



Social Care Services Board 7 September 2015

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015: response to new statutory responsibilities

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services

This report sets out how the Council and its safeguarding partners have responded to new statutory responsibilities introduced by government guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015'. These responsibilities relate to children at risk of:

- Sexual Exploitation
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Radicalisation

Introduction:

1. In March 2015 the government refreshed guidance related to inter-agency working to safeguard children. This guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015' introduced a number of changes, this included specification on how safeguarding agencies support children and young people considered at risk of:
 - Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
 - Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
 - Radicalisation
2. This report outlines these changes, and how the Council works with partners to meet these specific responsibilities.

Key principles of safeguarding arrangements

3. The guidance sets out that: "Effective safeguarding arrangements in every local area should be underpinned by two key principles:
 - safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and

- a child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.”¹
4. The guidance states: “The [Local Safeguarding Children Board] should agree with the local authority and its partners the levels for the different types of assessment and services to be commissioned and delivered. This should include services for children who have been or may be sexually exploited, children who have undergone or may undergo female genital mutilation and children who have been or may be radicalised. Local authority children’s social care has the responsibility for clarifying the process for referrals.”²
 5. The guidance also highlights new requirements around protecting those at risk of being drawn into terrorism: “Under provisions in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, local authorities will be required to establish Channel panels from 12 April 2015. The panels will assess the extent to which identified individuals are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and arrange for support to be provided to those individuals. Panels must include the local authority and the chief officer of the local police. There are also a number of panel partners, including those within the criminal justice system, education, child care, health care and police who are required to cooperate with the panel in the discharge of its functions. Local authorities and their partners should consider how best to ensure that these assessments align with assessments under the Children Act 1989”³
 6. It is important to note that the guidance serves to clarify responsibilities in relation to a number of recent high-profile national issues concerning safeguarding. CSE, FGM and radicalisation are separate issues, but can in some cases be linked and the reasons why intervention is necessary can be the same. However, they can also be linked to other safeguarding matters.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

7. CSE is defined by Ofsted in their Thematic Inspection report as:

“Sexual exploitation of children and young people **under 18** involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where the young person (or third person/s) receive ‘something’ (eg, food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.

¹ ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015’, page 8-9
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf (accessed 29 July 2015)

² Ibid. Page 15

³ Ibid. Page 19

Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain."⁴

8. A number of high profile cases in Rotherham, Oxford and Rochdale have raised the prevalence of this significantly and there is understandable scrutiny on Children's Services Departments and partners' responsiveness to tackling the problem in their area.
9. When Ofsted inspected the local authority in October/November 2014, they raised a number of concerns in respect of the Children's Services and Police in relation to CSE. Specifically, they identified:
 - Lack of strategic oversight by the multi-agency network in response to CSE;
 - The multi-agency arrangements for monitoring and oversight of CSE cases: specifically the Missing and Exploited Children's Conference (MAECC) process was seen as poor and uncoordinated;
 - The lack of skills and expertise amongst staff in identifying and assessing risk of CSE;
 - The management of data and the sharing of information across agencies was uncoordinated and confused.
10. In response to these criticisms, the local authority in conjunction with partners carried out the following actions:
 - Reviewed the MAECC process and since April 2015 have a new Area structure in place with an overarching county oversight group;
 - Refreshed the Surrey Safeguarding Children's Board's (SSCB) CSE Strategy group and work plan;
 - Reviewed and revised the CSE Risk Assessment Tool in advance of the government and Ofsted's recommendation that all local authorities do this;
 - Developed a single list of children identified as at risk of CSE that is shared between partners whilst conforming to Data Protection guidance;
 - Created a multi-agency data set to allow cross-referencing of information by partners, and drafted a CSE Information Sharing protocol;
 - Developed a CSE training programme both internally and in conjunction with partners as part of the SSCB's Training programme. In addition a series of targeted workshops have been delivered to front line staff in Children's Services and Youth Support Services
11. This work has led to measurable outcomes for children. There is increased awareness of CSE by staff and a total of 293 children have been identified as currently, or having previously been, at risk of CSE. The Area MAECC meetings have reviewed and quality assured the

⁴ 'The sexual exploitation of children: it couldn't happen here could it?', Ofsted, November 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-exploitation-of-children-ofsted-thematic-report> (accessed 18 August 2015)

protection plans of over 150 children. At present there are 96 children identified as at risk and subject to review by the MAECC. In addition, 9 children have become looked after and 8 children being made subject to CP Plans as a direct result of these meetings.

