

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY BOARD
16/11/2023 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor Moores (Chair)
Councillors Ali, Bishop, H. Harrison, Hurley, McLaren, Mushtaq,
Rea, Shuttleworth and Wahid

Also in Attendance:

Matthew Bulmer	Director Education Early Years and Skills
Leanne Cooper	Assistant Director Social Work Services
Julie Daniels	Assistant Director Safeguarding
Colette Morris	Local Authority Designated Officer
Gerard Jones	Managing Director Children and Young People
Shelley Kipling	Assistant Chief Executive
Jayne Ratcliffe	Deputy Managing Director, Health and Social Care Services
Paul Rogers	Constitutional Services

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence received.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Rev. Hurlston is a governor at Brian Clarke School. Councillor Moores is a governor at Radcliffe, Bluecoat and Mills Hill schools, Councillor McLaren is a governor at Radcliffe and Halcyn Way schools and Councillor Shuttleworth is a governor at Limehurst Primary school.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no Public Questions for the Board to consider.

5 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY BOARD MEETING**

RESOLVED that subject to the following amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023 be approved as a correct record:

- (i) Jean Hurlston – Manchester Church of England Diocese attended.
- (ii) 'Radcliffe' being amended to read 'Radcliffe', 'Moleshill' to read 'Miles Hill' and 'Lymehurst' to read 'Limehurst' in Declarations of Interest.

OPERATION SHERWOOD UPDATE

Phil Hutchison and Judith Holmes, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) gave an update on progress with regard to Operation Sherwood.



Members were informed that Operation Sherwood had moved into the operational phase whereby arrests have been made which are now in the hands of the Crown Prosecution Service. With regard to other work in relation to child exploitation. The Board was advised that the dedicated multi agency team comprised two detective sergeants, six detective constables, a child social care manager, senior social worker, ten complex social workers, family workers, dedicated safeguarding nurses and a part time physcho therapist. There is a strong relationship and working partnership with the multi agencies. They are currently managing in excess of 65 young persons and children over Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and approximately 25 adults who have opted to remain in the team for support.

Members were informed that this is current update on Operation Sherwood but unfortunately members cannot be given information on live ongoing investigations. Members were informed of several indictments where people have been brought to justice in relation to child sexual exploitation. The Board was reminded that they are investigating historic abuses from any time period.

Mr Hutchinson wanted to impress upon the Board the excellent work the partnership was achieving and that it was fully committed to dealing with offenders.

Councillor McLaren asked Mr Hutchinson the following questions –

1. As you are probably aware, the Council has been accused of covering up historic child sexual exploitation or abuse. During the course of the Sherwood investigation, has any evidence been uncovered that would suggest that any kind of a cover up has taken place?

Mr Hutchinson responded – Not to his knowledge. There has been an independent review of how GMP and the Council has looked at their investigations and there has been no suggestion from that review that a cover up has taken place.

2. Has any Elected Member (past or present) or member of the public reported any evidence to the Police that would suggest that the Council may have been involved in a cover up?

Mr Hutchinson responded – He does not have any information about that.

3. Has any evidence come to light from any source that would suggest that the Council has engaged in any kind of systematic cover up of child sexual exploitation or abuse at any stage?

Mr Hutchinson responded – Not to his knowledge.

4. During the independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation, the Council took the opportunity to refer a number of historic cases of child sexual exploitation from pre 2011 for further consideration. Has any other case come to light during Operation Sherwood that relates to the period before 2011 that could have been referred to the independent inquiry.

Mr Hutchinson responded – He would have report back on that question.

5. Has any case relating to child sexual exploitation for, say, the period prior to 2005 come to light that should have been referred to the independent inquiry?

Mr Hutchinson responded - He will have to report back.

6. Has any Elected Member (past or present) been named in relation to any investigation that has, or is, taking place in relation child sexual exploitation or abuse?

Mr Hutchinson responded – He is not aware of every single bespoke case, in such cases people are entitled to anonymity and would not wish to affect live investigations.

