

## **Child Sexual Exploitation**

### **Purpose of report**

To update members on the latest national developments on child sexual exploitation (CSE), and to highlight ongoing LGA work to support council efforts to tackle CSE locally.

### **Summary**

This report summarises the latest national activity to tackle child sexual exploitation, including the findings of the Casey review into Rotherham council and the proposals presented as part of the government's response to the Jay Report. The report also updates members on progress with the LGA's child sexual exploitation action plan following January's high level CSE summit at Local Government House.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- a) discuss government proposals to strengthen local responses to CSE.
- b) discuss the LGA's ongoing work to support councils in tackling CSE.

### **Action**

Officers to take forward actions identified by members.

**Contact officer:** Ian Dean  
**Position:** Senior Adviser, Children's Social Care  
**Phone no:** 020 7665 3878  
**E-mail:** [ian.dean@local.gov.uk](mailto:ian.dean@local.gov.uk)

## **Background**

1. Over recent months, a series of inquiries and reviews have highlighted significant weaknesses in collective action to protect vulnerable children and young people from sexual exploitation. Although much of the attention has focussed on local authority child protection services, no single agency at national or local level has escaped criticism for responses that have all too often failed to keep children safe from harm.
2. In response to the issues highlighted in these reviews, the LGA developed a cross-Board action plan over the summer of 2014 to support local activity in tackling CSE. This report updates members on progress with this work, and also summarises key national developments since the previous update to CYP Board in January 2015.

## **National developments**

3. Following publication of the Jay Report in August 2014, Louise Casey was appointed to lead an independent inspection of Rotherham council. This inspection had a particular focus on leadership and governance, scrutiny, services for children and young people, taxi and private hire licensing, and whether the council 'covered up' information.
4. Casey reported on 4 February 2015, and concluded that the council was "not fit for purpose" due to significant concerns about current practice and culture. The government subsequently appointed a team of five commissioners, headed by Sir Derek Myers, to take on the full range of the authority's executive functions until 31 March 2019.
5. The following month, on 3 March 2015, the government held a Prime Ministerial summit on CSE and announced a package of measures to tackle some of the issues identified by the Jay Report and subsequent inquiries. Although the detail behind many of the proposals remains unclear, headlines include:
  - A new national whistleblowing portal for reports related to child abuse
  - A new national taskforce and centre of expertise to support areas with their local response to CSE
  - Consultation on introducing an offence of "wilful neglect" to children's social care, education and elected members
  - Reconfirmation of the government's intention to consult on mandatory reporting of child abuse
  - Granting child sexual abuse the status of a national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement
  - £1 million towards a communication campaign on identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect
  - New duties on local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs) to conduct regular local assessments on the effectiveness of local responses to CSE
  - A range of measures designed to improve information sharing between agencies
6. Separately, Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, and Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Constabulary and Probation announced plans to introduce multi-agency inspections of

child protection services across all agencies in a local area. This follows 18 months of sustained lobbying from the LGA and the Association of Directors of Children's Services.

### **Actions arising from LGA CSE summit**

7. On Tuesday 20 January 2015, the LGA hosted a high level child sexual exploitation summit in Westminster, held jointly with ADCS and Solace. This was a key commitment from the LGA's CSE action plan, and brought together over 100 council leaders, chief executives, lead members and directors of children's services with representatives from central government, health, police and the third sector.
8. It was agreed that there was a need for stronger leadership from local government on these issues, particularly in light of a perceived failure from Whitehall to deliver a robust and coordinated response. Three themes were highlighted for focussed activity over the coming months, two of which were subsequently included in the government announcements of 3 March:
9. The need for a national awareness raising campaign. However, the campaign announced by government falls short of the LGA's call to challenge wider societal attitudes, particularly towards adolescents who are often blamed for their own abuse and around the increasing sexualisation of childhood. The LGA will continue to lobby for this to be included in future national activity, and we will also work with councils to support local awareness raising work.
10. The need to address challenges around sharing of relevant information, between separate agencies but also within agencies and between local authorities (particularly when looked after children are placed out of area). The LGA will work with government on the range of information sharing initiatives subsequently announced, and will continue to assess whether additional work is required.
11. The need to identify and share examples of effective practice, and to support senior leaders to properly assess the impact of local work. The LGA published a CSE resource pack for councils at the summit, and will continue to collect case studies of local practice to share online at [www.local.gov.uk/cse](http://www.local.gov.uk/cse). The LGA also worked with DfE, DCLG and the Home Office to ensure that a recent assessment of the quality of local responses to CSE included a focus on identifying effective approaches at the frontline, examples of which were shared at the Prime Ministerial summit in March.

### **LGA action plan update**

12. Alongside actions arising from the 20 January CSE summit, the LGA is continuing to work on the activity previously agreed through our CSE Action Plan. This includes:
13. Assessing the effectiveness of current legal options to disrupt the activity of people suspected of involvement in CSE. Birmingham City Council recently secured civil injunctions banning ten men suspected of child sexual exploitation from approaching any girl under the age of 18. Injunctions were considered necessary due to a lack of existing statutory alternatives to restrict the activities of suspected abusers without the evidential threshold required by criminal courts. The subsequent introduction in March

2015 of a new Sexual Risk Order, which can be applied without the need for sexual harm to have taken place, is designed to strengthen the powers available to police and social workers to protect children at risk of CSE. The LGA will work with councils to consider the effectiveness of these new orders, and to establish whether further legal powers are required.

14. A strong focus on the role of regulation and licensing in preventing CSE. Having successfully lobbied against a government clause to relax taxi regulations, the LGA will hold a taxi licensing conference on 31 March 2015 to highlight the importance of all councils ensuring that their licensing processes are safe and robust. The conference will also see the launch of an updated councillor's handbook for taxi and PHV licensing, stressing the importance of robust fit and proper person tests before issuing a licence and advising councils to refuse licences to those with an indecency conviction. We have also updated our online regulation training module for councillors with information on preventing CSE, and have written to all Chairs of Licensing to highlight the role of taxis in CSE.
15. Supporting councillors in scrutinising local safeguarding children services. The LGA's recently published CSE resource pack includes key lines of enquiry for councillors to pursue when considering the effectiveness of local responses to CSE. We are also working with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) to revise and update guides for councillors scrutinising services for safeguarding children and children in care, last updated in 2012. The first of these, for scrutiny of safeguarding children services, will be published in April 2015.
16. Review of local safeguarding children boards. This project is due to report at the end of March 2015. Early findings suggest that a lack of secure funding, limited statutory powers and heightened expectations present significant challenges for LSCBs. This report, and the LGA's new programme of LSCB peer diagnostics, will be used to influence upcoming government work to examine the effectiveness of LSCBs in scrutinising local safeguarding practice.
17. Highlighting the impact of funding reductions and rising demand. New modelling from the LGA has identified a £2.6bn shortfall in children's social care funding by 2020, alongside rapidly increasing demand for services and a 40 per cent reduction in council budgets since 2010. The Government recently pledged £2 billion to an NHS system struggling to cope with winter pressures, and the LGA will argue that the pressures facing children's social care services require a similar response.

## **Recommendations**

18. Members are asked to:
  - a) discuss government proposals to strengthen local responses to CSE.
  - b) discuss the LGA's ongoing work to support councils in tackling CSE.

## **Financial implications**

19. The work outlined in this paper will be completed within existing resources.