

21st June 2021

Agenda Item: 6

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE – ACTION PLAN

Purpose of the Report

1. The report updates the Committee on the progress made in completing the recommendation to Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in its report 'Children in the Care of Nottinghamshire Councils'.
2. The report also seeks approval from the Committee that all steps set out in Action 12 of the IICSA Action Plan have been completed and the Committee will not require future updates in relation to this action.

Information

3. IICSA is an independent statutory Inquiry which is investigating whether public bodies and other non-state institutions in England and Wales have taken seriously their responsibility to protect children from sexual abuse, and make meaningful recommendations for change in the future. The Inquiry was announced in 2014 and led by Professor Alexis Jay, with the Nottinghamshire Councils (Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council) investigation being announced in November 2015. The Inquiry consists of 15 investigations across a wide range of institutions including Local Authorities, the Police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Immigration Service, the armed forces, schools, hospitals, churches, charities and voluntary organisations. The Nottinghamshire Councils investigation focussed on children who were sexually abused whilst in the care of the Councils and lived in residential homes or with foster families. The Inquiry published the 'Children in the Care of Nottinghamshire Councils' report in July 2019.
4. The report set out the findings from their investigation into the institutional response of Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire Police and the Crown Prosecution Service to allegations of sexual abuse made by children who were abused whilst in the care of the Councils and who lived in residential homes or with foster carers. IICSA provided one recommendation to Nottinghamshire County Council and requested a response within six months of publication of the report.
5. In response to the IICSA report's findings and its one recommendation for the Council, 12 specific actions were identified under five key themes as previously reported to Policy Committee in September 2019 and in more detail to the Children and Young People's

Committee in December 2019. The Council informed IICSA that its identified actions were contained within the published report to the Children and Young People's Committee. By publishing the Action Plan, the Council met its requirement to IICSA, under its power of the Public Hearing Act, to publish the Council's response within six months. IICSA has acknowledged this and published a summary of the actions agreed in response to the recommendation.

6. Nottinghamshire County Council's Action plan went further than the recommendation and identified five themes which are: Support for Victims and Survivors; Governance and Scrutiny; Harmful Sexual Behaviour; Current Residential and Fostering Services and the Council's response to the specific IICSA recommendation to seek assurance regarding those working with children in residential care and foster care.
7. This report is focused on the planned actions undertaken in response to the IICSA recommendation. The IICSA report had one recommendation for Nottinghamshire County Council. This was to assess the risk posed by current and former residential care staff and foster carers. The recommendation also stated that the County Council should ensure that residential care staff and foster carers provided by external agencies should be assessed by those agencies. The Council's response to this recommendation was established as Actions 10, 11 and 12 in the IICSA Action Plan.

Staffing Review

Action 10 – Complete review of existing residential staff and take any necessary actions.

Action 11 – Review information available in relation to former members of staff and determine any necessary actions using a risk-based approach.

8. Prior to the publication of the IICSA report, a process had already begun to review the existing children's residential workforce in order to be assured of their suitability. It was clarified for staff that the methodology would be to consider information held on personal files and any employment procedures, as well as seeking the views of line managers. The findings were considered by a Panel chaired by the Corporate Director of Children and Families Service and including the Service Director for Youth, Families and Social Work and the Service Director Customers, Governance and Employees. The Panel meetings were concluded in March 2020. An independent social work consultant was engaged to consider any issues raised related to:
 - a. if any residential staff had not been appointed in accordance with safe recruitment practice and if so whether further action was required?
 - b. if any residential staff had given rise to safeguarding concerns that had not been dealt with appropriately and if so whether further action was required?
9. This review is being considered in two phases. Phase one covered Clayfields House and phase two the remaining residential children's homes. Phase one has been completed and work has now commenced on phase two.
10. In respect of former employees, work has begun to gather information to underpin this next stage. It is planned that Panel meetings will resume to give consideration to these

individuals, particularly in relation to ensuring that relevant notifications have been made to safeguarding bodies as appropriate. This phase will be completed by the end of September this year.