Councillor Shuttleworth asked Mr Hutchinson – Has the Local authority provided all the information requested in terms of all historic cases of CSE and any other available information to support the GMP in their investigations

Mr Hutchinson responded – He would have to take advice from the specialist team and report back.

Mr Hutchinson reiterated that he report back on each of the questions where an answer had not been given.

The Chair thanked Mr Hutchinson for his attendance and the update on Operation Sherwood.

Resolved: That the update on Operation Sherwood be noted.

CROSS PARTY CSE STEERING GROUP AND THE ANNUAL REPORT



The Board considered and discussed the Child and Exploitation: Elected Member Steering Group Annual Report 2022-23 submitted by Gerard Jones, Managing Director of Children and Young People which had been produced as a record of the progress and impact of the Cross-Party Steering Group on Child Sexual Exploitation during its first year in existence. This is the first Annual Report report of the Steering Group and will be presented to Council.

The first meeting of the group was on 23 November 2022 and the group had met in February, June and October of 2023 and a summary of each of those meetings were set out in the report.

Oldham Council made a commitment to establishing a cross-party Steering Group at a meeting of Full Council in September 2022 which followed on from the conclusion of the Independent Review into historic safeguarding practices in Oldham, the findings of which have been fully accepted by the Council. The review focussed on multi-agency responses to allegations child sexual exploitation in the borough during the period 2011-14.

In response to the publication of the review the Council has produced a Plan on a Page aimed at supporting survivors of child sexual exploitation and tackling perpetrators of abuse. This is attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

The purpose of the Elected Member Steering Group is to provide cross-party oversight of current safeguarding practice and the progress of the Plan to seek justice for and offer support to historic victims of child sexual abuse.

The aim is to raise member awareness, provide scrutiny and assurance on the effectiveness of current practice and to increase public confidence in the partnership response to complex and contextual safeguarding in Oldham.

The objectives of the Steering Group are to:

1. Not duplicate the scope of existing Boards in place but will work alongside the Council's existing governance arrangements.
2. Be provided with assurance on the support to victims both present and historic by way of data and insight reports
3. Be provided with assurance on progress of Operation Sherwood and the support given by the Council to Operation Sherwood by way of data and insight report
4. Be provided with assurance on current complex safeguarding activity and practice within the context of wider children's social care activity by way of data and insight reports
5. With agreement by the Steering Group, request and receive detail in relation to current safeguarding practice

and be able to make suggestions to improve processes and practice in place

6. Have the ability to refer any matters for additional information or advice to the independent Chair of the Oldham Safeguarding Children's Partnership



The Steering Group will provide reports to Council summarising matters considered within the 12-month period. A minimum of one report within each municipal year will be presented however, there may be more should the Steering Group feel it has something to report.

The Group is not a decision-making body. Any proposed changes to process/current practice that requires a decision will be referred to the appropriate decision-making forum in line with the Council's Constitution/Schemes of Delegation. What actions the decision-making bodies make on such matters referred to them will be formally reported back to the Steering Group.

Details of the Review into historic Safeguarding practices in Oldham were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. The Terms of reference of the Oldham Council Elected Member Steering Group on Child Exploitation were set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

Gerard Jones informed the Board that the Steering Group is not a decision making body but gave the Board assurance that it keeps in close touch with the police and multi agencies and it learns in detail about the on going safeguarding work. As the meetings have progressed the Group has often requested more detail and assurance on safeguarding matters. The group will constantly review its work to keep aligned with new challenges. Following the CSE Review the priority Action was to work closely with the Greater Manchester police to investigate historical allegations of sexual exploitation and to bring offenders to justice. The Group also have to ensure that support is being provide to victims. The work of the Group is also subject to Peer and Ofsted reviews which are reported back to the Group and Agencies. It was emphasised that there is also an extensive briefing with all Members of Oldham Council about how to report a concern to either Children's Services or Adult Services.

