

11 February 2016

Tackling Emerging Threats to Children Project Update

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this briefing note is to provide an update to the Schools Forum on the financial position of the *Tackling Emerging Threats to Children* project, following the Secretary of State's decision to decline the £1.2m funding from the Schools Budget reserve.

2. Background & Context

- 2.1 In September 2015, the Schools Forum unanimously approved funding of £1.2m over three years towards the *Tackling Emerging Threats to Children* project, which aimed to support schools and parents to safeguard children against a broad range of emerging threats. These threats include the risks children face from **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**, **online grooming** and **radicalisation**, as well as associated **internet safety** concerns.
- 2.2 The project was initiated in response to the growing trend of exploitation and abuse of children and young people, particularly through the internet and social media. In particular, concerns around CSE and radicalisation have become increasingly prevalent politically and in the media, and continue to be of concern locally in Nottinghamshire. This growing concern has been reinforced by David Cameron, who has described CSE as a "*national threat*" that is "*occurring on an industrial scale*". In October 2015, David Cameron also stressed the need to "*protect children and vulnerable people from the risk of radicalisation by empowering parents and public institutions.*"
- 2.3 The outcome of the project is intended to strengthen the response of schools and other universal providers to combat exploitative activity towards children, to promote resilience, prevention and early intervention, as well as supporting schools to confidently comply with Ofsted safeguarding requirements.

3. Progress to Date

- 3.1 In order to support schools and parents to effectively recognise and respond to such threats, the County Council has developed four tiers of support for schools, children and their families; this includes **universal**, **targeted** and **specialist support**, alongside a **recovery support** offer, funded by Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Groups.
- 3.2 Working Groups have been established for each tier of support, which include representatives from the County Council, schools, Nottinghamshire Police and Health. The progress to date of each support offer is as follows:

a. Universal Support to Schools

Work has been underway to develop a single, unified package of universal support to schools against the risks outlined above. This will allow all schools to access lesson plans, guidance and best practice with regard to radicalisation,

CSE, extremism, internet safety and cyberbullying. As the Schools Forum will remember, these are all areas that schools have requested support from other agencies to help them deal with these ongoing and emerging threats. This work has been in conjunction with ongoing activity within the County Council to develop a **Schools Health Hub**, to support schools to improve the health and educational outcomes of their pupils. Key areas of work include:

- A structural realignment within the County Council’s “Support to Schools” Service, to establish three *Universal Support Consultant* posts (only one of the three posts will be funded by the Schools Budget Reserve). These posts are responsible for:
 - promoting partnerships with accredited agencies to support mental health and build personal resilience. These have yet to be commissioned but would focus on charities and private organisations with a strong track record in this area;
 - sourcing, developing and maintaining accessible resources, lesson plans and guidance for schools in relation to emerging threats, to be available on the *Nottinghamshire Schools Portal*;
 - identifying and disseminating national good practice to schools;
 - facilitating networks of support between schools in each of the three Nottinghamshire localities;
 - providing quality assurance of providers of support and signposting schools;
 - providing consultation and advice to schools on emerging threats to children.
- The establishment of a *Universal Support to Schools Monitoring Board*, which is to monitor and oversee support offered to schools, discuss further emerging needs arising from the national agenda and undertake a needs analysis of schools in each locality.
- The development of a commissioning specification to enable an independent company or charity to become a ‘critical friend’, in order to provide independent challenge, highlight gaps in provision and evaluate the effectiveness of practice.

3.3 Targeted Support:

In order to support schools when concerns about a child first emerge, three additional *Early Help Case Manager* posts have been established within Nottinghamshire’s Early Help Unit, to sit alongside three existing locality-based Case Managers. The posts will focus on support and advice to schools when concerns do not meet the threshold for formal early help or social care services, and they will attend multi-agency CSE Concerns Network meetings. The six Case Managers will be split across the three localities and will be a point of contact for all schools within their geographical area.

3.4 Specialist Support:

In collaboration with Nottinghamshire Police, a service specification has been developed to commission a specialist support service for children who are risk of, or have been, sexually exploited. The aim of the service is to support children to move towards a safer and more settled lifestyle and recover from sexual exploitation by:

- reducing the number of children experiencing CSE in Nottinghamshire through preventative strategies;
- increasing the numbers of children identified at an earlier stage; and
- increasing the number of children at risk of, or victim to CSE, accessing quality support.

3.5 **Recovery Support:**

Funding from Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Groups will be utilised to commission a recovery support service in relation to survivors of CSE, who are identified as a priority for health and therapeutic support.

4. **Response of the Secretary of State**

4.1 The proposed funding source for this project was the Non ISB Schools Budget reserve, subject to Schools Forum and Secretary of State approval.

4.2 These approvals are required under *The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2015*, as the expenditure would be categorised as a 'combined budget' and there are restrictions on new commitments or increases in that budget from those already reported in 2012-13 via the Section 251 Budget Statement.

4.3 The Schools Forum unanimously approved the use of the funding at the meeting of the Schools Forum on 15 September 2015, but the Secretary of State has decided, at present, **not** to approve the application. The reason given for the decision is as follows:

"This proposal is inconsistent with the policy of maximum delegation to schools as schools should be able to make their own decision on how to use the funding.

We would suggest the authority or the Local Safeguarding Children's Board could offer a package of support and suggest to schools which wish to purchase this provision to group together and purchase it without committing other schools."

4.4 As a result of this response, no funding can be made available from the Non ISB reserve to support any expenditure by the Local Authority on this project. However, discussion is ongoing and the Schools Forum will be kept updated.

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