
Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	6 April 2017
Subject:	Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Report of:	Director of Social Care and Health		
Is this a Key Decision?	No	Is it included in the Forward Plan?	Yes
Exempt/Confidential	No		

Purpose/Summary

The report informs Members of the work agencies have undertaken to safeguard children from child sexual exploitation and children who have been reported as missing from home / care / education.

Recommendation(s)

1. In line with previous recommendation, to provide a regular report to Cabinet regarding the work undertaken to safeguard children from child sexual exploitation and children who have been reported as missing; and
2. To provide future reports to Cabinet on an annual basis.

How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?

	<u>Corporate Objective</u>	<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community	x		
2	Jobs and Prosperity	x		
3	Environmental Sustainability		x	
4	Health and Well-Being	x		
5	Children and Young People	x		
6	Creating Safe Communities	x		
7	Creating Inclusive Communities	x		
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy		x	

Reasons for the Recommendation:

To ensure Cabinet members are aware of the partnership activity undertaken to safeguard children from child sexual exploitation in Sefton and when they have been reported as missing, in respect of their duties under the Children Act 1989 the general duty of every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no direct costs arising as a result of this report.

(B) Capital Costs

N/A

Implications:

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

Financial		
Legal		
Human Resources		
Equality		
1.	No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact of the Proposals on Service Delivery:

N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD.4580/17) and Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD3867/17) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

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Background Papers:

None

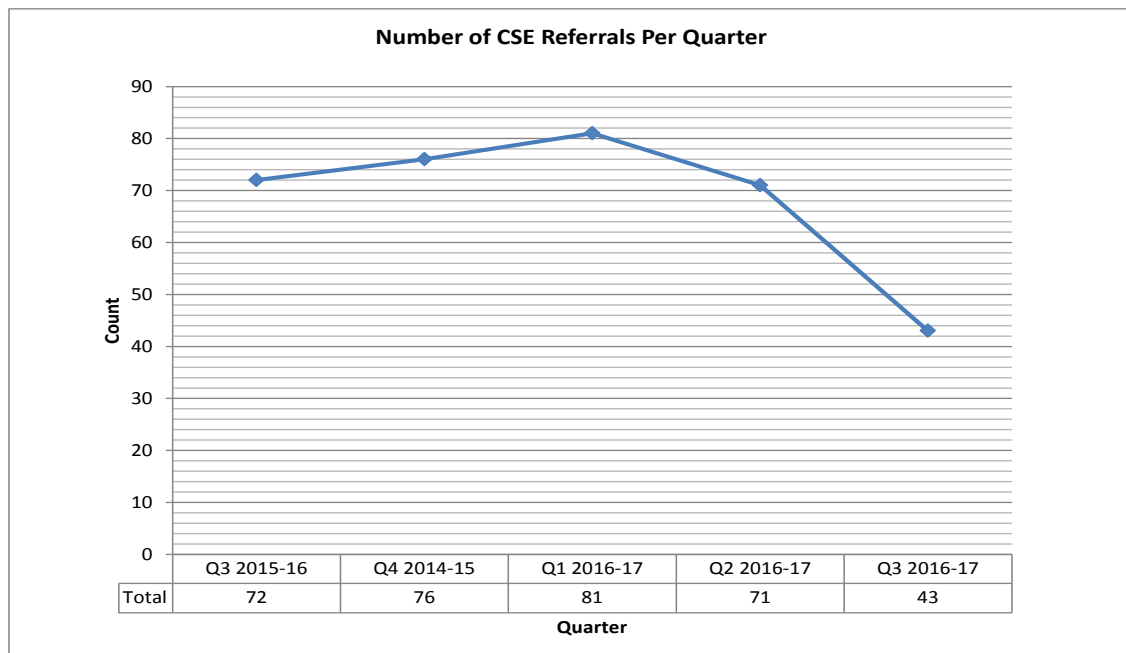
1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report assures Members that Sefton Council and partnership agencies are affectively working together to safeguard children who are at risk of being sexually exploited, and those children and young people who are reported as missing from home / care. The data included within this report is also reported on a quarterly basis to the Local Safeguarding Children Board CSE and Missing Child Sub Group. Sefton's Director of Social Care and Health is Chair of this Sub Group.

2. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

- 2.1 Individuals from partnership agencies who are concerned that a child is at risk of being sexual exploited continue to make referrals to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), as per the Local Safeguarding Children Board Child Sexual Exploitation Multi Agency Pathway. Between 1st July and 30th Sept 2016 (Q2 2016-17) the MASH received 71 CSE referrals regarding 67 children. Some children had more than one referral made about them by different agencies. Between 1st Oct - 31st Dec 2016 (Q3 2016-17) 43 CSE referrals regarding 36 children were received. As explained in previous reports to Cabinet the CSE referral rate is not a reflection of the number of children at risk of CSE / a victim of CSE in Sefton, but does evidence the partnerships commitment to identifying any potential CSE risks at the earliest opportunity.

