



## **Kirklees LSCB child sexual exploitation review**

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**CONTENTS:****PAGE:**

Introduction:	1
Timescales and Methodology	1
Acknowledgements	2
The Reviewing Organisation	3
Overview	4
Observations	5
Key Areas of Focus Going Forward	8
Appendices	12

**Nomenclature:**

KCS	Kirklees Children's Services
KSCB	Kirklees Safeguarding Children Board
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
RAV team	Risk and Vulnerability team
CE	Criminal Exploitation
CCE	Child Criminal Exploitation
NRM	National Referral Mechanism

## **Introduction**

The NWG CSE Response Unit was commissioned by Kirklees Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) to carry out a review of the current partnership response to child sexual exploitation (CSE). The review was commissioned following an OFSTED inspection of children's services, and subsequent monitoring visits that have illustrated an improving picture.

This review sits alongside a review of Historical cases and an overview of the current Contextual safeguarding strategy. It is intended that all the work will report together to give the Board a fuller picture of assurance.

The main focus of this review was to examine the current policies, procedures and practices, with a view to improving the outcomes and responses for children who had been or were at risk of CSE.

Terms of reference were established in liaison with KSCB which identified the following key lines of enquiry:

1. To provide independent specialist opinion into the current practice in regard to Child Sexual Exploitation, to include but not limited to current pathways into support.
2. To determine what steps have been taken to ensure practitioners are equipped to identify children and young people who are potentially at risk of being exploited and consider how effective these measures have been.
3. To review transition into Adult services, as well as considering how effective these measures have been in protecting children and young people through that transmission phase.
4. To consider the effectiveness of current CSE governance structures in Kirklees in relation to both operational practice and strategic oversight – with particular focus on the current Strategy, Action Plan and Risk and Vulnerability strategy alongside considering the multi-agency arrangements and information sharing.
5. To provide independent specialist opinion into the impact of the current support provided to the workforce regarding CSE including induction, training, supervision and case management.
6. To provide independent specialist opinion into the impact of partnership work carried out to raise the awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation with communities, businesses and non-safeguarding organisations.
7. Ensure that current practice learns from the past and has a strong strand of research evidence.

8. To support the Board in developing new ways to hear the voice of victims and to use this to influence policy, practice and procedure.

### **Review Timescales and Scope:**

- The review took place over two sites visits with the case audits held between 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019. The focus groups took place between 28<sup>th</sup> February and 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019.
- The review covered the area for which Kirklees Council has responsibility for children and young people.
- The review only considered live cases in the audit in order to ensure a focus on current practice.

### **Methodology:**

- The review included a literature review of policies and procedures relevant to CSE, prior to the two site visits conducted by the CSE Response Unit.
- KSCB initially provided the CSE Response Unit with an anonymised list of children known to be at risk of or have been victims of CSE in order to randomly select 10 cases. However, issues with gaining the consent of children and their parents led to the audit involving 7 cases.
- Initial findings from the case audits were feedback to KSCB and contributed to the discussions facilitated by the focus groups.
- As part of the focus groups, the CSE Response Unit had the opportunity to speak with the CSE Strategic Group, as well as three other groups of professionals, representing a diverse range of agencies and roles involved in tackling CSE in Kirklees. (See Appendix 2 for details of the focus groups)
- The CSE Response Unit also had the opportunity to speak with a number of young people and parents and carers to gain their views on the current response to CSE.

### **Acknowledgements:**

The CSE Response Unit would like to thank Kirklees Safeguarding Children's Board for inviting the unit to undertake the review. We would like to extend our thanks to all participants who contributed to this work, for taking time out of their busy schedules and providing the unit with useful and relevant information to inform our conclusions and enable the writing of this report.

We would like to particularly commend the open approach professionals took to the review, despite the current additional pressures facing practitioners working within the field of CSE in Kirklees. The CSE Response Unit would like to make specific reference to the tireless work of Sharon Hewitt, KSCB Board Manager, without whom the review would not have been possible.

### **The Reviewing Organisation:**

The NWG has been assisting agencies and professionals with their responses to child sexual exploitation since 2009 and during that time has developed a wealth of knowledge and experience in the field. In 2015 the organisation's CEO was involved in roundtable discussions which led to the formulation of the government's Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan.

