

# **CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: ELECTED MEMBER STEERING GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

## **1 Introduction**

This report has 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.

The first meeting of the group was on 23 November 2022 and the group has met in February, June and October of 2023.

## **2 Purpose**

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.

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.

The Terms of Reference for the group are attached at Appendix 2.

### **3 Progress over the last 12 months**

#### **a) November 2022**

At the first meeting held on Wednesday, 23rd November 2022 Members were reminded of the purpose of the Steering Group and the Terms of Reference as agreed at the meeting of Full Council in September 2022. It was agreed that the Terms of Reference would be reviewed in 6 months' time.

Members were provided with a presentation which summarised the discussions at the All-Member workshop held in August and the outcome of the Joint Safeguarding Board workshop held in September. The workshop was jointly hosted by Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership and Oldham Safeguarding Adults Board and was designed to ensure that agencies have a full understanding of the learning from both the Oldham Independent Review and the national Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) programme. The event sought assurance about how services have changed over the last few years, adopting new ways of working that ensure a more responsive and inclusive approach to tackling the organised exploitation of children and young people in Oldham.

Members of the Steering Group were advised that the Joint Complex and Contextual Safeguarding subgroup and Transitions Hub were reviewing their Terms of Reference following on from the event to incorporate all age exploitation and ensure survivors of exploitation are supported by multi-agency responses. A further Joint Safeguarding event to review progress will be held early in 2023.

The Group received an update from Greater Manchester Police on the progress of Operation Sherwood which is a large-scale operation in response to the survivors identified as part of the Independent Review. Members were assured that they will be kept up to date with all arrests made in connection with the operation.

The Managing Director Children and Young People Services, updated Members on the work the Council has undertaken in reviewing our support to victims. This includes ensuring that the views of survivors of exploitation inform and shape our response to support and detection. This is being facilitated by KOGS (Keeping our Girls Safe) which has been commissioned by the Council to undertake this work.

Members received a presentation on the National Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA). This is a set of reports that sets out the main findings about the extent to which state and non-state institutions failed in their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation and makes recommendations for reform. The Inquiry held 325 days of public hearings. It processed over two million pages of evidence and heard from 725 witnesses. The Inquiry has also published 61 reports and publications. Over 7,300 victims and survivors engaged with the work of the Inquiry. More than 700 gave evidence at public hearings or provided statements. The Inquiry heard repeatedly how institutions prioritised their own reputations, and those of individuals within them, above the protection of children. Many lacked appropriate policies and procedures. There are 20 recommendations noted in the report. Greater Manchester have undertaken a piece of work to consider the recommendations at a GM level and the LGA / ADASS and DCS networks are also considering the recommendations. Within Oldham we are currently analysing all the recommendations and considering what they mean for Oldham.

The Chief Executive of KOGS provided Members with an overview of the organisation and its history. It was established in 2011 and was set up to address the gaps in service provision to young people around prevention and early intervention by educating young people on unhealthy relationships and supporting those that had been groomed or exploited. KOGS works with schools / colleges, offer workshops which are held across communities in Oldham, counselling both 1:1 and group sessions, mentoring. The group agreed that work should be undertaken to understand the support in place for males who are subjected to abuse.

## **b) February 2023**

The Group was updated on a recent communication campaign, held over a period of two weeks, focussing on raising awareness of Complex and Contextual Safeguarding. An update was provided by Cllr Rea on a workshop that was organised in Failsworth to raise awareness amongst parents of young girls, although it was noted that more needed to be done to increase parent and carer engagement in the process.

Members were also updated on the Complex and Contextual Safeguarding Action Plan which takes into account key messages from the Historic Review and recommendations from the Joint Workshop which was held.

The following actions were noted as being completed:

- The Adult Safeguarding and Exploitation Strategy and Joint OSCP and OSAB Transitions Policy have been approved and implemented.
- The Joint Safeguarding Transitions Subgroup have also reviewed their TOR to incorporate exploitation.
- Each partnership has committed to an All-Age Exploitation Strategy

A case study was presented to the Group as part of this item.

