Rapid Review Learning Briefing
Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation

This rapid review looked at one child who was sexually exploited. The child was vulnerable as a result of their experience of traumatic sexualisation and sexual abuse in the family. The review looked at how the safeguarding system worked together to keep the child safe and whether there was any learning for the safeguarding partnership.

Click here to read the **Supporting Parents and Carers Guide** from the National Centre for Expertise in Child Sexual Abuse

Click here to read the **Communicating with Children Guide** from the National Centre for Expertise in Child Sexual Abuse

Click here for the KBSP Harmful Sexual Behaviour Guidance

Click here to read about Safer Options the coordinated whole system response to prevent serious violence and exploitation, including CSE in Bristol

Rapid Review Findings

It was found that professionals responded to the child in a non-judgemental and thoughtful way. There was one example of professional using victim blaming language found in the review where inappropriate language was used within a police report. This was challenged internally and on a multi-agency level, a learning and development plan was put in place for the officer and team in response. This is evidence of excellent practice and demonstrates the multi-agency network's shared understanding of sexual abuse and commitment to challenge victim blaming.

It was recognised that some of the formal training the foster child's carer received about supporting children who have been sexually abused was reactive to incidents and could have been offered at an earlier stage. It was also recognised that generally, support around the role of sexual health services and discussions about contraception would also be beneficial to foster carers.

It was found that the child and family assessments undertaken when the child became a child in care could have been improved further by having a fuller understanding of the impact of sexual abuse and the planned response. Whilst the child's needs were recognised in assessments, they didn't always have the specialism or detail to inform a shared intervention. The review also found that the CSE service offer in the city is difficult for social workers to navigate. Before being allocated to the CSE service, the support was fragmented between a range of specialist CAMHS teams and independent counselling and support services.

There is not a consistent pathway, service or model for assessment and support for children who have been sexually abused in Bristol who do not have a diagnosed mental health disorder. While there are a range of therapeutic voluntary sectors services, there are long waiting lists and these are not integrated within the statutory social care and health pathways for children

There is a risk for children who have experienced sexual abuse whose behaviour may be seen as sexually harmful or putting them at increased risk to grooming and sexual exploitation. These children may fall through the gaps of services supporting with child sexual abuse, harmful sexual behaviour and sexual exploitation. This is even more complex for children in care who are experiencing trauma from family separation. There is an expectation of stability required before trauma work can begin, but the behaviour's presented by the child as a result of abuse can impact the ability of the carer to achieve the desired stability.

The review found that it was positive that services took a systemic approach to the whole family, however these were short term and did not reflect the complexity of needs. It was the view of the review that if Bristol had a more comprehensive offer for children affected by child sexual abuse which flexed to their changing needs and development stages, the child's experiences of further extra-familial sexual abuse may have been reduced.