

Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation in Hillingdon

Committee name	Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee
Officers reporting	Janice Altenor, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Heidi Henderson, Principal Social Worker
Papers with report	Not applicable
Ward	All

HEADLINES

Hillingdon launched Child Sexual Exploitation strategy in October 2015 with the aim fulfil multi-agency statutory duties as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children.

The report provides an overview of the activity linked to children who are at risk of, or experiencing Child Sexual Exploitation in Hillingdon. It further aims to provide an overview of the multi-agency response in ensuring community safety for the residents of Hillingdon through the effective intervention and disruption of grooming gangs and other perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation.

Lacey's Story (not her real name):

Lacey is an eighteen year old, lesbian young woman. She came to Hillingdon Children's Social Care's notice when she was 15. Lacey was going missing, she was using drugs and she was dependent on vodka. She did not go to school and her relationship with her parents and her sister was beyond repair. She had violent outbursts. She seriously self-harmed and suffered an eating disorder. To get alcohol, Lacey got involved in criminal activity, youth violence and sex with adult men, these behaviours confirmed her negative self-view and spiralled further harmful behaviours. Lacey's life was in danger.

Lacey initially struggled to accept the help she got from her social worker, however, in just two years, Lacey has turned her life around. She is now a full-time apprentice and completing her GCSEs at the same time. She has stopped using drugs and only drinks occasionally when she is out with friends. She has embraced her sexuality and learned to love herself. She is taking driving lessons and saving for a car. Lacey says: "Part of what helped me turn my life around was a change in my brain and in my thinking and the other part was the support and help from the Young People's Team. My social worker was amazing. She was the only person who got me. She listened (even if I was swearing and shouting!), she understood me and she knew my history and my journey. She never judged me. She never got angry. She just accepted me for who I am. The little things made a big difference, like taking me to my mental health appointments, going to the hospital, texting, phoning, turning up and arranging activities (I would have liked more of those!). When she was not around, the duty workers and team managers, even the Head of Service will meet with me and listen to me.

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I did sometimes think the team was a bunch of pushy parents and I was not always ready or willing to listen to advice, but they never gave up, even when I had massive temper tantrums! They helped me to love myself, because they loved me and cared for me, no matter what I did. They accepted my sexuality and always respected me and treated me fairly".

Lacey's case was considered at the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation panel (MASE) on 2 occasions. The panel shared information about the high level of risk that Lacey was at to ensure that any agencies that she came into contact with would alert others and take protective action. The Hillingdon missing policy was frequently adhered to and the police disrupted and assessed alleged sexual activity with older men. Lacey is now safe. She says: "The young people's service saved my life"

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. Recognise the ongoing commitment of Children Social Care and its partners to effectively intervene into the lives of those children who are sexually exploited.
2. Continue to invest in Hillingdon's children to successfully prevent and intervene in Child Sexual Exploitation and other contextual risk factors (gangs and youth violence, county lines, human trafficking, modern slavery, etcetera).

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

In September 2013, LBH Children Social Care and the Police launched Operation Baker to investigate allegations of the organised Sexual Exploitation of a number of children in the Borough, some of whom were looked after by the London Borough of Hillingdon. A serious case review found inefficiencies in the recognition of and response to child sexual exploitation.

In October 2015, the Hillingdon Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and Action Plan was launched as an early response to lessons learnt during Operation Baker. The strategy aims to prevent Child Sexual Exploitation, support children at risk of or experiencing Child Sexual Exploitation and disrupt alleged offenders and those who support their activities.

Initiatives to prevent, intervene and disrupt Child Sexual Exploitation in Hillingdon

Hillingdon strengthened the Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment and Missing protocols to ensure that those children, vulnerable to exploitation are identified early. Since the launch of the Sexual Exploitation, Prevention and Intervention strategy in 2015, social workers have completed 354 Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment and 145 children have been managed through the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel (MASE) in light of heightened risk factors. Not all victims choose to disclose the names of perpetrators and therefore, the police information indicates that 46 Hillingdon crime reports were filed in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation, which

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is higher than the average for the Metropolitan Police of 41. The police data includes all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation (including familial abuse).

The identification of and intervention to prevent further abuse when a child is sexually exploited is now embedded in social work practice. It is no longer an area of specialism. Social workers and multi-agency partners receive MOPAC funded training from the LSCB. Social workers access specialist training through the West London Alliance Teaching Partnership, which evidences their continued professional development and professional capability framework.