In response to a query, Gerard Jones informed the Board that the word 'contextual' on page 4 of the report refers to criminal exploitation of children, children who might go missing and are vulnerable, together with a range of reasons where children might be exploited. On the same page of the report 'Transitions Hub' refers to other forms of exploitation which are brought together in the Hub and the wider theme of exploitation of young people, support for families being one of these areas.

On a question of funding Gerard Jones informed the Board that the work of the Steering Group and Multi Agencies had been very successful and continued funding is and will be explored for the forthcoming financial year. He drew attention to the voice

of victims that was the strongest indicator and testament on the work to date and shows a need to continue with the efforts with regard to the Child Sexual Exploitation work.



A suggestion was made that there needs to be development to achieve a clear reporting pathway to the public to make sure the public are aware of what is taking place and indeed how to report an issue which for any member of the public is a big step to take. Also that any issue reported needs to be acted on quickly.

Mr Hutchinson informed the Board that the policing group have a daily scan of issues reported. Referrals are acted upon with all due haste to support those victims.

Mr Gerrard informed the Board that the Multi Agencies deal with young male victims as well as female victims and it is very much the case that any investigation is carried out at the victim's pace. Male victims tend to move at a lot slower pace than female victims. Discussion then ensued regarding how investigations are progressed with victims.

It was suggested that to receive an even higher degree of transparency, the Board should receive a 6 month report rather than an Annual Report updating Members of the work of the Steering Group, the strategy being taken forward and the progression of public communication. It was also suggested that Members could receive more in depth safeguarding training to get a better understanding of the issues involved.

Gerard Jones informed the Board that the 12 Months Annual Report is a Council decision. He advised that the work of the Oldham Safeguarding Partnership which includes a report of the Safeguarding Steering Group, meets on a more regular basis and is available on the Safeguarding website.

In response to a query regarding the specific findings of the national Independent Inquiry into Sexual Abuse, page 8 of the report refers, Gerrard Jones informed the Board that a letter has been sent to the Home Office to say that the findings need to be carried out. He advised that with regard to this Council, the findings are taken on board and continually reviewed and where possible included into current systems. He would bring an update to a future meeting on the progress with the twenty recommendations.

Gerrard Jones asked Board Members to advise him of specific issues for him to update the Board at a meeting in 6 months.

A Member raised the point that there was no mention of Scrutiny in the Terms of Reference of the Elected Member Steering Group. Shelly Kipling, Assistant Chief Executive, informed the Board that the Terms of Reference of the Steering Group will be reviewed in the near future and the reference to Scrutiny will be included.

Resolved: that

- (i) the Child Sexual Exploitation: Elected Member Steering Group Annual Report 2022-23 be noted; and
- (ii) an update on the work of the Elected Member Steering Group together with a wider safeguarding report to include specific issues notified to Gerard Jones by Members of the Board together with an update on the way in which the specific findings of national Independent Inquiry as referred to in the report are being taken forward by this Council.

8

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS PERFORMANCE

Councillor Ali, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, presented the Primary and Secondary Schools Performance report.

The report informed the Board that Key Stage (KS) outcomes for 2023 show that Oldham school standards are recovering from the negative impact of the pandemic in primary and are improved since the last comparable results in secondary. Most gaps to national averages are narrowing and benchmarked performance shows consequent improvement. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils continues to be a strength. The impact of additional resource over time and local partnership strategic prioritisation has been pivotal to improvement.

The Board was further informed that School-age children take standardised national assessments in year 1 and at the end of KS1, KS2 and KS4. The data from these assessments is shared to enable comparison of performance across schools, boroughs and regions.

Pupils take the phonics screening check at the end of year 1, typically aged 6. Those who do not meet the expected standard take the check again at the end of year 2, typically aged 7.

Pupils are assessed at the end of KS 1 (year 2) in reading, writing, maths and science. Teachers are responsible for judging the standards in English reading, English writing, mathematics, and science. To help inform those judgements, pupils sit national curriculum assessments in English and mathematics, commonly called SATs.

Pupils are assessed at the end of KS 2 (year 6) in English grammar, punctuation and spelling, English reading and mathematics. English writing and science are reported as a teacher assessment judgement.

