

ITEM 12(a)

CHILDREN'S AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 8TH OCTOBER, 2014

Question submitted by Councillor Ashcroft in accordance with Standing Order 36.

The response has been prepared by the Director of Children's and Adult Services in consultation with the Executive Cabinet Member Deputy Leader's Portfolio:-

Question

In light of the recent report about child sexual abuse in Rotherham and the subsequent criticism levelled at the Local Authority and police, can officers please confirm that they are satisfied that this sort of activity is not prevalent in Bolton.

In addition, it is requested that a full report is brought to this Committee outlining what policies and procedures are in place in Bolton to ensure that some of the most vulnerable children in our society are protected and kept safe and give assurances that any incidences of organised child grooming will be investigated and acted upon, without fail, to ensure that victims voices are heard irrespective of who the alleged perpetrators are.

Answer

Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a longstanding priority in Bolton. The Exit team is a specialist team which focuses on the prevention of CSE, protection of children from CSE and the disruption and prosecution of offenders. The team was established in January 2009 and in December 2013, a significant increase in police resources was put in place and the team relocated to a new base at Brightmet House. The team now comprises of a Children's Services Team Manager, 1 Social Worker, 3 Support Workers, an Administrator, a Detective Sergeant, 3 Detectives, 1 Force Intelligence Analyst and a Missing from Home Co-ordinator. Specialist Young People's Health Services are also linked to the team.

The increased capacity in the team has improved the level of intelligence available and quality of information sharing in relation to predatory adults and has enabled a significantly increased focus on targeted disruption activity. There has been no evidence to date to suggest that there is any organised element to CSE in Bolton. Agencies in Bolton are fully committed to ensuring that perpetrators of CSE are prosecuted and dealt with appropriately by the courts. The most recent CSE case to be put before the courts in Bolton resulted in a custodial sentence of six and a half years. Members of the Scrutiny Committee can be reassured that all CSE in Bolton is very vigorously investigated and, if any organised CSE were to be identified, a

similarly robust standard of investigation would be undertaken. All CSE is thoroughly investigated in Bolton, irrespective of any issues relating to the circumstances or backgrounds of perpetrators.

CSE has been an ongoing priority for the Bolton Safeguarding Children Board for a number of years. The board and its constituent partners take the issue of CSE in Bolton very seriously and have a longstanding commitment to continuously improving the protection of children at risk of CSE in Bolton.

A detailed report will be provided to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.