

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Early Years, Children and Youth Panel.	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	26th January 2015.	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Feedback on the Inter Council Peer Challenge Process; Child Sexual Exploitation.	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
N/A		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This report outlines the process and learning from the autumn 2014 Peer Challenge process in which we participated. The Peer Challenge process is an integral part of the South-West Sector-led Improvement initiative which is hosted by the South West Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS). The ADCS had run the previous Regional Peer Challenge process in the Autumn of 2012, and the feed-back from Local Authorities was that the 2014 Peer Challenge process needed to more focused on a set of key practice issues, and each Local Authority would choose one practice area that it wanted constructive challenge on in order to assist development and planning.
- 1.2 Following discussions in the Spring and Summer of 2014, which involved all Local Authorities in the South West region, the following topics were agreed; a) Neglect b) Children in Care placed far away c) Child Sexual Exploitation d) Children who go missing. From this range of topics, BaNES chose Child Sexual Exploitation to be the issues we wanted to be "challenged" on. It was also agreed that Bournemouth Borough Council would be our "Challengers" and undertake the scrutiny of our practice in relation to CSE. The purpose in choosing Child Sexual Exploitation was that we were aware that this was an issue that we were in the process of developing and were wanting to improve. Therefore, a critical challenge in relation to our progress and development would be timely and helpful in shaping future development.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Challenge process is to allow the Authority to have the views from a "critical friend" in relation to the strength of front-line practice, and the degree of effectiveness of a particular strategic initiative.
- 1.4 The Peer Challenge in BaNES was undertaken by Bournemouth Borough Council on the 8th and 9th October. This was followed this up with an ADCS regional event at the

end of November 2014 which involved all South-West Authorities to share learning from each of the challenge processes.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 There are no specific recommendations attached to this paper, it is tabled for the purposes of up-date and discussion.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 There are no specific resource or financial implications outlined or addressed in this paper as its remit is one of broad update.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 There are no specific statutory considerations to be addressed in this report. The Council will continue to address any identified issues of Child Sexual Exploitation under its powers under the Children Act 1989 and 2004.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Peer Challenge process set by the Sector-Led improvement group out-lined that the “challenge” would be based on an audit of five cases which would comprise a self-assessment, review of case materials, interviews with the allocated Social Worker and/or Manager, and where possible/appropriate an interview with the young person or parent. The challenge session would take place over two days, with verbal feed-back at the end and a written summary from the Local Authority that undertook the challenge.
- 5.2 As part of the self-assessment document which we provided to colleagues ahead of their arrival, we identified five key lines of enquiry that we felt would be helpful to us in identifying issues that needed to be scrutinised. These Key Lines of Enquiry were; a) Is the LA confident and clear about the identification of children at risk of sexual exploitation? (b) Is there evidence of a range of suitable responses available to meet the needs of CSE? (c) How are outcomes for children who have been sexually exploited measured/identified and is there evidence that they have been achieved? (d) Is there evidence that the work we have done (Risk Management Panel, awareness training, Risk Assessment Tool) beginning to feed through into practice and having an impact on outcomes? (e) Is there evidence that basic good practice from staff is integrated into working practice. What are we doing well and what do we need to improve?.
- 5.3 At the conclusion of the two day challenge visit colleagues from Bournemouth provided feedback against the five Key lines of enquiry we had given them. These were as follows;
- 5.4 “Is the LA confident and clear about the identification of children at risk of Sexual Exploitation?”; The peer challenge were satisfied that there was a confidence within the workforce in regard to identifying the risk of CSE. However, they also identified a need for further clarity in relation to thresholds and what type of intervention is then appropriate following the identification of CSE or potential risk factors associated with CSE. In addition, colleagues from Bournemouth also highlighted a possible need for staff in our Early Help settings to place more emphasis on the potential risks of CSE.