- 2.2 The graph below indicates the quarterly CSE referral rates over the last year.



The LSCB CSE Partnership Pathway has been operational since Oct 2014 and a large amount of raising awareness and training has been provided to Council and partner agency staff. The initial increase in CSE referrals during 2014 and 2015 was expected, as awareness of the potential signs of CSE across the partnership increased. As the partnership gains further insight and confidence in identifying actual CSE, the CSE referrals now received by the MASH are becoming more clearly identified as children being at risk of CSE, or a victim of CSE via online exploitation (the 'virtual world'), or via individuals approaching children directly.

- 2.3 In Quarter 2 61% of CSE referrals, and in Quarter 3 42% CSE referrals, involved technological devices such as via Facebook or other apps, either on the children's mobile phone or iPad / laptop. These children had been approached by an individual trying to sexually exploit them in the 'virtual world'. Children younger than the age limit required to have online accounts such as Facebook had also been sexually approached online. This information has been discussed at the previous Local Safeguarding Children Board E-Safety Sub Group and recently the Council led E-Safety Working Group. Work has been undertaken by Catch22 in Schools and Colleges to ensure children are aware of the risks of individuals approaching them online and how they can safeguard themselves from not responding to such approaches.
- 2.4 The age range of the total 114 children referred due to the MASH regarding potential CSE concerns during the 6 month period ranged from 9 – 17 years old. The majority of CSE referrals received were regarding females aged between 15 – 17 years old. However a total of 18 referrals (16%) were also received regarding boys, many of which involved young people exploring their sexuality online.
- 2.5 On receiving a CSE referral the MASH continues to ensure that a Multi-Agency meeting is arranged as soon as possible, and uses a screening tool to analyse if the child is at risk of, or is a current victim of CSE. When there is concern that a child is at risk of, or, a victim of CSE, Children's Social Care commence an assessment with the child and their family / carer and Catch22, the Police and Crime Commissioner CSE Service co-located in the MASH, offer their support to the young person to develop their insight of CSE, how they can identify risk and what measures they can take to safeguard themselves. Where there is evidence that the child is being sexually exploited the Police commence a Police investigation with the partnerships support.
- 2.6 A monthly Pre-Multi Agency CSE Panel (MACSE) Meeting continues to be undertaken, involving the Detective Chief Inspector (MACSE Co-Chair) and/or Detective Inspector from Sefton Vulnerable Person's Unit along with the CSE Police Co-Ordinator, Service Manager for Sefton's Safeguarding Children Unit (MACSE Co-Chair) and the CSE Business Information Analyst. This monthly meeting ensures that, along with the sharing of intelligence, children's cases that have or have not progressed to MACSE are subject of further oversight by the MACSE Chairs, this oversight analyses and quality assures the decisions made in the CSE strategy meetings/ case discussions and ensures any intelligence related to other children at risk of CSE / CSE potential victims / perpetrators is identified and acted upon, in terms of both 'Protect' and 'Prosecute'. It continues to be clear from all documents reviewed that the meeting has used the 'Signs of Safety' methodology to analyse risks, vulnerabilities and strengths and that all agencies working with the child already are invited to the Strategy Meetings, wherever it is been practically to do so within a timescale required to safeguard the child. The Pan Merseyside CSE 2 scoring matrix continues to be used as a guide to assess risk, but the concluded risk numerical score is not solely relied upon to inform decisions made.
- 2.7 The children and young people who are considered as high risk of being sexually exploited, and those who are considered as currently being sexually exploited, continue to be referred for discussion at the monthly Multi Agency CSE Panel

(MACSE). This Panel continues to be co-chaired by a Senior Officer from Merseyside Police and Service Manager responsible for Safeguarding Children, and is well attended by the partnership CSE Single Points of Contact. Representatives from agencies working directly with the child also continue to be invited to MACSE, to ensure the Multi-Agency CSE Plan agreed is appropriate to other plan the child has in place, such as Child in Need Plan, Child Protection Plan or a Looked After Child Care Plan.

