

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 21 NOVEMBER 2019

CSE INVESTIGATION

REPORT OF JONATHAN EATOUGH – MONITORING OFFICER

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

To update members on progress to establish an Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Telford. The report summarises the work to support the Inquiry since the Advisory Group last met in June 2018, both in respect of commissioning support services for survivors, establishing the Inquiry and collating and securing information and records that the Inquiry might access. The report also details the influence and involvement of survivors in progress to date.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

For members to receive updates on;

Progress towards the establishment of an inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Telford;

On-going preparations to ensure that, when it commences, the inquiry progresses efficiently and effectively;

The influence and involvement of Survivors in the process; and

How survivors are being supported currently and how they will be supported during the inquiry.

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	<i>Putting our Children and Young People first Protecting and supporting our vulnerable adults and children Ensuring the neighbourhoods are clean, safe and well-maintained</i>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	<i>Eliminating child sexual exploitation is important for the entire community but particularly supports our children and survivors who have been impacted by this crime</i>
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	Ongoing	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	<i>An initial allocation of £0.35M has been set aside to meet the costs of the inquiry, including costs of commissioning an Independent Person to lead it. In addition to the £0.05m already committed to support survivors a further £0.1m per year, for the next 2 years, has been set aside to fund future support. There is more detail in the report.</i>
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<i>Outside the ambit of the Inquiries Act 2005, the Council has the power to commission an inquiry into activities in their area. In progressing to this point the Council has complied with procurement law, data protection and information governance law</i>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	<i>As detailed in the report.</i>
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	<i>Borough wide impact.</i>

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

Background

On 29 March 2018 a report to Cabinet gave a detailed history of the multi-agency work that has taken place in Telford in the last 12 years to protect children and young people from child sexual exploitation. This information was considered as background papers by full Council on 10 April 2018 when the Council resolved to commission and implement a non-statutory inquiry into all aspects of historic and current instances of child sexual exploitation within the Borough.

Members were seeking assurance on the following issues:

1. An inquiry into what had happened in the past would be established, it would be independent and the Council would co-operate with that Inquiry;
2. Survivors would be at the heart of the inquiry process; and
3. There would be comprehensive support for Survivors in Telford

Progress to Inquiry

The Inquiry - the Final Commission and the appointment of the Independent Chair

Members have this evening already considered a report about the process to appoint a Commissioning Body and have considered the recommendation for the appointment of the Commissioning Body.

Officers will meet the Commissioning Body to agree a timetable and reporting milestones so that progress can be monitored and reported back to members. It is important to note that, from this point, control over the timetable passes to the Commissioning Body.

Co-operating with the Inquiry - Evidence

The Council has made it clear from the outset that it does not seek to influence the terms of reference of the Inquiry, either in terms of extent or period. The Council will make its records made available for review during the course of the Inquiry. The Council has undertaken a lot of work in identifying and cataloguing records, both paper and electronic to make sure that those records are identified, catalogued and secure before the Inquiry starts.

Paper files are in locked cabinets in a locked room on Council premises to keep them secure and electronic records have had all existing access rights removed. It is important to note that some records do need to be accessed for current cases, access to either paper or electronic records can only happen with the approval of both the Assistant Director for Children's Safeguarding and Early Help **and** the Organisational Delivery and Development Manager.

Where files have been destroyed in accordance with approved document retention policies that may have existed at the time those are also recorded for audit purposes. Note that since the opening statement of Justice Goddard, the then chair of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse on 9 July 2015 no records relating to the care of children have been destroyed.

This work will undoubtedly support the Inquiry to avoid delay.

Co-operating with the Inquiry - Communications

The Council has, at www.telford.gov.uk/childsexualexploitation provided a lot more detail about child sexual exploitation, including facts about child sexual exploitation, where to go for advice and support and how to report it, alongside latest news on child sexual exploitation and the Inquiry. There have also been a number of press releases to keep people aware of progress.

The Lead Cabinet Member, Cllr Lee Carter, and the Chair of the Advisory Group, Cllr Peter Scott, have been briefed and all members of the Advisory Group have received regular updates from officers. Cllr Carter has also personally briefed the Telford MP. Both MPs have been sent updates at key milestones in the process.

Survivors at the heart of the process

Since the last meeting of the Advisory Group on 21 June 2018 the Council has continued to work with survivors in respect of developing support for them.

The Council has worked closely with the Survivors on the tender documentation for the Commissioning Body to ensure that they were in full agreement with those documents when they were published.

After the last meeting of the Advisory Group there was concern from survivors, their representatives and some members of this committee about how the documentation had been approved to move forward to the next stage in the process.

Officers/the Council recognised that this could have been done better and, since the last meeting they have worked to address some of those concerns. Initially the Council organised drop in sessions that were widely advertised, inviting anyone wanting more information about the process to come and ask questions about the process and the documentation.

Subsequently the Council agreed to a request from the Survivors Committee (renamed from the Reference Panel by survivors) for funding for them to receive independent legal advice. The purpose of this independent legal advice was to enable them to understand fully the tender documentation and better to influence the final tender documents. Since their appointment the Council's legal team and legal advisers have met with the Survivors

Committee legal representatives to agree this documentation. As a result of these conversations key changes to the documentation were made in respect of the role of the Survivors Committee in developing terms of reference and the process for finalising those terms of reference, particularly in relation to the role of the Independent Chair. The only material changes to the documentation agreed by members of the Advisory Group were those requested by the Survivors Committee.