Since 2016 the NWG has hosted the government's CSE Response Unit, specifically tasked with supporting practice. The NWG have previously supported national inquiries into child sexual exploitation in Scotland and Northern Ireland – four members of the response unit have contributed to the current Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

In the past two years the CSE Response Unit has assisted over 20,000 professionals and has visited agencies across England to develop a broad understanding of both the issues and approaches to addressing it. During that time the unit has been commissioned to carry out seven strategic reviews of either individual agencies or partnerships' responses to child sexual exploitation. These reviews have addressed a broad range in terms of lines of enquiry and have been co-designed in consultation with the commissioning organisation.

Four members of the unit are experienced report writers, having written reports in relation to some of the work detailed above, as well as experience gained elsewhere in their careers – one member of the team is an LGA peer reviewer.

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## **Overview:**

Throughout the CSE Response Unit's time in Kirklees the reviewing team spoke with a passionate workforce and observed a determination to tackle CSE and other forms of exploitation. Kirklees should be commended for taking the decision to adopt a contextual approach to safeguarding and will hopefully benefit from the ongoing support of Dr Carlene Firmin and the Contextual Safeguarding Network.

Many of the areas for consideration are challenges which are not unique to Kirklees, representing issues which are national areas for development. The CSE Response Unit was encouraged to hear about the positive steps already taken by Kirklees in regard of the development of a response to wider forms of exploitation and a trauma-informed approach. This clearly demonstrates Kirklees' recognition of issues and an openness to discuss them critically, as well as a desire to be amongst the best. This was demonstrated by the decision to commission this, and other reviews and the commitment to ensure practice is informed by evidence-based research. The reviewing team were also reassured by the swift response by senior managers to a concern raised by health staff regarding CSE notifications. This was dealt with immediately, suggesting that the system can respond with pace.

The cases considered by the CSE Response Unit demonstrated a good standard of recording and excellent multi agency work in regard of children who are looked after and at risk of exploitation or those who have been victims of abuse, evidenced through the case audits and in discussion with the case holders and other professionals. KSCB's ongoing quality assurance procedures should provide reassurances to a broader range of CSE cases than was possible in this review and this is clearly a part of the safeguarding system.

Staff approached the focus groups with refreshing honesty and an openness to the challenges they currently faced and the opportunities to build on the progress already made as a result of local authority's improvement plan. At all levels professionals demonstrated a commitment to learning from previous local experiences as well as that from national experts. There was also a strong focus on putting children and young people at the centre.

Kirklees is on a journey of continuous service improvement, which has been recognised by OFSTED in their monitoring visits. There has been an acknowledgement of need for swift action to get Kirklees into a 'safe place' so that further progression can be implemented. This has necessitated Leadership that is robust and directive. We heard of plans to increase opportunities to engage the front line more. There are clear plans for engagement of staff from all agencies in place as part of the shift to a safeguarding partnership. These plans also include the engagement of the CVS sector and of young people. This is intended to ensure the voice of children and young people contributes to strategic vision and operational service provision.

## **Observations:**

Throughout the case audits there was evidence of good recording on Liquid Logic, children's services' electronic recording system, as well as clear analysis and evidence of management oversight of all the cases.

The CSE Response Unit acknowledges that the Liquid Logic system has only recently been implemented and is not yet fully embedded, however feedback from social workers regarding the system and its ease of access was positive.

Six of the seven cases audited involved children who are looked after, with the relevant statutory processes and CSE process observed to work well together.

Social workers who contributed to the audit welcomed a move towards reflective practice, which is currently being embedded within children's services – a move to adopting this approach universally for all staff would be encouraged by the CSE Response Unit. Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning.

Those practitioners spoken to reflected that further support to apply their existing skills to the online context, as well as additional skill and knowledge development would be beneficial to assist them to respond to the issue of online abuse and exploitation, as well as being supported to take a more trauma-informed approach to their practice. .

