

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet

17th September 2013

Response to Recommendations of the Scrutiny Task Group on the Sex trade in Cheltenham

Accountable member	Councillor Peter Jeffries, Cabinet Member for Housing and Safety
Accountable officer	Tracy Brown, Partnership Team Leader
Ward(s) affected	All
Key Decision	Yes
Executive summary	<p>The Positive Lives Partnership and Cheltenham Safeguarding Forum have considered the recommendations within the Scrutiny report and have taken responsibility for moving forward those that require a partnership approach.</p> <p>The Partnerships will undertake work to raise awareness of the emergency housing available in Cheltenham, and then consider any further gaps in provision if necessary.</p> <p>A programme of activity to raise awareness of a variety of safeguarding issues has been planned by the Partnerships and will include not only initiatives related directly to the recommendations in the report but also wider safeguarding topics that the Partnerships felt were relevant to Cheltenham.</p>
Recommendations	That Cabinet endorses the Partnerships actions as outlined in response to the recommendations set out in the report of the Scrutiny Task Group on the sex trade in Cheltenham.
Financial implications	<p>As detailed in section 4 of the report.</p> <p>Contact officer: Paul Jones, paul.jones@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 775154</p>
Legal implications	<p>There are not direct legal implications arising out of this report.</p> <p>Contact officer: Sarah Farooqi, sarah.farooqi@teWKesbury.gov.uk, 01684 272693</p>

HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	<p>Any training of front line staff would need to be clear on what is expected of those staff, and how they escalate concerns rather than trying to deal with it themselves.</p> <p>Contact officer: Richard Hall, Richard.hall@cheltenham.gov.uk, 07801 123 276</p>
Key risks	See appendix 1
Corporate and community plan Implications	<p>The planned actions in the report are supportive of Corporate Plan outcome that communities feel and are safe</p>
Environmental and climate change implications	<p>Neutral</p>
Property/Asset Implications	<p>N/A</p> <p>Contact officer: David Roberts@cheltenham.gov.uk</p>

1. Background

The Cheltenham Safeguarding Forum and Positive Lives Partnership were asked to consider the Overview and Scrutiny sex trade report and comment on the recommendations held within it. The Partnerships saw this as an ideal opportunity to take part in some innovative joint initiatives in an area of work important to all agencies. As such the Partnerships developed a number of actions to deliver the recommendations and has established task and finish groups to lead on delivery on their behalf.

2. Recommendation 1 – Emergency Housing

Recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Report

i. That the council should work with the Police, Public Protection Bureau and voluntary organisations to identify emergency facilities where vulnerable people can be housed safely for a short period. This will allow for victims to receive appropriate emotional support from trained professionals whilst also allowing the Police a sufficient period of time to interview them and build a case for prosecution.

- 2.1 Initial discussion around the provision of emergency facilities for vulnerable groups gave rise to concerns that there may be some gaps in service. However on further investigation the perceived gaps in service may be due to a lack of knowledge or understanding of the two new county contracts that cover this area. The primary contract being for community based housing support that is now held in Cheltenham by P3. This should provide a variety of housing based floating support for vulnerable groups. In light of a lack of knowledge among partners about the new service the Positive Lives Partnership will undertake to support awareness raising of the new service. It will then review in November whether Partners still feel there are gaps and then take necessary action either through discussions with County commissioners or within the Cheltenham Partnership. The second contract that touches on this area is the recently commissioned Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service. Discussions are being held with County commissioners to seek guidance if this service could cover the concerns raised about emergency housing related to those who have experienced sexual violence specifically as a result of the sex trade.

3. Recommendation 2, 3, 4 – Safeguarding Weeks

Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Report

ii. That all Councillors should attend awareness sessions on safeguarding issues, particularly to learn about the warning signs that children, young people and vulnerable adults often exhibit if they are being abused or exploited. As community representatives with local knowledge and local intelligence, Councillors are in a good position to contribute towards this agenda.

iii. That the council assist the Police and Public Protection Bureau in producing, promoting and distributing information to those who may be at risk of sexual exploitation or already be victims of it, to let them know where they can go for help and assistance. The task group recognises the challenges involved in making this information accessible to those who are fearful of authority or many not speak English as a first language.

iv. That the council support the work of the Public Protection Bureau in raising awareness of prostitution and potential sexual exploitation. One issue focuses around making hoteliers more aware of the potential for their premises to be used for prostitution and exploitation purposes, and in response the task group recommends that the council use its links to the Cheltenham Hoteliers

Associate to raise awareness of this issue, particularly in relevant periods such as the run up to 'race week'

3.1 The Positive Lives Partnerships and Cheltenham Safeguarding Forum felt that the promotion of key safeguarding messages as outlined in recommendations 2, 3, 4 could be done most efficiently through a safeguarding awareness week. This would be an effective way to highlight the issues raised and also promote safeguarding to the wider public. The idea of a partnership safeguarding awareness week has met with wide ranging support from organisations across all sectors and as such the Positive Lives Partnership did not want to miss an opportunity to capitalise on this support. It has therefore been decided to run a programme of safeguarding events through the year along particular themes and aimed at a variety of audiences.

