

For General Release

REPORT TO:	CABINET 22nd February 2016
AGENDA ITEM:	9
SUBJECT:	Report on the 9th meeting of Croydon Congress held on 26 November 2015: 'Child Sexual Exploitation: Can you see it? Can you help stop it?'
LEAD OFFICER:	Nathan Elvery, Chief Executive
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Tony Newman Leader of the Council
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT: The prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Croydon is a strategic priority for the council as set out in the Corporate Plan 2015 – 2018. It is also a strategic priority for the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and Croydon's Safeguarding Children Board.	
AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON & WHY ARE WE DOING THIS: The intention of the council and the LSP is to raise awareness of CSE and develop actions to stop it in the borough. Our ambition is to reduce the incidence of CSE and divert and protect young people whilst holding perpetrators to account. These are all outcomes in the Corporate Plan, which incorporates the council's ambitions for Croydon.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT There is no financial impact arising directly from this report.	
KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.: This is not a key decision	

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to

- 1.1 Note the theme and draft recommendations arising from the 9th meeting of Croydon Congress.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report provides feedback on the 9th meeting of Croydon Congress, held on 26 November 2015. The theme was Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and the aim was to raise awareness and change attitudes and behaviours of people and organisations in the borough and to better equip the community to take an active role with the issue. This outcome is aligned with the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board's CSE Action Plan and the Safer Croydon Community Safety Strategy. Indeed Croydon's Safeguarding Children Board's Action Plan is constructed around the three themes of prevent, disrupt and prevent.
- 2.2 The purpose of each Congress is to bring together the key stakeholders to discuss particular issues of paramount significance. Importantly, the event offers an opportunity for attendees to influence the future development of policy related to the topic and to implement the recommendations made at Congress, including those set out in section 3.7.
- 2.3 Recommendations from Congress will be considered by the LSP and Chief Executives' Group, as well as its related themed Partnership Boards, the Council Leadership Team and Croydon's Safeguarding Children Board and CSE and Missing Sub-Group..

3. DETAIL

Background

- 3.1 Croydon Congress is the over-arching consultative stakeholder group for Croydon's LSP and has a key role in informing the future direction of its work, particularly on cross-cutting issues. Croydon Congress brings together key local leaders, representatives from local businesses and the public, voluntary and faith sectors.
- 3.2 The 9th Croydon Congress was held on 26 November 2015, and was attended by over 250 delegates from the business, public, voluntary, faith and community sectors. This was one of the highest turnouts for Congress and there was a particularly good representation from Croydon schools and educational institutions, as well as from taxi firms, hotels and fast food establishments. The theme was CSE, and the event posed two key questions: 'Can you see it? Can you help stop it?'. The keynote speaker was Laura

Butterworth, Programme and Project Manager at the Safer London Foundation. The meeting was also addressed by an expert panel including representatives from the MsUnderstood Partnership, the NSPCC, Missing People, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre/ National Crime Agency, the Metropolitan Police and Croydon Council. Delegates also heard from the Chair of the LSP and Leader of Croydon Council, the Statutory Director for Children's Services and Executive Director for People at Croydon Council. The event was Chaired by the Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Justice. The Congress programme and background information booklet are available as background papers to this report.

- 3.3 In the keynote speaker's presentation, delegates heard that the largest proportions of those known to be affected by CSE in Croydon are 15 (27%), 16 (24%) and 14 (22%) years old. Black or black British young people are most affected (39%), followed by white or white British (30%) and then mixed heritage (26%). Safer London Foundation's young people's questionnaires found that young people are least likely to speak to adults from their religious/cultural community (27%), followed by the police (25%). They were most likely to entrust a parent/carer (20%), followed by a confidential helpline (15%). The full PowerPoint presentation is available as a background paper to this report.
- 3.4 The council and its partners consider preventing and stopping CSE to be a significant cross-cutting strategic priority for the borough. In particular, there is a need to raise awareness of the issue and the devastating impact it has on young people and their families, and ensure that stakeholders have the opportunity to work together to develop actions to stop it. Devoting Croydon Congress to this is part of the council's work to change attitudes and behaviours of people and organisations in the borough and to better equip professionals and the community to take an active role to protect young people.
- 3.5 Congress has offered stakeholders the opportunity to influence the future development of policy related to CSE. It is now the responsibility of the council and its partners and local stakeholders to implement the recommendations that were put forward at Congress, including those set out in section 3.7.

