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| Meeting of South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership | Performance & Audit Committee |
| Held on: | 28th May 2024 |
| Agenda Item: | 7 |
| Title: | Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2020 – 2025 |
| Summary: | |
| <p>The purpose of this report is to update the child protection committee on the proposal to review what was outstanding within the sexual exploitation strategy and propose a way forward which was in line with National Child Protection Guidance.</p> | |
| Author: | Gary Hoey, Chief Social Work Officer |
| Recommendations: | |
| <p>It is recommended that the Performance and Audit Committee read the proposal and background information and endorse the proposal to review and update the Pan Ayrshire CSE toolkit in line with National Child Protection Guidance, South Ayrshire’s CSE training course, and incorporate definitions and signs of child criminal exploitation. It is recommended that these issues are re-framed within a contextual safeguarding approach.</p> | |
| Route to meeting: | |
| <p>Performance and Audit Committee Review Child Protection Committee</p> | |
| Implications: | |
| Financial | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| HR | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Legal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Equalities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sustainability | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Policy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ICT | <input type="checkbox"/> |

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION STRATEGY 2022 – 2027

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Performance and Audit Committee (PAC) on the proposal to review what was outstanding within the Sexual Exploitation Strategy and propose a way forward which is in line with National Child Protection Guidance.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the PAC read the proposal and background information and endorse the proposal to review and update the Pan Ayrshire CSE toolkit in line with National Child Protection Guidance, South Ayrshire's CSE training course, and incorporate definitions and signs of child criminal exploitation. It is recommended that these issues are re-framed within a contextual safeguarding approach.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Sexual Exploitation Strategy decision Feb CPC/COG

It was the recommendation of the Child Protection Committee in February 2024 that the Sexual Exploitation strategy had reached the point of requiring review and separation into separate actions for children's and adult's services. The majority of actions within the strategy had been completed and the proposal was adopted that any outstanding actions would be reviewed and if still applicable would be incorporated into a way forward that took account of up-to-date guidance around child protection and a contextual safeguarding approach.

- 3.2 **Pan-Ayrshire CSE Toolkit** [CSE_PAN_Ayrshire_Toolkit_2019.pdf \(south-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk)

- 3.3 **Jay Review of Criminally Exploited Children**
[Shattered Lives Stolen Futures Exec Summary.pdf \(actionforchildren.org.uk\)](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

4. REPORT

- 4.1 Although historically South Ayrshire's approach to combatting exploitation has been focussed on sexual exploitation in the Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2020-2025, this approach now needs to be updated in line with the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland which was published in 2021. This National Guidance provides detail on a wide array of different child protection concerns, including child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. Given the recommendation of the Child Protection Committee in February 2024 that a move away from the previous Sexual Exploitation strategy would allow for a more targeted approach, it is proposed that the current pan-Ayrshire CSE toolkit is updated and brought into line with the National CP Guidance and South Ayrshire's CPD accredited CSE training course.
- 4.2 In November 2023, Action for Children launched the Jay Review of Criminally Exploited Children to gather evidence from expert witnesses on the scale and nature of the criminal exploitation of children, the legal and policy response across the UK and the support available to victims. The review was chaired by Professor Alexis Jay CBE, chair of the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection and former chair of the Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

- 4.3 The criminal exploitation of children is a complex type of child abuse where a young person is manipulated or pressured to take part in criminal activity. This can include dealing and transporting drugs or weapons, growing cannabis, theft and burglary. Exploited children often experience multiple types of abuse at the same time, including violence, threats, emotional and sexual abuse.
- 4.4 The majority of victims have a range of risk factors that make them particularly vulnerable including; being a child in need or care-experienced, alcohol or substance misuse issues, adverse childhood experiences, exclusion from mainstream education. Children can very quickly become trapped in exploitation and under threat of violence, commonly conceal their exploitation from parents or carers.
- 4.5 The report makes a number of recommendations, mostly at a national level including:
- A call for a statutory definition of criminal exploitation of children as follows: *The criminal exploitation of children occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into criminal activity. The victim may have been criminally exploited even in the activity appears consensual.*
 - A single, cohesive legal code designed to tackle the criminal exploitation of children.
 - Co-ordinated police and practice at a local and national level (including a new pathway for protecting children from risk outside the home)
 - Investment, research and whole-system learning.
- 4.6 It is recommended that within South Ayrshire we expand the CSE toolkit considering the definition and signs of child sexual exploitation to also include the definition and signs of child criminal exploitation. It is also recommended that this document is updated and refreshed in line with the guidance provided within the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland and encourages a contextual safeguarding approach to understating risk to young people out with the home. This would ensure that within South Ayrshire we have a robust approach to child exploitation that incorporates the current guidance and research and can sit alongside staff training to ensure that our multi-agency staff group are equipped to identify and respond appropriately to young people at risk of exploitation within our communities.

5. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 5.1 National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021).

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

- 6.1.1 There are no financial implications of this proposal.

6.2 Human Resource Implications

- 6.2.1 The human resource implication of this proposal is the commitment to review and re-write the current CSE toolkit. This can be incorporated within the role of the CP lead officer/public protection practice development officer and will need to be considered and supported by Pan Ayrshire CPC colleagues.

6.3 Legal Implications

- 6.3.1 The review and updating of this toolkit will bring us in line with National Guidance and local procedure around child protection and exploitation.

6.4 Equalities implications

6.4.1 The new and refreshed guidance will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment as per the new process adopted by South Ayrshire Council and South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership. There are no perceived equality issues.

6.5 Sustainability implications

6.5.1 There are no sustainability implications.

6.6 Clinical/professional assessment

N/A

7. CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

7.1 As detailed in the report the review and refresh of this policy will require partnership working of the Lead Officers for Child Protection across the East, North and South Ayrshire to ensure consistency of approach.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 There are no risks perceived in relation to the recommendations.

REPORT AUTHOR AND PERSON TO CONTACT

Name: Sarah-Jane Ramsay

Phone number:

Email address: sarahjane.ramsay@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Integrated at 3.2 and 3.3