict sexual assault as a weapon in conflict. The majority of CSE within gangs is committed by teenage boys and men in their twenties (Berelowitz, 2012 in NSPCC, 2017).

Missing children: The Risk Assessment Group, (RAG), a sub-group of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, meets every 2 weeks, and is attended by

a range of statutory and voluntary partners. It has had presented for review the cases of 71 separate children between 01.01.17. and 31.12.17, many of whom have experienced missing episodes. The Risk Assessment Group facilitates challenge, oversight and development of plans to reduce the vulnerability of children, and identify opportunities to target / investigate possible / perpetrators. Open Door have been commissioned by Thurrock Children's Social Care to undertake return home interviews for children who go missing from home or care. Open Door report some of the reasons children go missing from home or care to be attributable in part to children having been placed out of area and 'running to' their parents, friends and extended family members. Attaining 100% referrals to Open Door for return Home Interviews for missing children and especially Looked After Children, is a work in progress.

Trafficking: Awareness of indicators of child trafficking, both as an offence in itself, and as part of wider exploitative contexts, is reflected in 8 children having been referred by Thurrock Children's Social Care to the National Crime Agencies' National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in 2017. Referrals are made by Social Workers when they suspect the children they are supporting may be at risk of, or experiencing trafficking for the purpose of sexual, and / or criminal exploitation, primarily in the context of gangs. Adaptations within Liquid Logic are being explored which it is anticipated, will enable us to contemporaneously keep track of those children referred to the National Crime Agency as suspected victims of human trafficking and modern slavery.

The types of concerns leading to referrals to the NRM primarily include children who have been located in different counties, at addresses to which they have no connection, in possession of Class A drugs. Given the sexually exploitative context of gangs, referrals have included instances where a child has been assessed likely to be victim of sexual, as well as criminal exploitation by gangs or groups. Individual children assessed to be at risk, or victim of human trafficking are supported by the development of bespoke intervention and support plans by Children's Social Care and appropriate partners. Children's families are provided information and advice about how most effectively to safeguard them. The NRM process encourages multi-agency collaboration which enhances the evidence and information used to support the NRM referral, informing the multi-agency safeguarding response. More broadly, the increasing numbers of children identified as being likely exploited within the context of gangs, has led to a report recently being prepared by the CSE Manager and submitted to the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE). This report has made recommendations relating to training, operational and more strategic proposed effective safeguarding and positive outcomes for children and their families.

Future Plans:

Whilst the approach to safeguarding children at risk of, and vulnerable to CSE has been tenacious and persistent, commitment to contemporaneously understand, and proactively responding to the developing nature of CSE in

the Borough in light of learning from repeated inquiries and evolving local trends, is unswerving. Full proposed actions for the coming year are located in the 2017/2018 '*CSE, Missing Children and Trafficking Action Plan*'. Key highlights include:

CSE, Missing, Gangs and Trafficking thematic audits: Children's Social Care Managers completed thematic audits in December 2017, when strengths and areas for organisational improvement in response to CSE, Missing Children, Child Trafficking and children groomed and exploited within the context of Gangs, was undertaken. The findings are currently being analysed. To maintain a relentless focus on our performance in this area, we will undertake further CSE thematic audits in May and October 2018. The CSE Manager has proposed Southend, Essex and Thurrock Social Care and Essex Police undertake a strategic benchmarking exercise in relation to organisational understanding of CSE. This process is currently in progress, the findings of which will inform our development further.

Internal training: Training will continue to be delivered to all new Thurrock Children's, Adult and Housing Service staff, managerial staff, Members and Partners outlined above, to widen and embed awareness of indicators and reporting pathways. A planned condition of Thurrock Taxi Drivers being licenced, is that within 3 months, they will complete the face-to-face CSE and Trafficking training. Additionally, an online training package is being finalised as written by the CSE Manager with the Training Dept. This will ensure Taxi Drivers are aware of indicators and Thurrock expectations in relation to these harms from the outset.

