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Meeting	Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date	9 September 2013
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Tackling Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Grooming</b>
Report of	<b>Cabinet Member for Education Children and Families.</b>
Summary	This report sets out the actions that Barnet Safeguarding Children Board is undertaking to prevent and tackle childhood sexual abuse within the borough.
Officer Contributors	Teresa DeVito, Interim Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Status (public or exempt)	Public
Wards affected	All
Enclosures	n/a
Reason for urgency / exemption from call-in	Not applicable
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## **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.2. That the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report and comment where appropriate.**
- 1.3. That the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the inclusion of an item within its work programme that reviews the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).**

## **2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS**

- 2.1 None

## **3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1. Safeguarding is a key priority for the Council and partners and is reflected in strategic partnership goals including the Corporate Plan 2013 - 14, Health and Well-being Strategy, Sustainable Community Strategy and Commissioning Strategy.
- 3.2 The Corporate Plan includes the strategic objective 'to create better life chances for children and young people across the borough' with an emphasis on early intervention and support and a further objective 'to promote family and community well-being' with a commitment to 'strengthen our approach to safeguarding'.
- 3.3 Safeguarding children and adults from avoidable harm or abuse underpins everything we do and is the responsibility of everyone who works for or with the London Borough of Barnet.
- 3.4 One of the key priorities of the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board is to safeguard young people at risk of peer violence and exploitation.

## **4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

- 4.1 There is a risk that lack of awareness of child sexual exploitation may lead to the under-identification of this issue for those involved in safeguarding children. The actions of the Barnet Safeguarding Children 'Task and Finish' Group on Child Sexual Exploitation which include raising awareness across agencies will work to mitigate this risk.

## **5. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

5.1 The national statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children states that “the requirements of effective safeguarding systems are child centred”. A child centred approach is supported by the Children Act 1989 & 2004 and the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act puts a responsibility on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. This applies to the process of identification of need and risk faced by individual children and the process of assessment. No child or group of children must be treated any less favourably than others in being able to access effective services which meet their particular needs. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides an international agreement that protects the rights of children and provides a child centred framework for the development of services to children. The UK government ratified the UNCRC in 1991.

### **5.2 Who Are The Victims?**

A recent study by the Children’s Commission Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups<sup>1</sup> showed that children and young people of a range of ages, both male and female, of a range of ethnicities, who identify as heterosexual, homosexual, lesbian or bisexual, and some of whom are disabled, have been sexually exploited in either gangs or groups. Furthermore, children from loving and secure homes can be abused in gangs and groups, as well as children with pre-existing vulnerabilities. Those for whom there are no protective measures in place are at greatest risk.

5.3 The characteristics common to all victims are not their age, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation, rather their powerlessness and vulnerability. The majority of sexually-exploited children are living at home when their abuse begins. However, a disproportionate number are living in residential care compared to the total number of children in care.

5.4 A child faces the risk of sexual exploitation at the hands of a gang or a group in their neighbourhood, home, and school, among peer groups or at places such as parks, shopping centres, parties, bus and train stations, and in hotels and guesthouses. Research has evidenced that sexually-exploited children and young people range in age from 4 to 19 years with a peak age of 15 years. Victims involved with a gang tended to be younger than those involved with a group.

5.5 The vast majority of victims identified are girls. There is no doubt that girls and young women are at much greater risk than boys and young men and

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<sup>1</sup> Data in 5.2 through to 5.12 has been sourced from the Children’s Commission Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups November 2012 – for details see Background Papers

- are targeted due to the way some men and boys perceive women and girls. Questions must be asked about prevailing attitudes towards women and girls in some parts of society.
- 5.6 Victims of child sexual exploitation were identified as coming from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Nationally there is a higher rate of victimisation among black and minority ethnic (BME) children and young people than has been previously identified. Figures show that 28% of victims reported to the Inquiry undertaken by the Office of the Children's Commissioner, were from black and ethnic minority backgrounds. This information is significant, given that the general perception appears to be that sexual exploitation by groups, in particular, is primarily a crime against white children.
- 5.7 **`Who are the Perpetrators?`**  
Far less is known about the individual characteristics of perpetrators of child sexual exploitation than is known about their victims. Agencies rarely record data on those who perpetrate Child Sexual Exploitation and what they do record is often incomplete or inconsistent. In addition, victims are frequently able to provide only aliases, nicknames or physical descriptions of perpetrators.
- 5.8 Recent public and media attention on the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation has focused on high-profile court cases. These have mainly involved adult males of British Pakistani origin and White British female victims. Given the publicity surrounding these cases it is clear that the police, children's social care services and other agencies have been effective in readily identifying perpetrators and victims with similar individual characteristics to those involved in such cases. However, evidence has shown that this issue is widespread and there is more than one type of perpetrator, model and approach to child sexual exploitation by gangs and groups.
- 5.9 In the Inquiry by the Office of the Children's Commissioner it emerges that gender is the most significant identifying feature of perpetrators. The substantial majority of perpetrators identified were men and boys: 72% male, 10% female and 18% undisclosed gender. The vast majority of groups and gangs involved male-only perpetrators. In only one case was a female-only group of perpetrators reported which involved girls under the age of 18. In terms of age the evidence identified perpetrators who ranged in age from 12 to 75 years so this was not seen as a significant identifying factor.
- 5.10 As with the victim data, individuals classified as `White` form the largest group of perpetrators in both gangs and groups. BME individuals,

