

The council has published two documents relating to non-recent Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in the district.

The documents are:

*Historic Child Sexual Exploitation – An Independent Review of Cases, by Dr Mark Peel.* This independent review was commissioned by Kirklees Council and carried out by a renowned academic and social work expert. Dr Peel's independent review looked at non-recent cases involving young women who were known to Kirklees Children's Services and who later featured in court proceedings which saw 20 men imprisoned for offences relating to CSE.

*Kirklees Safeguarding Children Board Child Sexual Exploitation Review, by the National Working Group CSE Response Unit.* This review was commissioned by Kirklees Safeguarding Children Board and carried out by an organisation which supports local agencies with their response to CSE. Its main focus was to examine current policies, procedures and working practices in relation to CSE in Kirklees.

Mel Meggs, Kirklees Council Director of Children's Services, said:

"We are absolutely clear that child sexual exploitation – and abuse of any kind – will not be tolerated in Kirklees. Like all of our local communities, and like the rest of the country, we have been deeply shocked by the scale of historic abuse that was uncovered by the police, the council and other agencies in the district.

"A number of people are serving long prison sentences because they felt abusing vulnerable young women was acceptable. They were found, prosecuted and punished for their abhorrent crimes. Crucially, we must pay tribute to the survivors. Without the immense bravery of these women, their abusers would not have been brought to justice.

"Dr Peel has conducted a very thorough review of previous cases. The most recent was in 2007 and ways of working have developed enormously. The NWG report confirms this, and both reports are vital in shaping the way young people are supported locally and nationally, both now and in the future.

"Dr Peel has been clear that the vast majority of cases were handled in line with the policy and practice of the time. However, the studies of 'Girl 4' and 'Girl 8' show that, historically, professionals did not always spot the signs of exploitation and did not always respond appropriately to concerns. We are truly sorry that these two girls were not protected in the right way.

"We are far from unique in experiencing CSE in our district, but we continue to leave no stone unturned. As a partnership, we are clear that Kirklees will lead the way in tackling and preventing these terrible crimes so that young people are kept safe."

Jacqui Gedman, Kirklees Council Chief Executive, said:

"We commissioned Dr Peel's report because we were determined to gain a fully independent view of our practice at the time of these cases. We have been completely open in our desire to examine our own actions and make every improvement we possibly can.

"We absolutely agree with Dr Peel that a small number of the cases could, and should, have been handled differently at the time and on behalf of the council I want to apologise to the girls that we let down. This is a common theme in reviews of historic cases around the country and we must all ensure that we learn from the past.

“We now have a much greater understanding of the risks and issues involved in CSE and we can be confident that the progress of recent years would lead to very different actions today. Sadly, there will always be young people who are vulnerable and there will always be adults who aim to exploit them. This is true of any town or city, but we have never been in a stronger position to take evil perpetrators off the streets.

“One of the judges in the trials, which prompted Dr Peel’s review, described the offenders as ‘vile and wicked’ – we could not agree more with those sentiments. We are actively encouraging people to come forward if they have any reason to think they have been abused. We know how difficult this can be, but our message is: We will listen to you, we will take action and we will learn from your experiences.”

All local authority areas have a Local Safeguarding Children Board which consists of several organisations, including council, police and health agencies. It has the role of overseeing, co-ordinating and improving safeguarding work.

Sheila Lock is the independent chair of the Kirklees Safeguarding Board. She said:

“The National Working Group (NWG) report shows how far we have come in our approach to CSE. There was a thorough review of current procedures across the safeguarding partnership and the outcome is positive.

“The NWG is highly experienced in assessing standards and has worked on national enquiries into CSE. The board commissioned their report so that we would receive a totally independent view of how young people in Kirklees are protected today, and how we can keep improving.

“They found many examples of good practice, including the support available to children and families and the quality of training that helps professionals to understand exploitation. They also saw areas that are still in development and we are already working to ensure all of their recommendations are put in place.”

For further details, please visit our website: <https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/cse>