

PE1393/C

EMAIL RESPONSE TO:

Child Sexual Exploitation in Scotland – Petition PE1393

The issue of child sexual exploitation is of paramount concern to Glasgow City Council and has been a key priority in the development of policy and practice. The points raised in the petition are important considerations for the future development of Glasgow's response to the concerns around sexual exploitation; many of the issues have been addressed in local initiatives.

Glasgow Child Protection Committee has a number of multi-agency protocols, which together provide comprehensive guidance for staff working with children who may have been sexually exploited:

- Vulnerable Children and Young People at Risk of Significant Harm – contains a specific section on Safeguarding Children and Young People at Risk of Sexual Exploitation
- Child Protection Procedures and Guidance
- Inter-Agency Guidance for Child Trafficking: Child Trafficking Assessment; National Referral Mechanism
- Inter-Agency Procedural Guidance for Vulnerable Women During Pregnancy
- Child Protection Internet and New Technology (pending)

Individual agencies also have their own guidance, which details responses of specific professions.

Guidance is clear that all young people who have been sexually exploited, or at risk, should be assessed under local child protection or vulnerable young people procedures. We would have concern if partner agencies are aware of children who have been sexually exploited and not referred to child protection services. All partner agencies within the Child Protection Committee area are expected to refer children to social work and the police where they have concerns about sexual exploitation.

Child sexual exploitation is increasingly linked to concerns about child trafficking and in this respect Glasgow City Council social work services, in conjunction with the Child Protection Committee, have established a comprehensive programme of research, policy and practice guidance and training on this issue. The work undertaken in Glasgow by the centre child protection team has been instrumental in informing local and UK guidance and practice developments. The child protection team are presently involved with a pan European initiative to investigate further responses to trafficking and sexual exploitation, and have been involved in liaising with Strathclyde police colleagues around concerns about trafficking and sexual exploitation.

A number of subgroups of the Child Protection Committee oversee policy and practice developments relating to sexual exploitation:

- Children and Young People at Risk of Significant Harm
- Child Trafficking

There are two specific services for children in the city involved in sexual exploitation / abuse as victims or perpetrators:

- HALT – provides risk assessment, monitoring and support for young people involved in sexually problematic behaviour
- Family Support Project – provides support for children and families who have experiences sexual exploitation / abuse

There is also a comprehensive programme of training for staff across all agencies, which includes sexual exploitation awareness raising, including:

- CEOP Ambassador Training (internet safety)
- Child Trafficking – identification and assessment

The prevalence of childhood sexual exploitation and trafficking in the city is difficult to estimate, because of the hidden nature of the crime. However, research undertaken by the child protection team has identified at least 35 young people who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation, over a third of all those identified as trafficked to and in the city. Discussions are presently in place with academics to further develop the research programme in Glasgow to encompass all aspects of child sexual exploitation.

While we have substantial resources and initiatives focussed on sexual exploitation, we are not complacent about the challenges presented by the issues raised and welcome the opportunity to contribute further to local and national developments.