The Steering Group were appraised on the progress of the Council Communications Strategy to raise awareness of the learning from the Oldham Review and how to spot signs of child sexual exploitation and take the appropriate action.

Members noted that work has also progressed on the following areas:

- A review of all of our safeguarding web pages, making sure the language and information was accessible as possible.
- A dedicated space in each addition of Oldham Council Working for You that profiles what the MASH and KOGS do.
- Promoting World Social Workday, giving thanks to our dedicated social work teams whilst also promoting how to get in contact with them.
- Promoting training sessions that took place in education settings for young people around spotting the signs of abuse.
- Regular posts on spotting the signs of abuse on our social media channels, particularly on Tik Tok which is increasingly popular among younger people.

The Council Communications Team will continue to work closely with KOGS to ensure that communication activity is sense checked by experts by experience.

Members also received update on the Complex Safeguarding Peer Review which has been undertaken in Oldham led by the Greater Manchester Complex Safeguarding Hub which identified the following strengths in Oldham:

- It is evident that progress has been made from previous peer reviews
- Allocation decisions set clear objectives and timescales
- There is evidence of management oversight
- The social care staffing has been increased to reflect the increasing demand
- Daily and weekly governance is attended by a range of partners
- Weekly governance enables young people not open to the service to be highlighted and monitored should concerns escalate
- The duty Complex Safeguarding Social Worker sits in MASH and in strategy meetings to provide consultation advice
- There is post 18 support for young people who consent to the continued offer from the Complex Safeguarding Team
- Peer mapping is actioned for every young person

- There is evidence of joint supervision and good working relationships with the area social workers
- Examples of the Complex Safeguarding Social Worker being persistent in trying to engage young people and considering age, vulnerability and young people's preferences in doing this.
- The Complex Safeguarding Team were able to reflect on decisions/actions and highlight where they could have done things differently
- The Complex Safeguarding Team demonstrated a genuine willingness to learn and develop
- During the meetings and case discussions there was evidence of a strong multi agency partnership approach

The Chief Executive KOGS updated the Group on progress through the use of case studies from survivors and the work that KOGS continue to provide and deliver services to survivors. Since being commissioned by the Council KOGS have spoken with 40 women regarding their experiences and are producing a spoken word presentation to share at a future Member Workshop.

### **c) June 2023**

GMP updated the group on Operation Sherwood progress with support being offered to survivors. An update to All Councillors will be provided as part of the Steering Groups Annual Report to the meeting of Full Council.

Chief Executive KOGS shared the experiences of survivors and the work that KOGS continue to provide and deliver. It was explained that KOGS use the term non-recent rather than historic when referring to survivors' experiences. A number of survivors real voices were heard during the presentation, although their identify was protected.

Members received a progress report on the work of the Complex and Contextual Safeguarding Hub. 168 referrals have been received since July 2022 of which 122 received intervention with the remaining signposted to other services including KOGS 68 were relating to CSE and 76 relating to dual Contextual and Complex Safeguarding. 54 cases are open to the Complex Safeguarding Hub between the ages of 10 – 20 years old. 25% of children and young people currently receiving support have SEND needs and 25% have speech and language needs.

Members were also informed on the work of the Council and its partners on the prevention of exploitation. This included the work being undertaken with the Communications Team to share positive messages on social media. Training has been delivered to schools re: online safety and increased awareness of complex and contextual safeguarding. Schools have reached out to request training to parents. During the week of action (13 – 24 March), the Hub delivered training/briefings to 2,500 pupils across 9 schools, 3 mosques and 5 residential homes. Feedback from a

School and young person was shared to the group as part of the presentation. The Leader asked that children with SEND and SAL are prioritised across the system.

