

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Monday, 5 September 2016 at 6.30 pm at the Civic Offices, Portsmouth

Present

Councillors David Tompkins
Ben Dowling
Paul Godier
Gemma New

Officers

Alison Jeffery, Director of Children's Services

Witnesses

Gemma Green, Portsmouth Abuse and Rape
Counselling Service (PARCS)
Chantelle Lemmon, Social Worker, PCC
Helen Saunders, Youth Justice Officer, PCC

57. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Will Purvis and Suzy Horton. Councillor Ryan Brent who had hoped to attend all the meetings for this review in his role as Cabinet member for Children's Social Care, also sent his apologies.

58. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

Councillor Godier declared a personal interest as his sister-in-law works for the Youth Offending Team.

59. Minutes of the previous meeting - 8 August 2016 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on 8 August 2016 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

60. A review into how well Portsmouth City Council and partners are preventing and dealing with child sexual exploitation (AI 4)

The Vice Chair advised that as the Chair had sent his apologies this evening he would be chairing the meeting today. The Chair invited everyone present to introduce themselves which they then did. He advised that a deputation request had been received from Mr Les Cummings and invited Mr Cummings to make his deputation. Mr Cummings circulated a copy of his deputation to the panel. The panel thanked Mr Cummings for his deputation and the Vice

Chair commented that the idea of developing a child friendly app giving advice and directions for reporting CSE was a great idea.

The panel then received evidence from Gemma Green from the Portsmouth Abuse and Rape Counselling Service (PARCS).

Gemma Green, PARCS.

PARCS was established in 1981 by a group of women who had been raped and they decided to set up a helpline for other women in the same situation as they were concerned that there were no other services available in the city. This quickly developed into offering face to face counselling. PARCS then widened the services to men and boys about ten years ago and has developed the young person service offering counselling and therapy.

The prevention service has been running for 19 years with the aim to prevent sexual abuse. There is one full time post, funded from a grant from the Tudor Trust and this allows the member of staff to undertake more long term work. They are able to follow up with the young people and offer practical support for however long they require this - there is no time limit. The staff will also work with young people who have been targeted and hold group sessions which are productive as they can hear that they are not alone and all support each other following their disclosure. Workshops can have themes such as justice, self-harm and courage.

There is also a part time person in post within the prevention service, who is working with Portsmouth schools. This is funded by Portsmouth City Council. PARCS have been providing support to schools for the last 15 years including holding workshops, attending assemblies and attending PHSE lessons. This gives the opportunity for the young persons to talk about their experiences and PARCS often receive one or two disclosures per session. Schools will approach PARCS to ask them to come into the school to hold a session. PARCS work to a co-productive model so will ask what they are concerned about and what they would like them to cover. Research tells us that if a child has concerns the majority of the time they will tell their friends rather than an adult. PARCS will work with what the young people tell them and use the bystander model which equips the young person to deal with disclosing. The Bystander model views the target audience as potential allies in preventing gender based violence and abuse and it challenges 'bystanders' to develop what have been called prosocial behaviours; behaviours that benefit others.

Gemma advised that 9-13 year olds who were all survivors of CSE had undertaken a project on CSE and had created a short video clip which she had permission to share. This was entirely their own work. The 6 minute clip was shown to the panel during the meeting. It shows an example online conversation between a vulnerable young person and a perpetrator.

The panel thanked Gemma for the information and showing the short clip. In response to questions from the panel, Gemma clarified the following points:

- The statistics showing the low numbers of victims within the BME community were the tip of the iceberg and it is very difficult to obtain information for minority groups as the crimes are often under reported.

PARCS work with the hard to reach groups but this must be done sensitively so that they allow PARCS into their communities and will 'sidestep' into the communities to find a way to engage with them. An example of this was their work with the Afro Caribbean community a couple of years ago.