Collaborative training focussing upon perpetrators and disruption / prosecution: Given a location of concern associated with missing - and possibly trafficked and exploited children – nationally, has been Hotels, this group of would-be partners have been prioritised for CSE and Trafficking training: A training package from Kent Police, adapted by the CSE Manager and Essex Police Public Protection Directorate, is ready to be delivered to key staff in all of Thurrock's Hotels by the CSE Manager and Essex Police.

'I Didn't Know' CSE Campaign, 2018: Given the increase internationally, nationally, (NSPCC, 2015: National Crime Agency, 2017) and locally (Essex Police, 2017) of online grooming and exploitation, the March 2018, '*I Didn't Know*' Child Sexual Exploitation campaign will focus specifically upon online CSE and youth-produced sexual imagery. It will primarily be focused towards parents / carers and children and young people. Our aim will be to encourage schools to participate to reach out to parents / carers during the week after the 18th March.

Embedding the revised SET CSE Risk and Vulnerability Assessment: The currently used SET CSE Risk Assessment does not enable identification of the model of CSE being most prevalently perpetrated in Thurrock: the revised CSE Risk and Vulnerability Assessment co-written by the CSE Manager, her counterparts, Essex Police, National Working Group and

University of Essex will be embedded within Liquid Logic by April 2018 to enable further, local analysis and informed response. It intentionally includes the different models of CSE to enable us to better understand the profile of CSE being perpetrated in Thurrock.

Whilst Models themselves are evolving, and children may be moved between a range of exploitative Models of exploitation, the current assessment of the Safeguarding Manager and CSE Manager is that these are currently likely primarily to be the older 'Boyfriend/ Girlfriend', and 'Gang' Models of CSE. Other Models of exploitation include the Inappropriate Relationship Model which is often characterised by a perpetrator who is physically stronger, older, and / or wealthy, and who has inappropriate power or control over a child - such as a teacher or community leader. The Organised / Trafficking Model includes the sexual trafficking of children across international, as well as internal borders, including across counties, cities and towns for the purpose of passing the children among perpetrators. This model can include the 'selling' of children and young people, and grooming children / young people into 'recruiting' further victims (the *'Three Girls'* Rochdale drama documentary shown in May 2017 illustrated aspects of this Model). The Peer on Peer Model often involves sexual bullying of children by children of a similar age (Children's Society, 2015). Victims may believe they are in a loving relationship, but are coerced into sex with friends or associates. The Online Grooming Model is internationally and locally assessed to be increasing (National Crime Agency, 2017). Through this model, children can be deceived and coerced into producing sexual images of themselves, engaging in sexualised chat online, or sexual activity via a webcam - images which are 'screen shot' and used to extort money or further images from child victims. Online grooming can lead to children being manipulated to secretly meet the perpetrator.

Addressing the Vulnerability of Exploited Children who become Adults: Newcastle's, Operation Sanctuary CSE Investigation highlighted the particular vulnerability of exploited and trafficked children who attain the age of 18, and become vulnerable adults. To strengthen the safeguarding of this group, the CSE Manager, Thurrock Adult Safeguarding Board Manager, Adult Safeguarding Lead and partners are working collaboratively to develop a clear pathway to adult services for vulnerable children who attain the age of 18 and who may need ongoing support and protection.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 This report has been prepared to apprise Corporate Parenting Committee Members of the developments relating to CSE, Missing Children and Trafficking achieved, underway and planned in Thurrock. It aims to raise Member's awareness of these 'hidden harms', equip them more fully to identify concerns and to provide a basis on which to challenge Children's Social Care to further improve our performance in these complex, high profile and vitally important areas of child protection.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 An update report relating to CSE and Missing Children was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2016.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 Ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded from exploitation and trafficking is a central part of the statutory duties of the Council.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**
Management Accountant

No Financial Implications

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal Services

No Legal Implications

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

This report has been prepared to appraise Corporate Parenting Committee Members of the developments relating to CSE, Missing Children and Trafficking achieved, underway and planned in Thurrock. Whilst there are no direct diversity and equality implications arising from this report, ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded from exploitation and trafficking is a central part of the statutory duties of the Council.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- Not Applicable

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Not Applicable

9. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author:

Claire Pascoe

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