The Managing Director of Children and Young People's Services presented the group with the specific findings of the national Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. The following recommendations of the Inquiry alongside Government's response were noted by the group:

1. Compile and publish a single core data set covering both England and Wales on a regular basis. **Agreed by Government**
2. Create Child Protection Authorities for England and Wales to improve child protection practice, provide advice to government on child protection policy and reform, inspect institutions, and monitor implementation of the Inquiry's recommendations. **Agreed as part of the Stable Homes, Built on Love Strategy.**
3. Create a Minister for Children for both the UK and Welsh governments. **Not agreed as Government believes role fulfilled by Secretary of State for Education.**
4. Commission regular campaigns to increase public awareness of child sexual abuse, which should be continuously evaluated to measure impact. **Agreed.**
5. Ban the use of techniques which deliberately induce pain in youth justice settings. **Not agreed.**
6. Give children in care the ability to challenge aspects of local authority decision making by amending the Children Act 1989. **Government believes Stable Homes, Built on Love Strategy to deliver on this.**
7. Create a registration system for care staff in children's homes. This should be through an independent body which sets, maintains and enforces standards. **Agreed by Government.**
8. Introduce a registration system for care staff in young offender institutions and secure training centres. **Government exploring how this will work.**
9. Extend the use of the barred list to anyone recruiting an individual to work or volunteer with children on a frequent basis. **Accepted - subject to feasibility study.**
10. Improve compliance with the statutory duty to notify the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) through inspections, arrangements to refer breaches to the police and an information sharing protocol between the DBS and regulator. **Agreed by Government.**
11. Introduce legislation to allow enhanced checks of citizens and residents of England and Wales who apply to work or volunteer outside the UK. **To be reviewed.**
12. Make it mandatory for internet companies to pre-screen material for known child sexual abuse images before it is uploaded. **UK Online Safety Bill to address this.**
13. Introduce laws requiring anyone working in regulated activity, a position of trust or as a police officer, to report child sexual abuse if they receive a disclosure, witness, or observe recognised indicators of child sexual abuse. **Accepted and propose a mandatory reporting regime for child sexual abuse subject to full public consultation.**

14. Commission an inspection of compliance with the Victims' Code in cases of child sexual abuse. **Accepted and to be considered through the Victims and Prisoners Bill.**
15. Remove the time limit for compensation claims by people who have been sexually abused. **Accepted and to consult on strengthening judicial guidance and options to reform limitation law.**
16. Provide specialist therapeutic support for all children who have experienced sexual abuse across England and Wales. **Accepted and will consult on systemic changes to provision.**
17. Introduce a code of practice on keeping and accessing records about child sexual abuse. **Accepted and will engage with the Information Commissioners Office**
18. Extend the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme. **Accepted and will consult on amending scope and time limits.**
19. Set up a single redress scheme, to provide some monetary compensation for people who were sexually abused in institutions in England and Wales. **Accepted and will consult with interested parties.**
20. Ensure internet companies introduce age verification systems. **Accepted. Online Safety Bill to deliver.**

The Group was kept updated on the progress of Rochdale Review and Members were assured that the meeting would receive an update up when the outcome and any learning from that review can be shared.

The Group were informed that the Council's communication strategy continues to focus on building trust and confidence in the Council's services to survivors and those contacting the council for help and guidance. An update was also provided on the training scheduled for Members.

#### **d) October 2023**

At the final meeting of the year, the Steering Group received a presentation on the Complex Safeguarding Annual report from the Assistant Director, Social Work Services. The report is produced in order to provide assurance to Members, partners and the wider public on the quality and effectiveness of the Council's services for children and young people at risk of criminal, contextual and sexual exploitation. The report will be circulated to the Steering Group and published following sign off by Oldham Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

The meeting heard from the Managing Director, Children and Young People Services regarding the Greater Manchester Assurance Statement, which had been circulated to the meeting in advance. This has been produced by all 10 GM authorities to provide assurance on the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements to tackle child sexual exploitation as part of the conclusion of the GM Independent Review. The Assurance Statement was submitted on 29 September 2023 and the final report will be published by GMCA towards the end of the year.

The Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance summarised the key areas of the statement on how Oldham Council has significantly improved

safeguarding practices and is working collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders. The development of the multi-agency Complex Safeguarding Hub was highlighted as an example of the progress that has been made in Oldham since the period highlighted in the Independent Review into Oldham. The Assurance Statement also identified much more robust governance and performance management processes are now in place in line with the GM Complex Safeguarding procedures and performance frameworks. This includes processes to review cases of children and young people at risk, including those missing from home and daily risk meetings are held.

Independent oversight of the progress and impact of the Complex Safeguarding Hub has been provided to the Council and partners through Peer Reviews which have been undertaken in partnership with other GM authorities and overseen by the GM Complex Safeguarding Hub, as well as Ofsted. The Peer Reviews in 2019, 2020 and 2022 have evidenced good progress being made as well as areas for improvement. Peer Reviews were suspended in 2021 due to Covid.

The meeting received a brief outline of the Council's commitment to produce a Survivors Charter for survivors of child sexual exploitation. This work is being undertaken in partnership with statutory partners and the voluntary sector to ensure that the experience and voice of survivors shapes the work.

The meeting also received a presentation on the work of the Council in education settings including primary and secondary schools to prevent exploitation. This was led by the Safeguarding Partnership Education Training Officer who spoke about early prevention, consent and healthy relationships, online safety and behaviours. These sessions are delivered to pupils, parents and carers, foster carers, children's social care staff, residential care home staff, school staff and multi-agency professionals.

The role of Safeguarding Advisor is to deliver relevant age appropriate and support to school staff, Designated Safeguarding Leads and school governors. A case study was shared which evidenced awareness raising where a child, following a training session in school, came forward as he felt he was at risk of exploitation and as a result a report was made to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) and the young man is now receiving support from school and services.

Members felt that the presentations provided assurance that schools are engaging well and would be supportive of the Council's commitment to ensure all children and young people are aware of what exploitation means and how to access support.

The Steering Group was appraised of the proposed changes to Working Together to Safeguarding Children to include education providers as statutory partners. This will support the Council's work in schools, and it will be a priority of Oldham Safeguarding Children's Partnership to ensure that education fulfils its statutory duties.

Greater Manchester Police provided an update on the work of GMP in relation to current and historic child sexual exploitation. GMP are committing significant



resources to tackling exploitation which includes 1 Detective Inspector, 2 Detective Sergeants, 6 Police Constables. The strength of working relationships between GMP and Children's Social Care was emphasised in tackling exploitation. Members were assured that there were a number of serious and complex investigations ongoing which are progressing at pace and the investigation stage of Operation Sherwood is embedded with the first arrest being made. A number of anonymised case studies were shared with the Group. Finally, GMP confirmed that the force has also completed a GM Assurance Statement which would also be shared with the Steering Group.

Keeping Our Girls Safe provided an update on their work with survivors of non-recent exploitation. This includes direct work as well as referrals onto other agencies. Over the last 12 months KOGS has supported 65 young women who have come forward for support. A case example was shared with the group which illustrated how much effort is required to support a disclosure and the length of time often needed to get to that point where a survivor feels able to disclose. The Complex Safeguarding Hub has worked with KOGS to support the individual concerned who has finally decided to report the abuse they experienced. Other examples were shared, and the group acknowledged the commitment from across all partners to ensuring that survivors are able to access support and perpetrators are being pursued.

Members received an update on the Council's Communication Strategy and the work that is being done to publicly promote how to access support around child sexual exploitation including with the Complex Safeguarding Hub and KOGS. This is being done via the Council website and its newsletter, Oldham Council Working for You. Alternative mechanisms for sharing stories and links with younger audiences is being explored and an example of TikTok messaging was shared with the Steering Group. Parent and child friendly versions will be developed as it was noted that content should be adapted for both audiences. The Council has been offered access to the GMP young person's forum in order to assist with the development of this work.

## **5 Conclusion**

This report summarises the assurance work undertaken by the Steering Group overseen during the first 12 months in existence.

The report will be presented to Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee in November and circulated to members of the Steering Group in advance.



Appendix 1 Oldham  
Plan on a Page.docx



Appendix 2 Terms  
of reference CSE Men

**Harry Catherall**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Oldham Council**

**24 October 2023**