- 5.5 “Is there evidence of a range of suitable responses available to meet the needs of Child Sexual Exploitation ?” ; The challenge was able to identify evidence of a variety of interventions within BaNES and that one of the key interventions was the quality of the relationship with the key professional (usually the Social Worker). They also reported that some staff felt that it would be helpful to have a “tool-kit” or written guidance in relation to issues what to do when concerns of CSE have been identified. In some of the five cases they reviewed there was a lack of consistency of lead professional working with the young person, which appeared to have resulted in problems in developing a consistent and trusting relationship.
- 5.6 “How are outcomes for children who have been sexually exploited measured/identified, and is there evidence they have been achieved?”; The challenging team identified and praised the good quality of work on some cases from Project 28 which demonstrated good outcomes for those young people. However given the very small cohort of young people that the peer challenge team saw, they did not feel able to make any firm observations or recommendations in relation to whether one measurement or another could evidence positive outcomes. However they also highlighted their earlier observation of the importance of consistent and persistent involvement with young people and the positive practice they had seen from Social Workers.
- 5.7 “Is there evidence that the work we have done (Risk Management Panel/Awareness training/Risk Assessment Tool) is beginning to feed through into practice and have a positive impact on outcomes?”; The Peer Challenge team were able to identify a good awareness from all staff interviewed of the Risk Management Panel, and heard positive comments about the multi-agency representation at the panel which they found helpful. There were no delays in staff being able to access the panel to discuss and plan for cases. The Peer challenge team were also able to confirm that the cases going to the RMP demonstrated good multi-agency arrangements and often already evidenced robust action plans. However, the Peer Challenge team also confirmed some of the feed-back that we had already picked up from practitioners that the Panel was too large and meant that too often the discussion did not always focus on the CSE issues, and spent too long discussing issues that were tangential to the concerns of CSE. This meant that the panel simply endorsed the existing plan rather than providing sufficient challenge or discussion on the issues that staff wished to raise.
- 5.8 In relation to training on CSE, the Challenge Team highlighted that all staff involved in the Challenge process confirmed that they had received training on CSE, and that they were aware of the CSE Risk Assessment Tool. They noted that the tool was clear and easy to use that staff felt they understood how to use the tool to support decision making.
- 5.9 “Is there evidence that basic good practice is integrated into working practice, and what are we doing well and what do we need to improve?”; The Challenge team were able to highlight that Multi-Agency work in the cases audited was well-developed and that these arrangements were making a difference for young people. They confirmed their view that that they had seen “very good practice examples of co-ordination across agencies, Project 28, Youth services, Connecting Families and YOT. However they also raised the question that on some cases there was evidence of lots of professionals becoming involved in families and that sometimes this resulted in problems in co-ordinating and managing the plan. This also became confusing for families. However, the Challenge team also commented that the staff they had interviewed were aware of this and had already begun to take steps to rationalise and prioritise which professionals should remain involved in the interventions. Staff also commented to the Challenge team that they were comfortable in managing the risks associated with CSE providing that senior managers were clear about backing them to take these risks.

6 SUMMARY;

- 6.1 The Peer Challenge process was felt to be a positive process for BaNES. The slightly reduced scope of the process also meant that staff did not feel that this impinged too much on their everyday tasks and responsibilities and also meant they felt more engaged and involved in the process. None of the issues raised by the Challenge team were felt to be issues that we had not already identified as possible areas that we would need to address, and so it was re-assuring that the exercise did not highlight any surprises.
- 6.2 Since this exercise we have undertaken the following actions to strengthen our position and understanding of the challenges presented by CSE for BaNES. Subsequent to the Peer Challenge process the BaNES LSCB has approved the new CSE Strategy document, the CSE sub-group has also issued a CSE Practice Protocol and a draft referral work-flow. All of these documents are available to Council staff and staff in other agencies and will assist in providing the guidance and clarity in terms of the key issues on which professionals will need to remain vigilant, as well as providing guidance on what to do when concerns are identified.
- 6.3 We have also taken forward plans to re-focus the Risk Management Panel into a CSE Panel, with a reduced number of agencies. The group has a new Terms Of Reference and we have ensured that it also shares key information on Children Missing from Home, and Children Missing Education as well as focusing on cases where there has been an identified risk of CSE.
- 6.4 The training of our new “Virtual CSE Team” is also underway and this will assist in providing some continuity of skilled engagement for young people where they might be at risk of CSE. A further round of more specialist training for staff is also underway. All 100 places on this training are now booked/confirmed.
- 6.5 It will be important that the effectiveness of each of these initiatives is reviewed regularly so that we can gauge the impact we are having in relation to CSE and reducing the risk to our vulnerable young people. This will be done via the LSCB and our own internal audit processes.

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Background papers	<i>LSCB CSE Strategy. CSE Protocol</i>
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