- The waiting list for phone referrals varies. For young people (5-11 years) the waiting list is approximately one month and there is currently no waiting list for adults. As there is no restriction on counselling services there often is a waiting list for adults. PARCS believe that it is important to keep sessions free and it is unproductive to put a cap on the number of sessions available. Encourage to be me is a pre therapy group for people on the waiting list and offers 8 group sessions looking at how the victims are coping whilst waiting for therapy to begin.
- PARCS has 8 paid staff and over 50 volunteers who are all fully trained counsellors.
- If PARCS had more funding available it could offer more services as more staff could be employed. At present there are too many referrals to cope with.
- Funding is currently received from various sources including the ministry of justice, Children in need and Portsmouth City Council. Staff also organise numerous fund raising events and donations are also received from different parties which is a great help.
- In response to the question about what more could be done by the Council or the wider structure to improve the way that CSE is being dealt with, Gemma felt that more joined up thinking is required. PARCS sit on the MET operational group and joined up working is improving, but there have been situations when they are unaware what other organisations are doing for example when new campaigns are launched. It is therefore vital that all organisations who are involved in tackling/preventing CSE share the work they are doing with the other organisation. Training on CSE is very important and PARCS are very grateful to PCC for providing their safeguarding training. PARCS staff also attend disclosure training. In addition, some people are still not aware that PARCS exist and the support that is offered so more can be done by both PARCS and other organisations to promote this.
- Gemma also said that although PARCS and other organisations run poster campaigns to promote awareness of CSE, this does not necessarily mean that young people will engage with them and lots of people PARCS work with will not engage with a poster so they need to find other ways to getting the message across to young people. It is also important to measure the effectiveness of ad campaigns. Members said this was disheartening to hear. Gemma said that positive feedback was received following the domestic abuse 'Is this love' campaign which used the bystander model. Alison Jeffery added that the Alice campaign run by Hampshire Constabulary, is a sophisticated online presentation being revived this school term and it will be interesting to receive the feedback from this. Gemma added that she talks about the Alice campaign with her young people.

Chantelle Lemmon, PCC Social Worker

Chantelle advised that as a Social Worker she sits on the MET operation group and attends regular meetings. She supported PCC when the CSE Guardian Angels campaign was launched last summer, and supported PSCB with the training programme which was mainly aimed at schools to raise awareness of CSE. All social workers are advised to complete the CSE e learning modules and the Risk Assessment toolkit is followed. Any children identified at risk are subject to an assessment and then supported with a plan or signposted out. Any new nominations of children identified at risk within the team will be added to the MET discussion.

In response to a question about publicising CSE risk/signs within schools, Chantelle and Gemma advised that some schools are better than others. Although some schools are attending safeguarding training, it would be good to cross reference these with the schools whereby children have been identified at risk. Councillor Dowling asked Alison Jeffery if this would be relatively easy to pull together and Alison confirmed that this could be done and brought back to a future meeting. Gemma added that it takes a long time to build relationships with schools; every school is different and has different training requirements. She confirmed that PARCS also work with private schools.

In response to a question about what else she felt could be done to improve the way CSE is being handled in the city Chantelle said:

- Very little is currently known about which apps children are using which perpetrators can target children through so she felt that more could be done around this.
- There is valuable information obtained from the online safety officer and it would be good to share this with frontline practitioners.
- Barnardo's undertake direct work with children but this information is not widely shared with frontline practitioners
- It would also be useful to understand and evaluate the effectiveness of MET meetings.
- The CPI forms are used by the police and frontline practitioners to obtain information on CSE cases, however these are not widely used particularly in schools. It was suggested that these should be promoted in schools as they have a better knowledge of behaviours in children and recognising signs of CSE as they are working with them daily.

Helen Saunders, Youth Justice Officer in the Youth Offending Team

Helen advised that young people come to her team via police or the courts as they have committed an offence. The team use the CSE toolkit and have all received CSE training through Barnados. They work closely with the police and also have a member of the team who sits on the MET operational group. Helen advised that herself and her colleagues decided to undertake a mapping exercise on young people at risk of CSE. This has evolved into a database which they have shared with Hampshire Police and the wider plan is that it will sit within the MET group and become citywide and agency wide. This will help with the free flow of information.

Every school holiday the YOT team hold a 'take a risk day'. These cover various topics and they have had disclosures arising out of these sessions. The YOT team is very good at referring children to the best organisation who can help them.

In response to questions, Helen clarified the following:

- A lot of CSE cases are already identified before YOT becomes involved. There are 41 cases discussed at MET of which YOT are involved with 10, and out of that 10, 8 were already open to Children's Services before YOT became involved. This data is from 25 August 2016.
- The initial assessment covers social welfare areas and through one to one sessions the YOT officers will discuss CSE areas and relationships so there is always the opportunity for them to disclose anything else going on in their lives.

The meeting concluded at 7.35 pm.

Chair