Emerging issues and recommendations

- 3.6 A number of issues were put forward at Congress by delegates. Young people were seen as having a limited understanding of what a 'healthy' relationship comprises of, with it suggested that schools need to create the time and space for this to be discussed. This was put forward by delegates as a particular issue for boys, who were seen to need more guidance and positive role models to help with this. Young people were felt to lack safe and suitable activities to get involved in to divert them away from risky situations and locations. Delegates felt that many parents experienced difficulties communicating with their children, particularly teenagers. Whilst it was apparent that some resources such as films and information are available out there, it was suggested by delegates that young people and their parents may not always be aware of where to find them. Feedback from Congress was that resources were not felt to be targeted at young people enough..

- 3.7 From the issues discussed, some of the recommendations to emerge from discussions at Congress were:
- To arrange for a conference on CSE aimed specifically at young people, with representation from every school and college in Croydon;
 - For schools to take a stronger stance on CSE and more openly discuss the issue;
 - For frontline services such as police, Safer Neighbourhood Teams, the council's Neighbourhood Safety Officers and the Street-Based Youth Team, to monitor known 'hotspots' like parks and bus stops;
 - To promote and expand safe spaces for young people to go to after school and at weekends to divert them from the dangers of CSE;
 - To share the NSPCC 'Jay' film and the local voices film with partners via uploading them to the council's website and signposting people there;
 - To create more media resources, involving young people in the making of them;
 - To share leaflets, fliers and posters on CSE widely in the community, including at bus stops and phone boxes, fast food restaurants and schools;
 - For parents to be supported and encouraged to speak more openly with their children;
 - For bespoke resources to be put together and shared with parents to help equip them to know the signs and symptoms to look out for and what to do if they suspect that something is wrong;
 - To utilise older children and young adults, including parents who have experienced CSE, to act as mentors and role models in schools and in the community;
 - To teach boys about what is and is not appropriate in terms of treatment of peers and sexual relations;
 - To train-up and introduce more positive male role models into schools;
 - For more work to be done with the faith community to break down some of the stigma and barriers that are in place which prevent young people from disclosing CSE and getting help from that community.
- 3.8 A full summary of the issues and recommendations put forward by delegates at Congress can be found in Appendix 1. The Croydon Safeguarding Children Board and its Sub-Groups will take ownership of these and embed them into its work programme as appropriate. Particular issues will also need to be considered in some depth by the relevant bodies and organisations, such as the Headteachers' Forum, the council's Departmental and Executive Leadership Teams, the appropriate Partnership Boards and key local stakeholders.

Pledges

- 3.9 During the course of the event, delegates were encouraged to make a specific pledge, either a personal pledge or one on behalf of the organisation they represent, to change attitudes and behaviours towards CSE in Croydon. In total 107 pledges were made, including:
- Croydon University Hospital Maternity Services pledging to incorporate CSE in mandatory safeguarding training for staff;
 - The Minster Nursery and Infant School pledging to hold a workshop for parents to hear about the vulnerabilities their children may face;
 - A pupil at Coloma Convent School pledging to speak in assembly about CSE.

- A Star Transport Ltd pledging to place important CSE related contact numbers in all of their vehicles;
- Croydon BID pledging to work with partners to introduce greater opportunities within the town centre for free activities and community involvement; and
- A member of Croydon Council staff pledging to research opportunities to volunteer once a month out of their own time to work on a CSE related project.

3.10 The relevant team within the council will be following up on the pledges and will also be contacting those who have left their details to be further involved.

Feedback

3.11 The high levels of satisfaction were in common with those recorded for previous Congress events. Of those delegates who completed their evaluation forms:

- 93% rated the keynote speaker as 'excellent' or 'good' (June 2015: 100%, 2014: 94%, 2013: 92%);
- 94% rated the local young person's voice film as 'excellent' or 'good';
- 89% rated the table facilitation as 'excellent' or 'good' (June 2015: 99%, 2014: 88%)
- 90% rated the overall quality of table discussions as 'excellent' or 'good' (June 2015: 99%, 2014: 86%).

The most common words and phrases used by delegates to describe the event were 'relevant', 'worthwhile', 'informative' and 'thought provoking'.

