

**Education and Children's Services
Scrutiny Committee
1 March 2017**

Covering Report: Children Needing Help and Protection

Summary and Objectives

1. The objective of this scrutiny is for the committee to understand, and make any recommendations in relation to the issues associated with Suffolk children in need of help and protection, in particular with regard to child exploitation and sexual abuse.

Scrutiny Focus

2. Key focus areas for this scrutiny include the following:
 - i) Progress against the actions in the LSCB strategy document: [Children and Young Persons at Risk of Experiencing Exploitation - Strategy Document 2015/17](#) and priorities for 2016/17 identified in the [LSCB Annual Report 2015-16](#). More specifically:
 - o The focus on NEGLECT and on Child Exploitation (see Annex 1, below)
 - o Identifying children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
 - o Use of toolkits to assess the risk factors
 - o A strategic understanding of the scale and prevalence of CSE (and reassurance of senior level strategic focus)
 - o What we are doing to increase awareness and understanding of CSE across the county
 - o The work around '*Chelsea's Choice*' for use in schools (*as referred to in the LSCB Annual Report*).
 - ii) How is the LA working with police & others, eg. via the MASH?
 - o County Lines Analysis
 - o The Make a Change Team,
 - o CSE awareness training done by councillors in 2016
 - o Update on progress with identifying and tracking missing children
 - iii) Links to gangs & drug/alcohol use. Intelligence gathering and action to disrupt networks.
 - iv) Sexual education and preventative work in schools.

How this relates to County Council priorities

3. This scrutiny is linked to the County Council's corporate priorities as indicated below:

The County Council's Corporate Priorities	Link to this scrutiny
Raising educational attainment and skill levels	✓
Supporting the LEPs to increase economic growth	
Maintaining roads and developing Suffolk's infrastructure	
Supporting those most vulnerable in our communities	✓
Empowering local communities	✓

4. Having considered the evidence, the Committee may wish to:
- i) make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, and/or the Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services;
 - ii) agree topics which could benefit from more detailed scrutiny at a future meeting, seek to influence partner organisations, or request further information.

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Background

5. The decision to scrutinise this topic was made at an informal workshop of committee members on 13 Oct 2016. Reference was made to the Feb.2016 [Ofsted report](#), that was overall 'Good'. The scope would focus in particular on Child Exploitation / Sexual Abuse. There was a desire to understand the progress against the actions in the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) strategy document: [Children and Young Persons at Risk of Experiencing Exploitation - Strategy Document 2015/17](#) and priorities for 2016/17 identified in the [LSCB Annual Report 2015-16](#). There was interest in sexual education and preventative work in schools (*ref. sexual abuse in schools - national [report in the Press](#) in 2015*). There was also interest in how the Local Authority is working with the Police & others, eg. via the MASH, and noting that could be scope for joint work with the Police & Crime Panel (PCP), which will be looking at some related subject matter at the PCP mtg. on 17 Mar 2017. The SCC Scrutiny Committee and the Health Scrutiny Committee have also suggested scope for some cross-Committee work on this subject, perhaps via a joint Task & Finish group.
6. An extract of the 2016/17 Priorities from the [LSCB Annual Report 2015-16](#) is at Annex A. The summary section regarding '*The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection*' from the Feb.2016 [Ofsted report](#), is at Annex B.
7. Proposed witnesses / participants in the scrutiny meeting include:
- Sue Hadley (LSCB Chairman)
 - Allan Cadzow / David Jacobs / Victoria Hurling (SCC CYP)
 - Seb Smith (MASH)
 - D/Chief Superintendent Simon Parkes (Constabulary)
 - Sara Blake / Chris Woods (SCC Community Safety / Partnerships)
 - Charlie Pincock (Make a Change Team)

Main Body of Evidence (attached)

- (i) **Evidence Set 1** - (3 pg) – Report from the LSCB Chairman, '*LSCB Report for Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee*'
- (ii) **Evidence Set 2** - (21 pg) – Report from SCC CYP, '*Children at risk of or being exploited (CE)*'

