

16<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Agenda Item: 12

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES**

### **HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR BY CHILDREN**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Committee with information regarding the work being undertaken by the Local Authority and relevant partner organisations regarding sexually harmful behaviour by children.

#### **Information**

2. On 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019 Policy Committee received a report of the findings of and the Council's initial response to the publication of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) report "Children in the Care of Nottinghamshire Councils". Responses to Harmful Sexual Behaviour was one of the areas considered by IICSA. Policy Committee agreed a recommendation that a report on Nottinghamshire's response to Harmful Sexual Behaviour be taken to the Children and Young People's Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019. The IICSA report noted that "More recently the County has taken steps to evaluate and improve its response to harmful sexual behaviour". This report seeks to provide assurance to Elected Members as to Nottinghamshire's response to Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) and sets out a programme for future action and explains the existing governance structures.

3. Nottinghamshire has adopted the NSPCC's definition of HSB by children:

*'One or more children engaging in sexual discussions or acts that are inappropriate for their age or stage of development. These can range from using sexually explicit words and phrases to full penetrative sex with other children or adults.'*

4. In 2017 a multi-agency organisational audit was carried out using a tool provided by the NSPCC and this was followed by an audit of case work in 2018. These audits identified a number of areas for improvement which led to recommendations and actions overseen by Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board and the successor Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP).
5. Included within the actions was a programme of awareness training for a wide group of staff working with children, training for social work and youth justice staff carrying out specialist "AIM" (Assessment, Intervention and Moving on) assessments of children who have displayed sexually harmful behaviour and the introduction of a new model for intervention,

Good Lives. Both AIM and Good Lives have established evidence bases to show their effectiveness. A small number of staff have also received training on working with young people with complex needs who sexually harm and on technology assisted harmful sexual behaviour.

6. At the time of writing 68 social workers have been trained to complete AIM assessments with an additional 10 youth justice case workers AIM trained. Staff across children's services have also been trained to deliver Good Lives interventions. This is sufficient to meet currently identified need.
7. Procedures for staff within the Local Authority have been revised and guidance for schools, who regularly need to make sensitive judgements about children's behaviour, has been developed by the Council's Tackling Emerging Threats to Children team. The 'Brook Traffic Light Tool' has been adopted by the NSCP for use by all partners to help make judgements about presenting sexualised behaviours and appropriate actions to be taken including whether a safeguarding referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) should be made.
8. A new process within the 'Mosaic' electronic case recording system has been developed and recently introduced. Once embedded this should enable robust and automated reporting of data on sexual harm and this will allow an ongoing assessment of prevalence and the effectiveness of the response by agencies.
9. One of the issues highlighted in the audits was that of ensuring the consistency of response. A key change in this regard has been the establishment of a new Harmful Sexual Behaviour Panel in June 2018. This multi-agency panel considers all cases where a child has been the subject of an AIM assessment. The panels are held monthly and are independently chaired. They have a standing panel which includes representatives from children's social care, youth offending service, educational psychology, police and health. Operational staff attend panels to present cases and assessments are carefully considered and recommendations for further action agreed where required.
10. Between June 2018, when the HSB panel was established, and May 2019, 50 cases have been assessed and presented to the panel. The profile of children within this cohort fits with national research on the subject, that being predominantly primarily boys in the 14-16 years age group.
11. Two case audit exercises have been completed since the establishment of the panel, reporting into the NSCP in November 2018 and June 2019. The audits showed positive progress in terms of timeliness and consistency of practice, evidence of use of recommended assessment tools in the majority of cases and the HSB panel rigorously examining cases and making appropriate recommendations for action that in the vast majority of cases were completed.
12. A specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provision has been recommissioned for intervention in cases where there are higher levels of concern or complexity. In addition, a regionally based 'Forensic CAMHS' was established in the second half of 2018. This is primarily consultative but provides an additional layer of expertise to local practitioners in understanding risk and planning interventions in the most concerning cases.

13. The multi-agency arrangements for assessment and intervention are overseen by the NSCP. A HSB steering group with senior representatives from the involved organisations has been established. The steering group is responsible for providing the direct oversight of the HSB Panel, procedures, tools and training. The panel ensures that there are sufficient trained staff to complete both specialist assessments and interventions as well as commissioned services where required. Progress is regularly monitored by reporting to the NSCP Safeguarding, Assurance and Improvement Group (SAIG).
14. A further multi-agency case audit under the auspices of the NSCP is to be carried out in 2020. This will focus on both procedural compliance and the effectiveness of interventions. Initial planning for the audit will take place in December 2019 where the detailed scope and plan will be determined. The findings of the audit will be reported into the NSCP in June 2020. The multi-agency 'organisational' audit (carried out in 2017) will also be re completed and reported into the NSCP in the same timescale.
15. The training needs of professionals will be reviewed over the coming months. A revised version of the AIM assessment tool has been developed by GMAP (the specialist independent organisation who developed the tool) and this may necessitate additional input for staff.
16. In the next six months the steering group will explore how work in this area can be better informed by the views of children and young people. This will be both those alleged to have perpetrated harmful behaviours and importantly the victims, ensuring the needs of both groups are met.
17. The steering group will work with colleagues to develop a data set to provide a clear on-going picture of the scale, nature and response to harmful sexual behaviour by children and young people.

### **Other Options Considered**

18. No other options have been considered.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

19. Harmful sexual behaviour by children is a significant concern to the public and Elected Members and has been considered by the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA). The recommendation is made to ensure that the Committee has an opportunity to be informed about current practice and direct further work in any areas of ongoing concern.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

20. 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**

21. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

1) That Committee agrees to receive an annual report on Nottinghamshire's response to Harmful Sexual Behaviour by children and that this be included in the work programme.

**Laurence Jones**  
**Service Director, Commissioning and Resources**

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## **Constitutional Comments (AK 21/11/19)**

22. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee under its terms of reference.

## **Financial Comments (SAS 20/11/19)**

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.

<https://legacy.brook.org.uk/our-work/the-sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool>

[Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse – initial response: report to Policy Committee on 18th September 2019](#)

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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