Comments left by Congress attendees include: 'Great event for information, discussion and networking opportunities' and 'Great event and excellent film by young people – highlighted where the issues are'.

NEXT STEPS

3.12 Next steps will be as follows:

- The LSP Chief Executives' Group receive an annual report on CSE from the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board.
- Croydon's Local Children's Safeguarding Board and CSE and Missing Sub-Group is responsible for considering the issues and recommendations emerging from Congress and where appropriate will incorporate them into their current delivery plan.
- This report will be presented at the Head Teachers' Forum for consideration on how to take forward these issues and recommendations within schools and other educational settings.
- The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance team will follow up on the individual pledges made.
- This report will be circulated, along with supporting materials and background information, to stakeholders for discussion and action.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Croydon Congress is a consultative meeting, comprising leaders and stakeholders from the business, public, voluntary, faith and community sectors.

5 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 There are no financial considerations arising directly from this report.

(Approved by: Lisa Taylor, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer)

6. COMMENTS OF THE BOROUGH SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 There are no legal considerations arising directly as a result of recommendations in this report.

(Approved by: Jessica Stockton, Corporate Solicitor, for and on behalf of the Borough Solicitor & Director of Legal & Democratic Services)

7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

7.1 There are no immediate HR considerations that arise from the recommendations of this report for HR staff.

(Approved by Michael Pichamuthu on behalf of the Director of Human Resources)

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 Croydon has one of the largest populations of children and young people out of all the London boroughs. The borough also has a high proportion of looked after children and asylum seeking children and the council is aware that some of this population can be vulnerable to sexual exploitation. In addition, Croydon has the highest number of missing children in London and this has a strong connection to CSE.

8.2 Croydon Congress is part of a multi-agency approach to understand the scale and nature of CSE in the borough and raise awareness of CSE and the early identification of potential victims (mainly young people, particularly but not exclusively girls) to prevent abuse, and provide effective and timely support to victims.

8.3 The Congress meeting has also supported the council in taking forward initiatives that will help deliver the following key priorities that are set out in the our Equality and Inclusion Policy:

- To lead on and work in partnership with agencies and the community to change attitudes and behaviours towards domestic abuse, sexual violence and female genital mutilation;
- To lead on strengthen the council's safeguarding processes for children and adults and working in partnership with the police, community, faith and voluntary sectors, hospitals and GPs, to make every effort to change attitudes and behaviours and prevent incidents of abuse taking place in our community.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

9.1 There is no environmental impact arising directly from this report.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

10.1 Whilst CSE can often be hidden from view, everyone needs to be aware that it is not a private issue; it is a crime. Raising awareness of CSE and changing attitudes and behaviours towards it will contribute to the increased safety of children and young people in the borough. This outcome is aligned with the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board's CSE Action Plan and the Safer Croydon Community Safety Strategy.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

11.1 To raise awareness of CSE in order to change attitudes and behaviours and better equip professionals and the community to take an active role and protect young people in the borough is a strategic priority for the Council, the LSP and the Safeguarding Children Board.

12. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

12.1 Not applicable.

CONTACT OFFICER: Sharon Godman, Head of Strategy and Communities. 020 8604 7034 Ext 47034

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Croydon Congress programme
Croydon Congress background information booklet
Laura Butterworth's PowerPoint presentation

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Summary of issues discussed

Appendix 1: Summary of issues discussed

Schools

- Healthy relationship work is needed in schools.
- Regular school assemblies should take place to address 'healthy' relationships.
- There should be education in schools about dangerous use of social media.
- There should be education in schools about dealing with peer pressure.
- Schools should promote self-esteem and resilience amongst young people.
- Schools should make space and time available to young people to disclose concerns about friends.
- Young people should be taught about the legal definition of rape, i.e. sex without consent, including if there is coercion or alcohol or drugs.
- Young people need more education on the use of images and films of themselves and blackmail.
- Sex/relationship education should be delivered by youth workers or young adults rather than traditional teachers.
- Older pupils could be trained up to mentor younger pupils.
- School staff could patrol outside the school perimeter to spot signs, e.g. young people being collected by older people.
- School staff need more training on the issues. Materials are helpful but need more support on what to do.
- School nurses should hold informal drop-in sessions.
- There is a sense that some Croydon schools are not open to discussing issues like CSE. It is a similar situation with discussing drug and alcohol abuse. Where schools are not receptive this needs to be addressed.
- Faith schools in particular need to be promoting the right messages and offering sufficient sex and relationship education.
- Schools focus a lot on issues like sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy and CSE feels to be less of a priority in comparison.
- Do schools notice patterns of absence and flag this up with education welfare officers? Can this be sped up?
- Access to smart technology should be removed in schools to give young people respite from online pressure and cyber abuse.
- There should be a CSE conference exclusively for young people with representation from all schools. It is all very well providing the information to professionals, but young people need to understand the dangers and how to protect themselves.
- Schools should have their own CSE 'Charter' designed and written by the young people themselves.