During KS 4 most pupils work towards national qualifications - usually GCSEs. Pupils are assessed at the end of KS 4 (year 11) in the compulsory national curriculum subjects of English,

maths and science and a range of foundation and other subjects.

In response to a query, Matt Bulmer, Director of Education Early Years and Skills, informed the Board that children are referred to as disadvantaged according to the income of a family and this is determined by a test being completed by families.

With to another query with regard to more children in Oldham achieving better than the national average, Matt Bulmer informed the Board that Primary school performance have achieved 90% or better and this is as a result of a great deal of hard work over the last 5 years by Primaries to bring them up to that standard. With regard to Secondary schools there is a great deal of work needed to mirror the improvement of Primary schools. Currently this is shown in the raw attainment data and in terms of the Ofsted outcomes which currently stand at 46% good or better in Secondary schools. He informed Members that the Department of Education had made significant investment over the last 5 years in Oldhams schools. All but 3 of the schools are local authority maintained. The remaining 3 are Trusts. Teacher recruitment and retention is high on the list. Every effort is being made to keep the best teachers as is recruiting good quality teachers. He advised that there is a long way to go on secondary school performance, probably years, to achieve the Primary school levels.

Tony Shepherd, , emphasised that the vast majority funding in public schools is a direct result of central government policies. The local authority has a role in the Strategic Management and this is done through the Oldham Learning Partnership who bring together any group who work in education in the Borough and this mechanism drives the authority's education forward.

In response to a query regarding the elements that make the foundations of secondary schools good, Matt Bulmer acknowledged the fact that keeping Headteachers and stable Leadership Teams in place together with schools having adequate number of spaces and progressing the disadvantaged children in schools were all key elements for schools.

Resolved: that

- (i) the Primary and Secondary schools performance outcomes for 2023 be noted; and
- (ii) a further update report be submitted to the Board in 6 months.

THE LADO ANNUAL REPORT

The Board considered and discussed the LADO Annual Report 2022-23 submitted by Colette Morris, Team Manager, Allegations Management Unit.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the management of allegations in Oldham, and the role of the Designated Officer between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

The statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 sets out the requirements for all agencies providing services for children to have procedures in place for reporting and managing allegations against staff and volunteers. This is mirrored in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 (KCSIE). The guidance highlights the need for a Designated Officer to oversee the process, by giving independent advice on thresholds and the other aspects of safeguarding when an allegation is made. This will include a range of measures, in consultation with the employer, including risk assessment, the use of suspension for more serious conduct matters or criminal investigations, alongside other issues including managing duty of care to the employee and proportionality to ensure the process is concluded fairly and as soon as possible.

The procedures for the management of such allegations are contained in the Greater Manchester Child Protection Procedures - Allegations against Staff.

Members were informed of the role of LADO as follows –

The LADO role is designed to manage all allegations against all professionals who work with children (both employed and voluntary) and to assist professionals, to create safer environments for children to access services. Therefore, if the LADO is effective then children and young people can confidently access services safely.

The definition of an allegation is:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- Behaved towards a child that indicated he/she would pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children.
- Behaved in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children.

The ways in which allegations are considered and the duties of the LADO are set out in the report.

Colette Morris informed the Board that the report did not emphasise any problems. The report shows that there is much more awareness among people. The Council has two LADOs which means they can manage cases more quickly and efficiently. The Board was advised that each concern is taken seriously. Members were advised that there have been vexacious complaints by adults but this is not reflected in complaints by children.

10 **KEY DECISION DOCUMENT**

Consideration was given to the Key Decision document covering decisions taken from 18 September 2023.

Resolved: That the Key Decision document covering decisions taken from 18 September 2023 be noted.

11 **RULE 13 AND 14**

The Chairman advised their was nothing to report at this item.

12 **WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24**

The Chair advised that the Work Programme was currently being revised and an updated Programme will be submitted to the next Board meeting.

Resolved: that the item be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.00 pm