From the evident recording, it was not always clear that professionals had a clear understanding of consent or were applying it consistently in regard of children and young people. It should be recognised that the case audit sample size was small, however further concerns were raised in the focus groups regarding this issue. It is recognised nationally that there are tensions around consent in the case of exploitation, where individuals may not see what is happening to them as abuse. This issue has been picked up by the KSCB in both the decision-making Framework and as part of the CSE training. The Authority has invested in considerable work at the front door with Prof David Thorpe to ensure a clearer understanding amongst professionals.

Transition arrangements were clear from the audits in cases involving looked after children and those children with special educational needs. However, attendees at the focus groups identified transition arrangements for other children as they moved into adulthood, including police responses and mental health support as an area that would benefit from further development. It was recognised as a positive step that the RAV team keep cases open for three months after children turned 18. The recording of information accurately is an issue identified by managers and is being addressed

Multi-agency feedback from the focus groups and police input to the case audit process identified the need to ensure consistent application of risk and need, considering information from a range of agencies. The assessment arrangements are still new and The CSE Response Unit expects KSCB will be able to address this, and the timely sharing of information between partner agencies, through existing quality assurance processes.

Risk assessment meetings were often bolted onto statutory meetings, which is not necessarily an issue in itself, however it was not always clear from the recording that the purpose of the risk assessment meeting was met taking this approach.

Young people spoken to by the CSE Response Unit were knowledgeable about CSE as a result of awareness raising campaigns which they accessed through schools and colleges. Young people identified a number of locations of concern for them and their peers – Kirklees' adoption of contextual safeguarding should help address such locations.

The CSE Response Unit had the opportunity to speak with a limited number of parents and carers who were complimentary of the services available to them and for children and young people. This is a strength.

Professionals welcomed the recognition of the need as set out in the contextual work, to move towards a more trauma-informed response to supporting children affected by exploitation. A number of teams represented at the focus groups had benefited from trauma training and were keen to see this rolled out to colleagues. Trauma informed practice requires an organisational structure and framework of support that involves understanding, recognising, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma.

Health professionals raised concerns that CSE notifications were no longer being sent to the local Accident & Emergency Department. This matter was raised with senior management by the CSE Response Unit and addressed immediately.

Both professionals and young people spoken with lamented the loss of the youth service, with young people keen to see centre-based provision. Kirklees has already begun work to look at youth provision across the Borough and is undertaking this work with the CVS. The issue of budgets and the non-statutory nature of youth work has made this a national concern and it is positive that Kirklees is taking a proactive approach. A review has been commissioned to capture the voice of young people in regard of youth provision.

The social worker focus group discussed concerns regarding the support of children identified as 'low risk' and the need to intervene at the earliest possible opportunity to prevent harm. The

development of the Early support strategy and its roll out to localities will assist in this regard as part of a preventative offer .

Police officers and social workers engaged with as part of the focus groups raised concerns about children being placed in Kirklees from other areas. Staff recognised the value of Kirklees striving to avoid placing its children out of area. Professionals also recognised the good work carried out by care providers in Kirklees and identified one specific home, Ruby Lodge, as demonstrating excellent practice.

## **Key Areas of Focus Going Forward:**

### **1. Use of the Assessment Tool**

The review team recognised Kirklees' existing use of audits as an area of strength, which could support the embedding of work to look at the use of the assessment tool within the existing audit timetable. KSCB may consider it beneficial to undertake regular audits of the new 'CSE risk assessment tool' process, which was implemented in August 2018.

### **2. Review of Training Offer**

There is a comprehensive training offer in Kirklees which offers multi agency training including sessions on trauma-informed practice and an understanding of wider forms of exploitation. KSCB may consider reviewing the training which has been put in place for those workers in locality teams, who now complete CSE risk assessment tool. This will help to ensure that the training is providing staff with the relevant knowledge and support that they need, to complete CSE risk assessments to the quality assurance standards of the KSCB. A review of training compliment work underway within the KSCB to consider the impact that training has on outcomes. Kirklees staff stated they would welcome further training.

### **3. Consent to Referral**

The review team noted that there had been recent changes and improvements to 'The Front door' including the consideration of the need to gain of consent prior to making a referral. The KSCB has also reviewed thresholds for making decisions in safeguarding. While it is clear that where there are identified safeguarding risks, consent is not required, a consistent message from across the partnership at the focus groups was the need for greater consistency around the interpretation and implementation of this issue. We are aware training has been delivered to staff around consent and referrals, however it may be beneficial to review the impact of the training.