particularly those loosely recorded or reported as 'Asian', are the second largest category of perpetrators reported.

- 5.11 The circumstances in which children are abused can be deeply confusing with the result that the victims often simply do not know the identities or numbers of people involved. Children have described 'parties' involving several men who raped and sexually assaulted them, incidents where they were intoxicated or drugged so they did not know what was happening to them, and being taken to many different locations where they were assaulted.
- 5.12 As a result, it is not possible to say or even estimate accurately how many people in England are sexually exploiting children in gangs and groups. The fact that the majority of perpetrators remain unidentified is of concern and a conclusion must be drawn that the actual number of perpetrators is likely to be substantially greater than is reported.

## **6. USE OF RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (Finance, Procurement, Performance & Value for Money, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

- 6.1 The Barnet Safeguarding Children Board's multi agency task and finish group on child sexual exploitation will be set up from and operate within existing resources.

## **7. LEGAL ISSUES**

- 7.1 Working Together is national statutory guidance and should be complied with unless exceptional circumstances arise.
- 7.2 Working Together to Safeguard Children sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. This guidance is issued under:
  - (i) section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which requires local authorities in their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State;
  - (ii) section 11(4) of the Children Act 2004 which requires each person or body to which the section 11 duty applies to have regard to any guidance given to them by the Secretary of State; and
  - (iii) section 16 of the Children Act 2004, which states that local authorities and each of the statutory partners must, in exercising their functions relating to Local Safeguarding Children Boards, have regard to any guidance given to them by the Secretary of State.

- (iv) Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 - Section 1(8)(h) requires the police and crime commissioner to hold the chief constable to account for the exercise of the latter's duties in relation to safeguarding children under section 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004.
- (v) Crime and Disorder Act 1998 - Section 38 requires local authorities, within the delivery of youth justice services, to ensure the provision of persons to act as appropriate adults to safeguard the interests of children and young persons detained or questioned by police officers.
- (vi) Education Act 2002 - Section 175 places a duty on local authorities in relation to their education functions, the governing bodies of maintained schools and the governing bodies of further education institutions (which include sixth-form colleges) to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are either pupils at a school or who are students under 18 years of age attending further education institutions.
- (vii) The same duty applies to independent schools (which include Academies/free schools) by virtue of regulations made under section 157 of this Act.

## **8. CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS (Relevant section from the Constitution, Key/Non-Key Decision)**

- 8.1. Council Constitution, Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules – the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee has responsibility:
  - To scrutinise the Council and its partners in the discharge of statutory duties in relation to safeguarding; and
  - To scrutinise the council's procedures in relation to the protection and welfare of children

## **9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 9.1. Child sexual exploitation is a form of abuse which involves children and young people being forced or manipulated into sexual activity in exchange for something – money, gifts or accommodation or less tangible goods such as affection or status.
- 9.2. Since 2010, the scale of this abuse has become clearer, with police investigations and the launch of a two-year Inquiry by the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England into sexual exploitation in gangs and

groups. In 2011, the Government appointed the Children's Minister as the lead minister for child sexual exploitation and produced a National Action Plan.

9.3. The Barnet Safeguarding Children Board has set up a multi-agency 'task and finish' group to review the prevalence of Child Sexual Exploitation within the borough and to make recommendations to the strategic Board. The key objectives for this group are:

- develop an understanding of the potential scale and nature of this issue in Barnet
- establish what factors make children and young people particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation within Barnet
- establish what factors facilitate the internal trafficking of children and young people for the purpose of sexual exploitation within Barnet
- establish levels of professional awareness of this issue
- consider what interventions there are, and which of these are currently being utilised in Barnet and whether there are any gaps in provision
- identify any examples of good practice
- raise public awareness of this issue.