Youth services

- There should be more investment in services for young people in Croydon.
- There should be more alternatives for young people, e.g. free sport and fitness activities, beauty activities and youth clubs.
- North End between 3pm-5pm is a dangerous time for young people. There should be activities put in place in that area at that time to divert young people.
- Activities need to be free and of interest to young people. The activities need to be seen as fun and cool otherwise young people will not attend.
- DBS checks can prevent very good people from becoming mentors, we need to consider whether certain previous convictions should be a barrier.

- Self-defence classes could be useful to give young people more confidence.

Local service providers

- Local services that already exist such as 'Croydon Drop-In' and 'Off the Record' should be promoted. More young people would make use of them if they knew what they offered and where they were.
- We should make more use of the expertise of our detached youth team. They do excellent work in Croydon.

Boys

- We need to introduce boys to positive male role models and mentors. They should visit schools.
- Boys need to be taught about what is and is not appropriate in terms of treating females and sexual relations.

Parents

- There should be work done around the vulnerability of mothers, single mothers in particular may need more support.
- Parents should be given more support/information to understand risks.
- Parents and children need to be able to have open conversations with each other.
- Parents need to ask more questions, they should show more of an interest and be curious.
- There should be special courses for parents of teenagers on how to communicate with them.
- Parents should be educated on the need for sex and relationship education for children from a young age so that they do not resist this when it is offered in schools.
- Some parents may have experienced similar things when they were younger. They could be used as parental role models.
- Family mediation should be promoted.
- Resources need to be put together and distributed directly to parents, not all will come into school for events or talks. They need to know what to do and who to contact if they have concerns of if their child goes missing.
- Parents should be engaged with whilst their children are still in primary school about this topic.

Faith community

- Young people seem more willing to listen to fellow young people but are wary of approaching faith leaders. More work needs to be done with the faith community.

Neighbourhoods and policing

- Safer Neighbourhood Teams and Neighbourhood Wardens should be educated about the signs of CSE. They should monitor hotspots, such as parks and bus stops.
- The Street Based Youth Team should monitor hotspots, such as parks and bus stops.
- Do we need security in parks and at bus stops?
- There should be safe alternative spaces for young people to go.
- Information needs to be passed to police fast enough. If they are not aware of

something happening they cannot intervene.

Businesses

- Utilise local businesses, such as fast food outlets, to display posters and support materials.
- Hotels and cab companies need to be encouraged to report concerns.
- Internet providers should take action against perpetrators, e.g. block their accounts. Some lobbying may need to be done on this.
- Schools cannot take all of the responsibility and do all of the work, young people spend a lot of time in shopping centres, fast food establishments and even bars and pubs. These venues need to be part of a wider joined-up approach.

Communications

- The 'Jay film' should be shared by the council on their website and used for training.
- The 'local voices film' should be shared by the council on their website and used for training.
- There should be more films and resources created for young people by young people.
- Media resources are very useful. There should be more of them.
- Boys are protective around their sisters, we should utilise this and make a film/start a campaign about other girls being just the same as your sisters.
- Leaflets and fliers should be shared widely in the community, utilising bus stop displays, phone box displays and also fast food restaurants.
- We should promote the stories of the young people who get help and turn their lives around. There should be positive as well as negative case studies.
- Posters should be sent to each school with anonymous phone numbers on them. These should be displayed around the schools.
- We might want to consider rebranding the issue, as Child Sexual Exploitation makes people think of very young children. Teenagers may not identify as being 'children' and may not think that the issue applies to them.