Foster Carer Review

Action 12 – Senior managers will scope the approach to the assessment of the potential risks posed by current and former foster carers, for incorporation into the comprehensive action plan.

11. The previous report to Committee, in September 2020, updated that an Independent Consultant had completed the review of current and former Nottinghamshire County Council foster carers. A report was completed providing an overview of the findings and recommendations to continue to develop and improve practice. This was followed by a seminar hosted by the consultant with the Council's fostering service in October 2020. The fostering service developed an action plan to undertake the recommendations. Current foster carers will also continue to be subject to ongoing annual reviews of their suitability to foster in line with current regulations.
12. In respect of Independent Fostering Agencies, a joint-approach has been taken with Nottingham City Council, who had the same recommendation in the IICSA report. Engagement with relevant Independent Fostering Agencies to undertake their own internal reviews has been completed and their responses collated. A report was brought to a joint meeting of Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Children's Safeguarding Partnership Board. This board will provide recommendations if further actions are required.
13. In regard to this action, all steps set out in the Action Plan have therefore been completed.

Next Steps for IICSA

14. The Nottinghamshire Councils investigation is one of 15 IICSA investigations and is one of three investigations that focusses on events within named local authorities. The other two local authority investigations are the 'Cambridge House, Knowl View and Rochdale' investigation and 'Children in the Care of Lambeth Council' investigation.
15. The Rochdale investigation report was published in April 2018. The public hearing for the Lambeth investigation concluded in July 2020, an investigation report is due to be published in the summer of 2021. At the conclusion of the Children in the Care of Lambeth Council investigation, the evidence from the three local authority investigations (Rochdale, both Nottinghamshire Councils and Lambeth), as well as further relevant evidence from research workstreams, will be considered by the Inquiry. This may lead to further recommendations by the Inquiry for all local authorities.
16. All of the investigations' public hearings have concluded, with the investigation reports continuing to be published through 2021. A Chair and Panel's Final Report is expected to be published upon conclusion, but a date has not yet been made available.

Other Options Considered

17. No other options were considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

18. The County Council is supportive of the report by IICSA and will fulfil the recommendation in order to produce assurance that any risks posed by current and former residential staff and foster carers have been addressed in order to keep children in the Council's care safe.

Statutory and Policy Implications

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

20. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

21. The assessment of potential risks posed by current and former residential staff and foster carers should strengthen arrangements for the safeguarding of children and adults.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Committee:

- 1) notes the update on progress made in response to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) recommendation for Nottinghamshire County Council in its report 'Children in the Care of Nottinghamshire Councils'.
- 2) agrees that Action 12 of the action plan has been completed and the Committee will not require future updates in relation to this action.

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Constitutional Comments (GR 07/06/21)

22. Pursuant to the Nottinghamshire County Constitution this Committee has the delegated authority to both receive this report and make the recommendations contained within it.

Financial Comments (SAS 28/05/21)

23. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Staffing Resources for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse - report to Policy Committee on 15 June 2016](#)

[Responses to Historical Child Abuse – Resources - report to Policy Committee on 20 December 2017](#)

[Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse - report to Full Council on 18 January 2018](#)

[Response to Historical Child Abuse – Resources - report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 18 March 2019](#)

Children in the care of the Nottinghamshire Councils Investigation Report – July 2019

[Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse – Initial Response – report to Policy Committee on 18 September 2019](#)

Guidance for Elected Members – Visits to Children’s Residential Homes - report to Children’s Homes Governance Board – September 2019

[Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse – action plan – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 16 December 2019](#)

[Establishing a Managing Allegations Service – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 15 June 2020](#)

[Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse – action plan – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 21 September 2020](#)

[Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse \(IICSA\) - Independent Fostering Agencies review – June 2021](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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