3.2 Positive Socialising week – 16th – 20th September

This week will coincide with the start of Freshers fortnight at the University of Gloucestershire. It will capitalise on the already strong multi agency work that goes on at the time to welcome new university students to the area while keeping them safe and minimising disruption to the local community. During the week the following activities will take place to highlight positive socialising across the community:

- There will be poster campaign based on the Dorset Police's successful Operation Protect initiative which highlights issues associated with sexual violence and alcohol. These posters and also wristbands will be distributed across the Town highlighting the key safety messages and promoting support services.
- The Sexual Assault Referral Centre will run training for frontline reception staff to give them key skills to support victims of sexual violence in the first instances before specialist services can take over. The training will include information about procedures, myth busting and dealing with traumatised customers. This will be piloted with a small number of key agencies and if successful will be continued.
- There has been an anecdotal increase in children being involved in mobile phone and internet usage that may make them vulnerable. Schools will be targeted to raise awareness among Year 5 and 6 pupils and their parents of the issues. The Police and Youth Support Team will offer interested primary schools bespoke sessions to look at the issue in depth these will continue throughout the year. They will also run programmes in Cheltenham secondary schools tackling these issues and also positive relationship issues starting in the Autumn term and continuing throughout the academic year.

3.3 Positive Living week – 28th October - 1st November

This week will highlight the issues around the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and older people as these areas can sometimes be overlooked. This week was chosen as there will already be increased partnership working with vulnerable groups during this time due to the fear around Halloween and Bonfire night. It is also a time of year as the days become shorter when vulnerable groups can become more isolated.

- Gloucestershire Fire Service will deliver Safe and Sound training to frontline workers who go into people's homes to help them identify risks. There will also be the opportunity at the end of the training for support services associated with vulnerable adults and older people to advertise their services and disseminate information.
- A personal safety leaflet previously published by the Cheltenham Community Safety Partnership aimed at older people will be revamped and distributed across Cheltenham. It will be brought up to date and redesigned to include services for all vulnerable adults.
- The 'Keep Safe' scheme will be re-invigorated. The scheme encourages shops to offer a safe

place to vulnerable adults when they are out and about and may feel intimidated or confused. A sign is displayed so a vulnerable adult knows they can be safe inside and staff in the shop are trained to support them and contact support agencies as necessary. Shops currently participating will be asked if they need any additional support, new shops and organisations will be encouraged to join and the scheme will be re advertised to vulnerable groups and agencies who support them.

3.4 Positive Relationships week – 10th February – 14th February

The week beginning the 10th February has been chosen by the Partnerships as this will not only coincide with Valentine’s Day, when issues around relationships are in the spot light, but also be in time to raise awareness ready for an increase in some safeguarding issues during race week. Between now and February 2014 there is opportunity for the week to develop to ensure it is most effective but as a minimum it will include:

- A safeguarding seminar for people in a position of authority in the town like the successful conference in February of this year
- An hotelier event and information campaign in preparation for race week. This could extend to other business groups that it may benefit
- An awareness raising campaign about what a healthy relationship looks like and support if you think you may not be in one
- Basic training for frontline workers in identifying sexual exploitation and domestic abuse.

4. Funding

4.1 It is still too early to understand what if any funding needs may arise from recommendation 1 regarding Emergency Housing. However once Positive Lives has all the information it requires any funding implications will be considered and reported as necessary. All activities during the Safeguarding Weeks will be delivered in partnership with a variety of organisations who are committed to using existing resources creatively to support the weeks this will hopefully keep costs to a minimum. There will however be some small costs and it is proposed that these may be met from the Cheltenham allocation from the Police and Crime Commissioner under priority 12 “build confidence that Gloucestershire is a safe place to live, work, learn and visit”. The Health Inequalities funding that comes from Gloucestershire County Council’s public health department may also be able to be used. The Positive Lives Partnership will consider these proposals at its September meeting.

5. Monitoring and Review

5.1 After each Safeguarding week there will be a review to look at impact, this will culminate in a report once all three have been delivered. The report will make recommendations regarding possible future events and the most effective way to promote key safeguarding messages.

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Appendices	1. Risk Assessment

Background information	1. Final Report of the Scrutiny Task Group on the Sex trade in Cheltenham
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The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-5	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
	If the Council doesn't show leadership in this important area of work it may impact on the reputation of the Council within the community and partner agencies.	Tracy Brown	17/9/13	2	2	4	Accept	Council Officers and Elected members continue to show leadership regarding safeguarding within the partnership structures	Ongoing	Tracy Brown	
	If messages surrounding the Safeguarding awareness weeks become confused it may impact on the reputation of the Council due to bad publicity	Tracy Brown	17/9/13	3	2	6	Accept	Council Officers and Elected members continue to show leadership regarding safeguarding within the partnership structures	Ongoing	Tracy Brown	
<p>Explanatory notes</p> <p>Impact – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical)</p> <p>Likelihood – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6 (1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability)</p> <p>Control - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close</p>											