Two representatives of the Survivors Committee attended the Bidders Open Day on 28 September 2018 and observed the presentations and discussions during the day and the Survivors Committee were also represented when the evaluation process was undertaken on the 9 November 2018.

The Cabinet Member Lead and officers are in regular communication with representatives of the Survivors Committee to make sure that any issues are identified and dealt with quickly. This is working effectively.

Supporting Survivors

A key element of the planning for the Inquiry was to review the existing support for survivors and, if appropriate, introduce extra support as quickly as possible. At the same time the Council would plan for on-going support during the period of the Inquiry when, foreseeably, the requirement for support services would be increased.

It is planned that, once the Inquiry has been completed, any recommendations would inform future support, again the intention is that this is designed and developed in collaboration with survivors.

The Council has been working to engage survivors and professionals in both local statutory services and the voluntary sector to develop the right support solutions for adult survivors of CSE.

The first stage of this work, extra support capacity led to the funding of the Holly Project: A project set up by survivors for survivors providing a drop in service and a safe place for individuals and their families to get support and advice from people who understand the trauma and lasting impact of child sexual exploitation. This project operates under the leadership and guidance of the YMCA Wellington. Short term Council funding was secured to start up this service and provided the opportunity for the Holly Project to develop its offer and to start working in July this year.

The Council has since committed additional short term funding to increase the level of psychological support available to people accessing the Holly Project.

This funding is committed to the end of March 2019. Longer term commissioned services will commence at the beginning of March 2019 to ensure that, whatever the outcome of the tender the service is continuous.

Since its inception the Holly Project has been developing good relationships with key partners including the Council's out of hours Emergency Duty Team, social care including the CATE team, the Police, sexual health services and the mental health Crisis Resolution Home Treatment Team. These valuable discussions have supported the development of strong working relationships which will undoubtedly improve the outcomes for people accessing the Holly Project and adults impacted by child sexual exploitation.

The second stage was to engage survivors, professionals and the voluntary sector to collaborate to develop longer term support services which the Council has committed funding for 2019 - 2021.

Telford and Wrekin Mental Health Forum is a group of voluntary and statutory sector providers who regularly meet to share new ideas, best practice and to raise local issues and concerns related to mental health (including emotional trauma). Members include organisations such as: Telford Mind, Citizens Advice, Axis, private counsellors, Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust, Branches, Recharge, Thrive and Impact (there are over 60 individual members of this group). The Forum has been regularly briefed on the Inquiry and work to support survivors. Members have acted as a conduit to the wider community by ensuring anyone they were supporting was aware of both the Inquiry into CSE and the commissioning work described – advising them of how they could be involved in either or both. This resulted in feedback which has informed the development of the specification for these longer term services.

Further local market research has been carried out in the form of a questionnaire and numerous 1-2-1 discussions with providers. Questions focused on: initial thoughts and reactions to the principles of the specification, any concerns they have, whether there were changes they would make and if they were aware of any examples of good practice in this area. Many providers advised that they were either responding on behalf of someone they had supported, or using their experience of supporting people (who have been victims of CSE) in a professional capacity in order to provide a response. Their feedback either directly changed the specification or resulted in further conversations with survivors in order to clarify certain details.

Concerns were also raised during this engagement process that the timescales didn't offer enough time for the market to prepare and to potentially recruit and train the level of staff needed. The procurement timescales were extended to address these concerns.

The Council continues to work closely with the Holly Project and this has ensured that the early experiences of the Project informed the development of the specification for longer term services and that, through the Holly workers, more survivors have been engaged in the process.

The opinions of 2 Clinical Psychologists (one of whom specialises in trauma) have also been sought in the development of the specification. Their contributions have ensured we protect from vicarious trauma. Both have been supportive of the approach taken and the support designed.

The council is seeking to commission a support service which offers 3 key functions:

- information, advice and guidance (to enable access and support engagement to wider community services)
- peer support (peer mentors will offer support via: group work and one to one support, help removing barriers to engagement, informally advocate and support before, during and after meetings)
- a listening service (a solution based approach to support individuals)

One of the strong messages from survivors and professionals was that it was a challenge to build trust and support people, often with very low self-esteem. As a result, the Council will be commissioning a framework of approved providers who can offer survivors activities which promote good emotional health and wellbeing. It is envisaged that a range of services will be on offer (this could include for example a focused activity around grief, an opportunity to learn new skills to help survivors to find work, or simple relaxation techniques which improve wellbeing). Survivors have shared powerful examples of how the flexibility to engage with people in different ways and in different places, is often key to building a new relationship from which the person can access support. The preferred provider for the main service will be asked to be part of the evaluation process to “approve” the list of providers and their activities. This will be open all year meaning providers can bid at any time to join the framework.

The closing date for bids was 12 November. A panel consisting of a survivors' representative, commissioner, procurement officer, safeguarding lead and mental health team lead will evaluate the bids along with contributions from colleagues in finance and health and safety. Provider discussions will take place on the 26 November with the preferred provider being notified on the 5 December. The new service will commence on 1 March 2019.

5. PREVIOUS MINUTES

CSE Members Advisory Group – 22 May 2018

CSE Members Advisory Group – 20 June 2018

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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