9.4. The broad definition of child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups is this:

- (i) Gang – mainly comprising men and boys aged 13 – 25 years old, who take part in many forms of criminal activity, such as knife crime or robbery, who can engage in violence against other gangs and who have identifiable markers such as territory, a name, sometimes clothing etc. While children can be sexually exploited by a gang, this is not the reason why a gang is formed.
- (ii) By contrast, child sexual exploitation by a group involves people who come together in person or online for the purpose of setting up, co-ordinating and/or taking part in the sexual exploitation of children in either an organised or opportunistic way.

9.5. Sexually exploited children are rarely visible on the streets, and it is therefore difficult to gather meaningful data. Moreover, street based sexual exploitation of children is only a small part of the bigger picture of sexual exploitation of children by adults and other children and young people. A recent Barnardo's study<sup>2</sup> identified a total number of 507 separate cases of child sexual exploitation in London, and the total number of children likely to be at risk across London was 1,002.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Running from hate to what you think is love (the relationship between running away and child sexual exploitation)' Barnados 2013 – for details see Background Papers.

- 9.6. A growing number of the young people are being sexually exploited by adults and older young people they met via the internet. This is referred to as 'information and communication technology (ICT)-based abuse', and the access it affords to groom children for abuse has contributed to the invisibility of the sexual exploitation of children.
- 9.7. The age range of children who are victimised through sexual exploitation has come down in recent years from the 16 - 18 age groups, to children under 16 years of age. The evidence is that children across all cultures, and including a significant proportion of children in the care of local authorities, can be at risk of sexual exploitation.
- 9.8. In some cases, children may be drawn into sexual exploitation by peers who are already involved. Girls in particular are frequently coerced into sexual exploitation by an older young person or man who poses as, and who they view as, their boyfriend. The girl becomes physically and emotionally dependent upon the 'boyfriend', and this may be reinforced by the use of alcohol and drugs. Over time, the girl's access to her friends and family becomes curtailed and she becomes alienated from agencies which may be able to identify and interrupt the abuse.
- 9.9. **Barnet Response**
- (i) The Barnet Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) has formed a multi agency 'task & finish' group, co-chaired by the Interim Head of Safeguarding and the Police.
  - (ii) This group will scope Child Sexual Exploitation in Barnet using the self assessment tool included in the Children's Commissioners report and information from work conducted after inquiries and convictions by other areas such as, Rochdale, Derby and Oxford
  - (iii) Barnet have launched a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which will be effective in joining and sharing of information across agencies.
  - (iv) The police will work with partner agencies, including third sector specialist organisations, to log information on the girls and young women linked to gang members, and then risk-assess these young people for sexual exploitation
  - (v) All processes and procedures will be reviewed and the BSCB will agree policies and procedures for ensuring partner agencies including children's social care services, Youth Offending Team and police work cooperatively to identify and deal with children and young people who are both victims and perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation. These procedures should be incorporated into the BSCB's Child Sexual Exploitation strategy and monitored for effective practice.
  - (vi) The police will consider multi agency intelligence to profile local risk



- (vii) Having reviewed research on Child Sexual Exploitation and other authorities. The task & finish group has concluded that the voluntary and third sector will have an important role to play in accessing funds and delivering services that could be complementary to those commissioned by the Council. Therefore this aspect will form an important part of a partnership strategy.
- (viii) The BSCB should ensure that the core training delivered to all professionals who come into contact with children and young people should include information on warning signs, and impact, of child sexual exploitation, to ensure victim identification, and should outline an implementation plan for training as part of their next business plan.
- (ix) The Child Sexual Exploitation task & finish group will link with the sub group responding to E-safety to identify the risks around exploitation via internet tools and devices.
- (x) A recommendation will be made to the Adult Safeguarding Board to review information on exploitation of vulnerable adults alongside the work by the BSCB.

## 10. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1. ['Running from hate to what you think is love \(the relationship between running away and child sexual exploitation\)'](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/research_and_publications/publication-view.jsp?pid=PUB-2100) Emilie Smeaton Barnados and Paradigm Research 2013  
[http://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/research\\_and\\_publications/publication-view.jsp?pid=PUB-2100](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/research_and_publications/publication-view.jsp?pid=PUB-2100)
- 10.2. ["I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world"](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/info/csegg1) The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation In Gangs and Groups Interim report November 2012  
<http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/info/csegg1>

<b>Cleared by Finance</b>	JH
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