### **4. CSE Notifications to Accident & Emergency**

Due to recent changes in Kirklees it was noted that CSE notifications to Accident and Emergency (A&E) were no longer being effectively sent. It is our understanding that this issue had not been raised with the strategic exploitation group. As soon as this issue was raised by the review team with the strategic lead from Kirklees, this was immediately resolved. This pace of the response is to be commended.

## **5. Contextual Safeguarding**

Kirklees has approved through the KSCB a contextualised approach to exploitation, which has built on the work of the University of Bedfordshire. This approach is welcomed by Kirklees staff and is recognised as an extremely positive development by the review team. This is not as advanced in other authorities in the country as it is in Kirklees.

## **6. Trauma-Informed Practice**

Staff who participated in the focus groups were enthusiastic and welcomed the 'Trauma Informed' approach to exploitation, which Kirklees is committed to developing. KSCB are Working to examine the 'Adverse Childhood Experience' (ACE) model and how it will support embedding the contextual safeguarding work.

## **7. Implementation of Learning**

KSCB is responsive and promotes a culture of learning evidenced by reassurance given to the review team by KSCB, that the points for consideration from this review will be implemented through the contextual safeguarding strategy. The strategy is complete and is in the process of being shared with operational staff across the partnership. The review team welcome this, as this will give a shared understanding of Kirklees' vision to which all professionals operate.

## **8. Staff Engagement**

The review team recognise that Kirklees' improvement journey for Children's Services has required swift executive action, this has necessitated acting with pace, resulting in opportunities to engage with staff in discussion and developmental dialogue not being as extensive. With the improvement now evident, the CSE Response Unit observed a commitment to a more inclusive approach. The review team noted that a practitioner forum has been developed under the new safeguarding arrangements. This forum will provide a line of sight from strategic management to frontline practitioner, allow staff consultation to take place and ensure that the voice of operational staff is heard at the highest level, influencing strategy and service provision within Kirklees. The review team welcome this approach.

## **9. Youth Provision**

Kirklees like other areas across the country have had to implement substantial reductions in funding which have impacted upon service delivery. This is felt particularly in non-statutory services such as youth provision. Throughout the focus groups undertaken by the review team, there was a recognition that the loss of the youth service within Kirklees had had a significant impact, particularly on the engagement opportunities for adolescents. The review team noted that KSCB had undertaken a defined piece of work to consider the voice of young people and that with the new Director this was being expanded to consider youth engagement more broadly. This will play a key part in Kirklees' development of their contextual safeguarding strategy.

## **10. Transition Arrangements**

Exploitation and the transition between Child and Adult Services is a national issue. The review team noted Kirklees' commitment to improving existing transition arrangements for those affected by exploitation. Kirklees' approach to transition was apparent through their attendance at the NWG transition workshop held in September 2018. It is also encouraging that Adult Services within Kirklees are keen to develop a transition process and a potential adult services response to victims of exploitation. From the work we have undertaken during the review, Kirklees staff and The NWG review team would welcome this.

## **11. Online Exploitation**

During the focus groups staff gave feedback that they would welcome additional training and support in ensuring consistency when safeguarding and supporting children who were at risk of or being exploited online. The NWG recognises that Kirklees has developed a number of online tools, which could be further utilised to support this concern. The work on youth engagement will also support the development of young people as scrutineers in the new safeguarding partnership, sitting alongside the practice group referred to, this will ensure that the voice of workers and young people is at the heart of safeguarding practice.

## **12. Early Intervention**

The review team found evidence to support Kirklees' self-assessment that working with children at 'low risk' of CSE, needs to be further enhanced. The review team also welcome Kirklees' decision to embed Risk and Vulnerability (RAV) workers into locality teams to support staff in this area. The development of the Early Support Service and the accompanying strategy will provide an opportunity to ensure an effective pathway and escalation process for children assessed as 'low risk.'