The successful intervention in safeguarding children from sexual exploitation is further attributed to the co-location of specialist Child Sexual Exploitation Police Officers in MASH, to identify grooming and postcode gangs early through strategy meetings and escalation to MASE. A further success factor in early identification of group grooming and exploitation activity is through AXIS. This service is co-located in the Youth Offending Service. They work with young people who may not be receiving statutory services but have been identified as being on the periphery of risk by their own behaviour or through association. AXIS provide intervention and support in collaboration with other services in order to reduce risk and prevent escalation. Key to their role is the intelligence mapping of youth activity across the borough. Health Partners assess and refer children attending Accident and Emergency, Minor Injury units and Early pregnancy units. The children are considered at weekly multi-disciplinary meetings to ensure the right response to each child.

Successful multi-agency intervention, has contributed to disruption activity. Between April 2017 and June 2018, the Hillingdon police have issued 12 Child Abduction Warning notices on suspected perpetrators of contextual risk factors to children. The police have further issued 67 Civil Orders (including Sexual Harm Prevention Orders) and issued 112 CSE disruption activity forms (again, these relate to all contextual risk factors). 2 Charges have been made and 19 cases are awaiting an outcome. The Metropolitan Police data specific to Hillingdon does not include an ethnic, gender or age breakdown of alleged perpetrators. The Vulnerable Young People Risk Management Group is a multi-agency forum to ensure that information about victims and suspects informs improved analysis of the threat of Child Sexual Exploitation and other contextual risk factors in Hillingdon.

The newly formed Police West Area BCU consists of three Boroughs, Hillingdon, Ealing and Hounslow. CSE officers work across all three. This is already proving valuable in information sharing across locations frequented by young people. The continuation of proactive interventions, as seen in Operation Makesafe will continue across Hillingdon with locations to be targeted, already identified.

The Community Safety Unit are carrying out community engagement events across the borough. A recent one focused on the night time economy in Hillingdon. This resulted in the identification of a young woman at risk of CSE who was supported in returning home safely. There has been a positive response from police in increased patrols to an area that was identified as being frequented by young people for sexual activity and drugs.

“Staff take effective action to reduce risks to children who are considered highly vulnerable and at risk of child exploitation. Intervention to protect children at risk of sexual exploitation and children missing from home, school or care is diligently pursued. Social workers and other professionals across the children's workforce understand the complexity of risks to children and this is given significant consideration and analysis in multi-agency strategy meetings and risk assessments. Child sexual exploitation risk assessments are routinely completed to inform children's safety plans, and these assessments and plans are regularly updated as circumstances change. Co-working with the youth offending service for young people at risk of and subject to criminal exploitation is particularly effective, and due consideration is given to them as potential victims of abuse.” (Ofsted, May 2018, par 9 page 4).

“Social workers recognise and respond well to children vulnerable to exploitation. This includes identifying interdependencies of risks from sexual exploitation, missing from care, radicalisation and criminal exploitation. Social workers and partners attend strategy meetings that result in effective plans that help to reduce risks and protect children.” (Ofsted, May 2018, par 20, page 6).

Implications on related Council policies

In June 2018, Hillingdon launched the Vulnerable Young People's Risk Management Group. This multi-agency group uses the principles of the MASE panel but looks at sexual exploitation and associated risk factors for young people such as missing, county lines, serious youth violence and radicalisation. Ofsted recognise Hillingdon's vision in responding to increasing contextual risk factors in Hillingdon. The good work undertaken by social workers and multi-agency partners will continue but expand to include other vulnerable children and respond to local and national needs.

The Multi Agency Risk Management group met in June and July. They continue to track the progress of Operation Tolleson and support available to victims. The group is professionally curious about concerns with regard to serious youth violence and knife crime in Hillingdon and is working alongside neighbouring Local Authorities to keep children safe in Hillingdon.

Policy Overview Committees are at the heart of how the Council shapes policy at Member level.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

1. Lacey and other children like Lacey are feeling safer in Hillingdon. They feel valued and cared for and the residents' investment in her is growing dividends, she is contributing to Hillingdon.
2. Residents of Hillingdon will be satisfied that the funding invested in partnership working to keep children in Hillingdon safe is changing children's lives.
3. Residents will be satisfied with the vigilance of partners in disruption activities for perpetrators and businesses who allow the exploitation and abuse of children.

Financial Implications

The Vulnerable Young People's Risk Management Panel fulfils a statutory duty and the cost is included in existing budgets.

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Legal Implications

Hillingdon will fulfil its statutory duty to Children at risk of or experiencing Child Sexual Exploitation under the Vulnerable Young People's Risk Management Strategy.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

List of documents referred to:

- Hillingdon Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy
- Operation Baker Report
- Pan London Safeguarding Procedures
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Vulnerable Young People's Risk Management Strategy
- Ofsted Report, May 2018