

Briefing Note for Councillors –

CSE is a sensitive and complex issue that it is not an easy subject to talk about, but it is essential that we do. We cannot assume that this is not happening in area we may live or work within, nor should we assume that someone else will make sure that the necessary responses are in place. Tackling child sexual exploitation must be a priority for all of us.

Evidence indicates that Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is happening across the country, with perpetrators and victims coming from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds.

- CSE has a devastating impact on children, young people and their families. It should be a concern for everyone. CSE is largely a hidden crime, and raising awareness of this type of abuse is essential to preventing it and stopping it early when it does happen.
- CSE cannot be tackled by one agency operating alone. Effective responses will be built on a holistic understanding of the problem, which will only come through a shared commitment to partnership working.

With the above in mind we have pulled together some handy tips for councillors to consider when working in their local communities:

1. Do encourage parents and carers who have concerns about a child to contact the police, children's services and /or school to discuss further (details of how to do this are at the end of the briefing). The public are our eyes and ears and any information given could be the final piece of the jigsaw puzzle that is needed to progress an investigation around persons of concern or a location which is risky.
2. Do raise awareness in the local community about CSE to help spot the signs as this will help the issues to be dealt with at the earliest opportunity. The following websites contain helpful information www.seeme-hearme.org.uk and the www.lscbbirmingham.org.uk. Please encourage your constituents to visit these sites for information and general advice. Safeguarding children is everybody's responsibility.
3. Do take the time to understand how the systems and structures in place are working to improve responses on CSE. It is important that members understand how these processes are contributing to wider strategic objectives and the impact that they have on local practice.

For further information please contact:

- Debbie Currie, Assistant Director Protection, Partnership and Performance on: 0121 303 2468 or email debbie.currie@birmingham.gov.uk
- Jon Needham, HOS Safeguarding Education on: 07912 793 668 or email jon.needham@birmingham.gov.uk .

We will be able to arrange an officer to meet with you or a group of you to give you an overview of services we have in place.

CSE & Press Enquiries:

Do consider at all times the needs of children and the safeguarding of these when responding to enquiries from the press. We work closely across the partnership to tackle CSE and will require an opportunity to liaise with other agencies ie the police to ensure any information provided to the press doesn't undermine any ongoing investigations. We need to ensure information given is accurate and doesn't raise anxieties unnecessarily.

Press Office: 0121 303 3885

CSE & Parents:

Don't panic or assume that action isn't being taken if we are not able to give a full account of work being undertaken to disrupt perpetrators and safeguard victims. Agencies are often undertaking lots of work behind the scenes using intelligence which is sensitive. Tackling CSE effectively takes time and patience to build relationships with children who are victims of coercion and control.

CSE & Police:

It will not always be obvious to the public what action is being taken. We need your support to remain calm and clarify any queries you are unable to answer with the police, children's services or education.

Don't make assumptions and do make efforts to make enquires to understand more about the information you have been given. There are lots of myths about CSE and exploitation generally. The Local Government Association – Tackling CSE – A resource pack for councils contains lots of useful information and in particular has a section Myths versus Reality. It would be good to familiarise yourself with this document to raise awareness and assist with facilitating conversations with constituents to also raise awareness.

Key Contacts:

- If you have concerns about the safety and/or welfare of a child or young person telephone the Children's Advice & Support Service (CASS) telephone **0121 303 1888**.
- Outside these hours contact the Emergency Duty Team on **0121 675 4806**.
- In an emergency where a child's safety is at immediate risk of significant harm, **contact West Midlands Police on 999**.