- 2.8 When 'looked after' children are placed by other Local Authorities with Independent Children's Homes within the Sefton area, and the child has been subject of a CSE Plan in another area, the child is discussed at Sefton MACSE to ensure appropriate transfer of the previous CSE plan.
- 2.9 There continues to be proactive work undertaken by the MACSE Co-Chairs, CSE Police Officers, CSE Business Information Analyst, Missing Children Independent Return Interview staff and MACSE Panel representatives, to ensure these children are safeguarded whilst in Sefton and that their care package and placement can safeguard them. A number of children's cases have been escalated to Assistant Directors or Director of Children's Services of the relevant other Local Authorities, due to serious concerns in relation to the child/ren that they have placed in Sefton.
- 2.10 During Q2 25 CSE referrals were made by Independent Children's Home Providers with regard to 16 individual 'looked after' children, 13 of which were young people 'looked after' by another Local Authority and placed in their care. Four of these young people, subsequent to escalations made by Sefton's safeguarding children lead to the placing local authority were moved out of Sefton and a further young person moved to a semi-independent provision in Sefton. During Q3 26 CSE referrals were made by Independent Children's Home Providers with regard to 18 individual 'looked after' children, 15 of which were 'looked after' by another Local Authority placed in Sefton. Six of these young people have subsequently moved out of Sefton.
- 2.11 The Sefton Director of Social Care and Health is lobbying Ofsted and the Department for Education regarding non-regulated 16 -18 yr old semi-independent placements not being inspected by a regulatory body. Such inspections would ensure regulatory overview regarding young people placed are appropriately safeguarded and that their therapeutic needs are met, to ensure these young people are effectively supported into adulthood.
- 2.12 At the end of September 2016 three children were subject of a Multi-Agency CSE (MACSE) Plan, of these one child was placed in Children's Homes within Sefton by another Local Authority and one had moved to Sefton on a Child Protection Plan from another Local Authority. Five children were subject of a MACSE Plan at the end of December 2016, of these one was a child placed by another Local Authority. The MACSE Panel ensures that children who are at risk of CSE, and those who are victims of CSE, have a Multi-Agency CSE (MACSE) Plan to safeguard them whilst also disrupting and prosecuting offenders.
- 2.13 The decrease in the number of children's referrals progressing to MACSE is due when the incident became highlighted their parent / carer took appropriate action and the risk immediately reduced / ceased and no further support other than a brief piece of support work and in some cases a police investigation to ascertain the

identification of the online sexual exploiter has been required to be undertaken. Additionally, several of the children placed in Sefton by other Local Authorities have moved placement out of Sefton when Sefton Safeguarding lead escalated to the placing Local Authority senior manager that they require therapeutic placements which can safeguard them.

- 2.14 LSCB CSE Workforce Briefings continue to be undertaken on a regular basis. Specific training has been provided by members of the LSCB CSE Sub Group to specific elements of the workforce, such as GP mandatory training, GP reception and nursing staff, Southport and Ormskirk Acute Trust Sexual Health Service and the Council Trading Standards Service. With the support of the Council for Voluntary Services specific events have been provided to the voluntary settings, with a focus on attempting to engage local Faith sectors.
- 2.15 Additional LSCB briefing sessions have started to be undertaken with leisure's settings regarding the national FA investigation regarding young men allegations that they have been sexual abused by football coaches. These will continue to be undertaken by the LSCB whilst lessons are learned by the national investigation, to ensure these lessons are distributed to Sefton based leisure settings.
- 2.16 In November 2016 members of Sefton's Multi Agency CSE Panel were invited to The Guardian Newspaper Public Services Awards in London, as the multi-agency Panel has been shortlisted in the Awards Care Category, out of over 460 nominations made regarding Public Sector Services.
- 2.17 The Local Safeguarding Children Board has reviewed its Strategic Priorities and safeguarding children from CSE and those children that go missing continues to be a partnership priority for the Board. The Director of Social Care and Health (DCS) will continue to chair the LSCB CSE and Missing Children Sub Group, to continue to have strategic oversight of the partnership's work.

3. Children reported as missing from home / care

- 3.1 All missing episodes reported to the police or Council Emergency Duty team either directly by parents/carers or by other professionals supporting their care continue to be communicated to the MASH who identified of the child has an Early Help key worker or is known to Sefton Social Care or is a looked after child placed in Sefton by another Local Authority.
- 3.2 In Quarter 2 (2016-17) 137 children went missing, a total of 329 times. A child is defined as being missing when their whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character. Children are sometimes reported missing when they have not returned from School at the expected time, or have not returned home at the time they have agreed with parents, but return shortly afterwards. 90% of children and young people who went missing were missing for 2 days or less.
- 3.3 Of the 137 children, 102 were Sefton children and the remaining 32 were 'looked after' children placed in Sefton by other Local Authorities. 34 of the 102 Sefton children were missing 2 or more times in Q2. In total these young people were responsible for 66% of all missing episodes generated by Sefton young people.