Additional References (online)

- (i) LSCB strategy document - Children and Young Persons at Risk of Experiencing Exploitation - Strategy Document 2015/17:
<http://suffolkscb.org.uk/assets/files/2015/2015-LSCB-CSE-Strategy.pdf>

- (ii) The LSCB Annual Report 2015-16. (An extract of the 2016/17 Priorities is at Annex A): <http://suffolkscb.org.uk/news-and-events/suffolk-lscb-annual-report-2015-16/>
- (iii) The Feb.2016 Ofsted report. (The summary 'The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection' is attached for reference at Annex B): https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/suffolk/053_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf
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Annex A Extract from - Suffolk LSCB, Annual Report 2015-2016 V5

LSCB 2016/17 Priorities

The priorities for 2016/17 are:

Improved Integration

- Further develop the multi-agency data set and improve measures to understand the quality of practice, improve analysis and identify risks.
- Improve integration across strategic partnerships in addressing Hidden Harm.
- **Build on the multi-agency NEGLECT strategy to tackle neglect, to identify prevalence and enable an evaluation of effectiveness**

Scrutiny and Challenge

- Oversee the implementation of the post OFSTED Action Plans, both for the LSCB and the Local Authority.
- Continue to focus on the scrutiny of key statutory safeguarding responsibilities and assess the quality of front line practice across key partnerships.

Identifying and mitigating risk

- **Ensure that the Board continues to improve its understanding of the scale and prevalence of Child Exploitation, including online safety, across the County.**
- Ensure risks in multi-agency working are evaluated and mitigated.
- Consolidate confidence in the MASH, shared approaches to risk assessment, interagency communication and clarification of agency process and procedures for referrals.

Listening and Learning

- Ensure that lessons from Case Reviews and the Child Death Overview Panel are implemented and evaluate what changes as a result.
- Improve the systems for the LSCB to hear the views and experiences of children and young people and practitioners.
- Monitor the impact of the Suffolk Emotional Wellbeing strategy in improving children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health.



The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement
<p>Services for children and their families who need help and protection require improvement to be good. Although there are considerable strengths and evidence of sustained progress, demonstrating ongoing improvement, some areas are not sufficiently or consistently embedded to have yet reached a good standard.</p> <p>Early help services for children and their families are good. There are early signs of increased impact through the new integrated early help teams and the Signs of Safety and Well-being casework model. Some aspects of this work have been particularly effective, including Suffolk Family Focus (work undertaken with 'troubled families') and joint work with the police and other specialist services regarding child sexual exploitation, gangs and groups, and female genital mutilation.</p> <p>Partner agencies are developing a clearer understanding of thresholds when specific services need to be involved. This is resulting in more appropriate contacts and referrals. Partner agencies are positive about the prompt support and advice available to them through the MASH (multi-agency safeguarding hub) professional telephone contact line and the referral process.</p> <p>Customer First offers an efficient and effective access to services. The relatively new MASH provides a sound multi-agency response, with appropriate decision-making seen in relation to the need for assessments and strategy discussions. The service has only recently started ensuring that input from education has been sought for all school-age children.</p> <p>Children in need and children in need of protection are receiving help at the right level. In most cases seen by inspectors, risk of harm and its significance were understood and responded to appropriately.</p> <p>While children are seen within reasonable timescales in the majority of cases, case recording does not always note whether the child is seen alone or evidence how direct work with the child, and their wishes and feelings, influence case practice and care planning. The quality of assessments is inconsistent, with some not being informed by the voice of the child, historical factors or a clear rationale for decision-making. Child in need and child protection plans vary in quality, with some not showing clear actions, timescales or outcomes.</p> <p>The offer and take-up of return interviews for children missing from home are low, meaning that planning at both an individual and strategic level is not sufficiently robust. This is steadily improving and the local authority has taken action to sustain improvements further.</p>	