

Review into historic safeguarding practices in the Borough of Oldham



Priority actions:

- To work with Greater Manchester Police to investigate historic allegations of sexual exploitation and bring offenders to justice
- To provide support to victims of child sexual exploitation
- To provide reassurance about standards of current safeguarding practice
- To ensure cross-party oversight and involvement in improving safeguarding services and supporting victims
- To raise greater awareness of child sexual abuse, how to spot it and how to report it

Bringing offenders to justice

Under Operation Sherwood Greater Manchester Police will investigate all allegations of historic sexual abuse. This will include those highlighted in the CSE Review but also any other historic allegation from any time period.

The Operation will be clearly promoted to encourage other victims and witnesses to come forward, both to seek justice and access support.

The Council has identified dedicated additional resource to support the ongoing work of Operation Sherwood, both by supporting the work of investigation teams and by providing help and ongoing support to victims who come forward.

Supporting victims of child sexual exploitation

A GMP and Oldham Council victim strategy, for those victims identified in the review and any new victims that come forward, has already been developed and deployed working alongside victim support, SARC, and mental health services. It offers a helpline for victims signposting to support on a range of issues including mental health and housing.

This helpline will continue to offer support to victims throughout Operation Sherwood and beyond, should it continue to be needed.

The Council will provide funding via an appropriate support organisation to provide advocacy for victims including signposting to independent legal advice and support

The Council will convene a victim support advisory group led by victims/survivors and chaired by local organisation Keep Our Girls Safe (KOGS) to ensure the voice of local victims shapes our ongoing support offer and oversees our current work.

Providing assurance on current safeguarding practice

Council safeguarding and children's social care services are inspected regularly by Ofsted. They provide a rating of our current practice in a range of areas against a national framework.

In addition, the Council's ongoing work to improve the services we provide for children is overseen by a 'Getting to Good' Board which is chaired by the Department for Education.

Oldham also has a multi-agency safeguarding partnership, chaired independently, which oversees the borough's work to keep children and young people safe.

To encourage greater and quicker improvements to services Oldham Council will work with sector-leading councils from across the country who can share best practice in safeguarding and specifically CSE practice.

A series of Learning Events will be held to encourage learning for professionals on CSE and complex safeguarding practice from the Oldham Review, the Home Office Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and other national inquiries.

Ensuring cross-party oversight and involvement

Oldham Council will establish a cross-party assurance group to provide scrutiny and direction for the council's improvement activity in relation to safeguarding. The group will also oversee our work to support victims.

The terms of reference for this group will be determined by an all member engagement process and agreed at Full Council.

We will review our current member training offer on CSE and wider safeguarding issues with advice and support from charities and advocacy groups.

Raising awareness of child sexual abuse

Oldham Council will promote the work we do to safeguard children and young people and the role all residents and organisations can play in supporting that work.

We will improve our safeguarding education and training offer to more pupils and parents in Oldham schools, to local businesses and partner organisations so they are aware of the risk of child abuse and how to report it.