- 3.4 60% of Sefton children who went missing in Q2 were aged 15 and over.
- 3.5 In summary, performance regarding missing children during Q3 evidenced some improvements, with 34% reduction in the number of reported missing episodes from the previous Quarter. A total of 99 children were reported missing one or more occasions, of which 68 were Sefton children and 31 were 'looked after' children placed in Sefton by other Local Authorities. 93% of children and young people went missing were missing for 2 days or less.
- 3.6 All young people who are reported as missing from home / care continue to be notified to the Missing Children Independent Return Officers from the Early Help Service, who are co-located in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The Independent Return Officers are experienced youth work staff. They arrange an independent interview to explore with the young person the reasons for the missing episode. The interview notes are agreed with the young person and stored on the child's electronic record. A copy of these notes is also shared with the Police to support any investigation work. For young people supported by a plan the notes are also shared with their Lead Practitioner (or Social/Early Help worker). The Lead Practitioner can then use this feedback to review their plan, in order to reduce further missing episodes and increase their safety.
- 3.6 During Q2 an independent return interview was offered to the Sefton children in 87% of the missing episodes. Of the other Local Authority 'looked after' children 97% were offered a return interview. Of the total number of children offered a return interview 40% refused. Of the children who accepted the offer 50% of return interviews were undertaken within the required 72 hr period, a total of 76% had been conducted within 7 days and all had been undertaken within 3 weeks.
- 3.7 In Q3 an independent return interview was offered to 90% the Sefton children. Of the other Local Authority 'looked after' children 95% were offered a return interview. Of the total number of children offered a return interview a third refused. The biggest group who refused interviews were children and teenagers who had a single missing episode. In the main, parents refused the offer on behalf of their children and felt that the return interview wouldn't provide anything different for their children than the discussion they and the Police had with them. Of the children who accepted the offer 50% of return interviews were undertaken within the required 72 hr period. This is an area of improvement for the Missing Children Team.
- 3.8 The 2 Independent Return Officers who conduct the interviews also regularly attend MACSE, strategy meetings and other case discussions to ensure the views and concerns of the young people they have interviewed are heard and plans developed accordingly. This includes strong communication with social work teams from other Local Authorities for young people placed in Sefton. Feedback on these arrangements indicates that other professionals highly value this service.
- 3.9 Independent return interviews are analysed, to establish themes and trends to influence service provision and development. The individual factors have also been reviewed by Social Workers/Lead Practitioners who have also made changes to the child's individual plan. All cases involving risk of CSE have been referred to the MASH as per the Sefton LSCB CSE Pathway. Children not known to Social Care have been referred to the Early Help Gateway for intervention and support. The main issues identified from the analysis were:

- Unmet mental health needs, stemming from anxiety and the feeling of being overwhelmed. Most of these children had received support for these issues previously, but nothing was in place at the time of the missing episode.
- Feeling that no one listens.
- Unrealistic expectations e.g. time to return home, a number of children spoke of a 'curfew'.
- Unclear boundaries and expectations.
- Adults and children not listening/understanding each other leading to arguments and children going missing to escape. There were more instances of this for 'looked after' children.
- Children who were 'looked after', but placed away from their family, also featured highly as they extended their contact time with family. Most of this did seem to be known to staff at their placements.
- Going out with friends, sometimes involving alcohol/cannabis featured highly in the reasons given.
- Whilst few episodes occurred during school time, most children had low levels of school attendance (below 60%).
- Consistently the young people interviewed minimised the level of risk to their personal safety and had a high level of confidence in their ability to take care of themselves.
- Some initial examples of children being led, not just so by their friends alone, but also references to gangs and bullying.

The LSCB Sub Group is working to ensure these lessons learned inform future commissioning and practice via quarterly reports to the LSCB and the LSCB Annual report to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

3.10 In addition Merseyside Police analyse the children who are Top 10 missing children, and the Children's Homes from which children predominantly go missing. These individuals and Children's Homes are discussed at Police operational briefing meetings. Intelligence regarding where children have been found, or they have stated where they have been when missing is communicated and recorded on the children's police missing people's records. If there are ongoing concerns a visit is undertaken to the children's home by a Senior Police Officer or a Neighbourhood Inspector to discuss risk assessment and action plan.

4. Future planned developments

4.1 Sefton Council and partners will take part in a Merseyside wide campaign, led by Merseyside Police, as part of National CSE Awareness Day 18th March 2018 to raise awareness of CSE in local communities and Colleges.