



Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee

Report to the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee

Title:	Child Sexual Exploitation Service (CSE)
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Purpose of Agenda Item

The purpose of this report is to provide members with information about the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) service within Buckinghamshire and an overview of progress in this area.

Background

This is the first report to Select Committee in respect of CSE services in Buckinghamshire.

Issues regarding the sexual exploitation of children have been an emerging concern for Local Authorities nationally over the last 3 to 4 years. In response to this Buckinghamshire have established a specialist service called the SWAN unit, to respond to and proactively support children in Buckinghamshire where CSE may be a concern.

Summary

Recent referrals in Buckinghamshire and learning from historic concerns from adults who were abused as children through sexual exploitation has led to partner agencies in



Buckinghamshire developing a clear multi-agency approach to dealing with CSE and proactively promoting the well-being of children who are at risk from CSE.

The SWAN unit is a partnership arrangement of agencies within Buckinghamshire who collaborate to provide a coordinated response to children who are victims of CSE or may be at risk of CSE.

Whilst CSE is not widespread in Buckinghamshire it is an issue and is clearly a high risk area – hence the need to provide a proactive and responsive service.

Key issues

The SWAN Unit is co-located in Aylesbury Police Station and currently has 2 permanent CSE specialist social workers, 2 full time Police engagement officers, one RUSafe support worker (Barnardos), a part time Education Safeguarding Officer, a full time Detective Sergeant and a part time Safeguarding Nurse. The Social Workers are managed and supported by a Children's Social Care Practice Improvement Manager alongside the Detective Sergeant.

The agencies that make up SWAN, attend Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation meetings (MASE) which are held weekly to consider any ongoing vulnerable children's needs and when a child is deemed at immediate risk an urgent multi agency strategy meeting will be held. These meetings are chaired by the Children's Social Care Practice Improvement Manager in line with agreed procedures. In advance of the MASE meetings the agenda is sent out to all agencies (including virtual partners such as Oxford Health and CAMHS) to allow them to check their systems and provide electronic updates via secure email before the meeting, thus giving a comprehensive knowledge of each child being considered.

Social Workers within the SWAN unit will undertake specific assessments of children and young people where CSE is a concern and they will then also offer ongoing engagement and work when appropriate. Currently each of the SWAN Social Workers are undertaking work with 8 to 12 children each at any one time. Their role also allows them to offer support and advice to other Social workers who are working with children where there are CSE concerns. This allows for all children who live within Buckinghamshire to have an element of support from a specialist CSE Social Worker.

In addition to direct work with children, the 2 Social Workers are also involved in preparation and delivery of training for other agencies and services. They also offer a consultancy and advice role when necessary to key professionals and families within Buckinghamshire.

The correlation between children who go missing and CSE is also an emerging factor and we are looking to merge both these elements of vulnerability within the SWAN unit (see next steps).

To ensure that there is a fully coordinated approach to CSE at a strategic level there is a monthly multi agency meeting co-chaired by a Head of Children's Social Care and Detective Inspector CAIU. These meetings are referred to as M-SERAC – Missing and Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Conferences. These meetings consider the highest risk children who are known to be missing or at risk of CSE and are resident within Buckinghamshire. This may also consider other local authority children in care who are placed in Buckinghamshire.

In addition to the CSE services provided by the SWAN unit, Buckinghamshire County Council has also commissioned CSE services since 2006 and missing services since 2007. These are currently provided by Barnardo's R-U-Safe?, this CSE and missing service provision is being retendered for a new contract to be in place for the successful tender. This contract would then commence in April 2017 for three years.

The new contract has 3 aims:

1. To reduce the incidents of repeat episodes of young people going missing.
2. To reduce and prevent young people from being sexually exploited.
3. To support young people who go missing or are victims of CSE.

For the missing element of the contract it is expected that the service provider will offer and carry out Return Interviews with young people who have returned from going missing from home or care and undertake direct work with them to reduce the likelihood of repeat missing episodes and to reduce the risks to them should they go missing again.

With regard to the CSE element of the contract, the service provider is expected to undertake direct work with young people who have been identified as being at risk of CSE.

In the new contract the council is seeking the Service Provider to deliver a holistic and integrated service that provides added value for the benefit of children and young people which will include;

Preventive work, Additional support, Innovative approaches and support to non-eligible young people.

The Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB) has commissioned "Alter Ego" to perform a CSE awareness raising theatrical production, 'Chelsea's Choice', in schools for pupils in Years 8 and 9. This has been performed in the 14/15 and 16/17

academic years. Another production, Loud Mouth's 'Working for Marcus', was delivered to professionals.

The BSCB CSE sub-group organised 9 awareness raising evenings for parents across the county. These were fronted by colleagues from Children's Social Care, Thames Valley Police, Youth Services and Barnardo's R-U-Safe? Although attendance was disappointing, those parents attending gave very positive feedback.

Resource implications

The current arrangements for resourcing the SWAN unit are met within the financial envelope of each agency. For Children's Social Care this is currently the cost of 2 x Social Workers salary and part contribution to seating arrangements in the SWAN room.

Next steps

- Youth Offending Service – YOS have been virtual partners at the SWAN meetings (MASE) up until this date. The plan is now to progress this to the next step and they will be present at the weekly meetings from the 16th September 2016. Their input into the MASE meetings will be invaluable in making the links between the vulnerable children we all work with.
- Addaction Worker – An Addaction Worker has now been appointed to work in the MASH and they will also be part of the SWAN MASE meetings giving advice and possibly then linking their service into undertaking direct work with the children who are referred to the SWAN unit.
- CSE Nurse – From September there will be a CSE specialist nurse who will work in the Swan Unit 25 hours a week, including attendance at the weekly Swan MASE meetings held on Tuesdays. Having a CSE specialist nurse working in the Swan Unit will benefit children by offering them sexual health advice and also advise children and workers of any mental health issues and where to seek the most beneficial support.
- Work is being undertaken to target minority groups in Buckinghamshire to ensure they receive the information, advice and support that has been rolled out through the parents' evenings at our secondary schools.

- Training Taxi Drivers on CSE – Learning from other authorities, the Practice Improvement Manager has met with the transport commissioners from Buckinghamshire County Council and we are working together to incorporate the CSE training into their regular training schedule. We are also investigating the possibility of training options for taxi drivers in Buckinghamshire so they are aware of CSE risks and also repercussions and prosecutions that could face them if they aiding these risky behaviours.
- Children’s Social Care has purchased a specialist workspace for CSE for their child recording system. This will enable the SWAN team to gather information about child and adult victims and perpetrators in a secure place. We will be able to ensure that thorough multi-agency risk assessments are completed and intelligence gathered. The implementation date is end of October 2016.
- It is recognised that there are links between those Children who go missing and those at risk of CSE. Approximately 70% of children with CSE concerns in Bucks have had missing episodes and approximately 50% of the children who go missing have CSE concerns raised. Current protocols mean that referrals are not always made to Children’s Social Care the first occasion when a child goes missing. We want to change this practice so that multi-agency information can be gathered as soon as a child is at risk and work with them to reduce the number of repeat missing episodes and so prevent the risk escalating to exploitation (whether CSE, gangs, trafficking, modern day slavery or radicalisation) and potentially to prevent children being taken into care. To fund this developmental area of work an Innovation Bid for funding has been made. A decision on this bid is expected later this year.

The above developments will allow for the SWAN team to have a fully coordinated and informed approach to positively support and work with children who are vulnerable to exploitation and risks associated with CSE.