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# **Council Meeting**

19<sup>th</sup> March, 2013

**Booklet 1**

Answer to Question

1.

**QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor Lepoidevin**

**TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor O'Boyle**

**TEXT OF QUESTION:**

**What action has been taken in Coventry to prevent the grooming of children for sexual exploitation? In light of recent cases around the country, what assurances can you give that children in the City and children in our care are safe and protected in this area?**

**ANSWER:**

Over the past year there have been a number of strands of work undertaken to ensure that children and young people in the city are supported and protected from the risk of being sexually exploited.

This work has been led by the child sexual exploitation safeguarding focus group in line with the recommendations from the Governments *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation* action plan published in November 2011. Some of this work includes:

- Developing and utilising a data collection and assessment tool to inform local need, including highlighting risks and vulnerability indicators, so that historic, possible and current child sexual exploitation (CSE) can be identified.
- An improved integrated approach with the Police and Social Care with clear safety plans in place for the most vulnerable young people which determine an immediate Police response when the plan is triggered. The police continue their efforts to secure prosecutions and maximise opportunities to disrupt CSE locally.
- Establishing a process to support professionals to appropriately share information to build a local profile of child sexual exploitation and to support criminal investigations and prosecutions.
- Building on the capacity of a range of services to offer specialist interventions via direct work for children and young people who are, or at risk of, being sexually exploited.

- Raising awareness and providing training across children's workforce including children's homes staff and schools about factors that may increase vulnerability to CSE as well as signs and symptoms that it is occurring. A range of organisations both statutory and third sector services such as Street-Wise, CRASAC, KAIROS continue to promote awareness and understanding of materials targeted at children and young people. This work is being pursued by a wide range of organisations through websites, conferences, seminars and other training and awareness-raising events nationally, regionally and locally.
- The action plan refers particularly to the link between children going missing and being sexually exploited. Coventry has an established Multi-Agency Screening Panel (MASP) which reviews every missing from home or care episode that occurs in the city. The Panel has now incorporated overview of any young people suspected or known to be at risk of CSE into its work to ensure that all necessary support services are in place to reduce risk or raise awareness.
- Proactively raising the awareness with Hoteliers and their staff of the indicators that children and young people are being sexually exploited via the "*Say Something if you See Something*" campaign, addressing the issues of hotels being used unwittingly for the exploitation of young people often called 'Hotel parties'.

CSE is not an easy issue to tackle or one that can be dealt with quickly. The work set out in the CSE focus group action plan is still a work in progress, however we are confident that we are moving forward in ensuring that the knowledge, expertise and awareness required to help support and protect children and young people from sexual exploitation in the city is in place.