12. There continues to be further work in this area, as the CSE agenda continues to evolve as more information becomes available at a national and regional level. Specifically, we need to review how we are working with boys who may be at risk of CSE. National data would suggest that approximately a third of all children at risk of CSE are boys. This, however, is likely to vary from area to area, with factors such as high levels of gang culture meaning the numbers of boys at risk would be higher in some local authorities than in others. It is therefore possible that the numbers in Surrey would be lower than elsewhere in the country. Nevertheless, it is probable that it is higher than we are currently reporting and that we may as multi-agency partnership not identifying those boys as risk as we are girls at risk.
13. The interface between the MAECC and other local groups needs to be defined, such as the Borough Joint Action Groups (JAG) and Community Impact Action Groups (CIAG). These groups meet regularly at borough and District level and may provide a useful mechanism for identifying hotspots in the county and inform the Police, SSCB and Children's Services of the developing profile of CSE.
14. Whilst there have been significant steps in developing our data sharing, there continues to be room for improvement, with the need to incorporate wider Health data.
15. The new MAECC structure is currently being well received by partners and attendance is by senior managers, which represents an important and welcome development. However, it has only been in place for four months and it should be reviewed to see if there is a need for further refinement.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

16. In March 2015, the Department of Health published guidance for professionals on managing the risk from FGM. FGM became a criminal offence under the Female Genital Mutilation Act of 2003. Under the Serious Crime Act 2015, the law governing FGM has been strengthened.
17. All NHS organisations are required to have local Safeguarding Protocols and Procedures for helping children and young people at risk of FGM. Under the new guidance, NHS organisations have been asked to review their procedures in handling cases where FGM, or the risk of FGM is alleged. These will need to conform to the overarching principles of Working Together 2015, but there needs to be specific procedures in place that consider the characteristics of FGM, including the information sharing protocols with partners throughout a girl's childhood.

18. The SSCB has in response to this established a Task and Finish Group to develop a partnership wide response to this guidance. The group has four main strands of work:

- Scoping the extent of the problem of FGM in the county and mapping areas of risk;
- Researching good practice throughout the country to inform local practice;
- Reviewing and updating SSCB Policies and Procedures for FGM;
- Developing a Training package for practitioners across all agencies.

19. This group is due to reconvene on 4 September 2015 to review progress against each of these strands and an update provided to the Social Care Services Board.

Risk of Radicalisation:

20. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act was passed into law in February 2015. One of its key provisions is to require Local Authorities to take steps and act to prevent people being drawn into extremism. This duty rests firmly now with County and Borough Councils.

21. The National Counter Terrorism Strategy is termed CONTEST and has four principal strands:

- Pursue: is concerned with the apprehension and arrest of any persons suspected of being engaged in the planning, preparation or commission of a terrorist act.
- Prevent: is concerned with working with partners to reduce support for terrorism of all kinds, challenging and isolating extremists, including those operating through the internet.
- Protect: aims to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack and reduce our vulnerability to such attacks.
- Prepare: take action to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack where that attack cannot be stopped.

22. The Prevent Strategy in Surrey is coordinated by the Community Safety Unit with involvement from key partner agencies including each of the Boroughs and Districts, Police, Health and Social Care. In addition key links have been developed with Schools, Universities and Prisons, where radicalisation and extremism can be an issue if not identified.

23. At a local level, the Prevent Partnership has been tackling radicalisation through:

- Work with Police including the Counter Terrorism Teams to review and develop local profiles and begin to assess the risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism.

- Established links with Prevent coordinators, schools, universities, colleges, local prisons, probation services, health, immigration enforcement and others as part of the risk assessment process.
 - Mainstream the prevent duty so it becomes part of the day-to-day work of the authority, in particular children' safeguarding.
 - Provide overarching leadership in the development of Plans to combat radicalisation.
 - Provide a training programme to key staff on Radicalisation and the Prevent Strategy.
24. In response to this agenda, Surrey have worked closely with partners to ensure that each borough and district has a Prevent Action Plan in place, established Divisional Prevent Partnership Groups which feed into county Partnership Group. A training programme has been devised and delivered across the network, with priority having been given to those key agencies where young people may be most vulnerable to radicalisation and where the signs of this may be picked up. Strong links have therefore been developed with Universities and with schools in target areas.
25. The Training programme has also been incorporated into the SSCB's Training calendar as part of a wider training programme covering CSE and E-Safety, as well as Radicalisation.
26. Under Working Together 2015 and Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, Local Authorities are required to establish Channel Panels. These panels will assess the extent to which an identified individual, or individuals are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and ensure that sufficient support is available to that individual.
27. There have been few referrals of individuals since these have been in place since April 2015.

Recommendations:

The Board is asked to note the ways in the Council and partners have worked to ensure support for children and young people at risk of CSE, FGM or radicalisation. It is invited to make recommendations and seek further assurance by requesting an update report for a future meeting.

1. To support and promote the commissioning of an independent review of the new MAECC arrangements from October 2015, with a view to measuring its effectiveness and making recommendations for any changes required to improve its working.
2. That officers develop a problem profile in relation to FGM for the county and update the Social Care Board, in order to inform future service delivery
3. That the progress of the County's Prevent Strategy Action Plan be regularly brought to the Social Care Services Board for their information

Next steps:

SSCB to commission an Independent Consultant to review the MAECC arrangements for the county in combating CSE in September for review in October 2015

FGM Task Group to complete its problem profile for Surrey and review of existing FGM procedures

The Prevent Action Plan be updated with progress against targets.

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Sources/background papers:

'Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015'

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/contents/enacted> (accessed 29 July 2015)

'The sexual exploitation of children: it couldn't happen here could it?', Ofsted, November 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-exploitation-of-children-ofsted-thematic-report> (accessed 18 August 2015)

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