### **13. Out of Area Placements**

The review team noted concerns from practitioners in relation to 'out of area' placements into Kirklees, with the availability of cheaper housing there are a growing number of private providers - this is a national challenge. The review team endorses and commends the steps Kirklees has taken to address this issue, including action by the Director of Children's Services and KSCB's independent chair to contact every placing authority regarding Kirklees' expectations. The development of a 'provider network', which will promote consistency, enhancing the return home interview process including the sharing of intelligence. Kirklees have requested practice examples relating to the management of planning applications and supporting documents from other areas who are attempting to respond to this challenge.

### **14. Enhanced Parental and Family Engagement**

The review team heard from parents and carers who spoke highly of the support services available to both them and their children. Emerging responses to adolescent vulnerabilities and threats, external to the family home can support parents, carers and families to be involved in the safeguarding of their children. This is a national area for development in which Kirklees has an excellent springboard from which to enhance its engagement of parents, carers and families as it moves to a contextual response to safeguarding children. The new local safeguarding arrangements could provide an excellent vehicle for further developing dialogue and support for families affected by child exploitation.

## **Appendices:**

### **Appendix 1 - The Review Team**

Phil Ashford is the Operational Lead for the CSE Response Unit – a Department for Education funded programme responsible for providing operational and strategic support for professionals and agencies tackling child sexual exploitation. Phil previously managed a multi-agency CSE service in Sheffield for 3 years, overseeing the integration of a range of agencies and professionals into the co-located service. Phil’s professional background is community safety, having spent 7 years working with police safer neighbourhood teams.

Kevin Murphy is the NWG Response Unit’s Sport and Communities Lead. He was previously Head of Service for a local authority and held responsibility for 3 multi-agency teams, 6 Children Centre's and the Youth Service delivering services within a diverse and multi-cultural environment. He was also the Principal Education Welfare Officer and the strategic lead for missing children and chaired a monthly missing children MARAC.

Steve Baguley is the NWG Response Unit’s Education lead, who specialises in services for this cohort. Steve has previously been a Head of Service for a local authority and helped to pioneer a project delivering integrated working across the children’s workforce, this received national recognition of delivering “change” across the children’s workforce. Steve has also managed a Connexions Service delivering support to vulnerable post 16 students which also included specialist health provisions and the leaving care team. Steve has visited over 80 areas in the country and has gained a national picture of working with vulnerable adolescents, especially in an exploitation context and the transition into adult services.

Kay Wallace is the NWG Response Unit’s Police and Justice lead. She worked as a police officer for 30yrs, and investigated and managed child abuse investigations for over 26yrs of her 30yr police service. She was also a senior investigating officer and has managed many serious and complex child abuse and CSE investigations. She has managed CSE teams online and on street. In 2003 Kay implemented the Lord Laming recommendations for West Midlands Police, following the Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. The changes were wide reaching and changed the culture of child abuse investigation in the police service. In October 2015, Kay took up the post of CSE regional coordinator for the West Midlands region and gained considerable knowledge about approaches to investigating and disrupting CSE, from shared learning throughout the UK.

Maria Cassidy is the NWG Response Unit’s Parental Engagement Lead, working alongside organisations to highlight how they can work with parents as safeguarding partners. Maria is a

qualified Youth and Community Worker and has been a Senior Training and Curriculum Lead for Bristol Youth and Play Services and most recently led on substance misuse for Derbyshire Health Promotion. Maria provided valuable assistance in reviewing the documentation sent prior to the review by NCS.

## **Appendix 2 – List of Focus Groups**

**CSE Strategic Group** - Strategic direction of Kirklees' response to CSE and learning from previous cases.

**Social Care Focus Group** - Front door staff, area teams, looked after team and specialist team.

**Health Focus Group** - CAMHS, school nurse service, drugs and alcohol service, GPs, health visitors.

**Young Person's Focus Group** - Kirklees to arrange for appropriate group of young people to discuss CSE.

**Police Focus Group** - CSE Team, Missing officers, local policing team and other police staff.

**Parents and Family Focus Group** – Parents/carers and family members to discuss CSE.

**Multi-Agency Focus Group** - YOS, education, housing, licensing, residential care providers, adult services, early help.