



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Full Council

Thursday 27 February 2025

Update on CSE Inquiry

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Lee Carter – Leader of the Council Cllr Shirley Reynolds – Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education, Employment & Skills
Lead Director:	Anthea Lowe - Director: Policy & Governance
Service Area:	Policy & Governance
Report Author:	Anthea Lowe - Director: Policy & Governance
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 383219 Email: anthea.lowe@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

Full Council is asked to:

- 1.1 Restate its commitment to continue its work, through co-production with lived experience consultees and partners as appropriate, to respond to the challenge of CSE within our Borough;
- 1.2 Approve the proposal for the Leader to write to government to ask that it mandates the publication by **all** local authorities of data akin to that included in the Council's Annual Report at **Appendix A**;
- 1.3 Note the update provided in this report on the actions taken following the publication of Tom Crowther KC's review report in July 2024;
- 1.4 Note the contents of the Annual Report attached at Appendix A to this report; and
- 1.5 Note the work the Council is doing to share learning within the local government sector.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on the actions taken to date since the Independent Chair of the Independent Inquiry into CSE, Tom Crowther KC, published his 2-year review report on 12 July 2024 and to provide the CSE Annual Report in respect of 2023/24.
- 2.2 The Annual Report provides the Council, and partner organisations, with data that allows for continuous challenge of our procedures and practices.

3.0 Additional Information

- 3.1 In 2018, the Council commissioned an independent inquiry, chaired by a former judge, Tom Crowther KC, into CSE within Telford. The Chair published his report in July 2022 in which he made 47 recommendations (comprising 148 actions) across the Council, West Mercia Police, the NHS and West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner.
- 3.2 Immediately upon publication of the report, the Council accepted all of the recommendations and two days later confirmed that it would be working with three individuals with lived experience of CSE. These individuals are also professionals working in the field of CSE, modern slavery and human trafficking.
- 3.3 The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry provided for a review to be carried out by the Independent Chair two years following publication of his original report. The Council wrote to the Chair in December 2023, six months earlier than anticipated by the Independent Chair, inviting him to return to the Borough to commence his review. The Chair published his 2-year review report on 12 July 2024. In it, the Chair recognised that CSE is a national concern, stating that Telford was not in a “category of uniquely unfortunate places but rather that CSE had occurred, and will occur, in other towns across the country”. The Council is very clear that this statement remains true and will continue to be relevant to all towns and cities across the country. It has been seen in recent weeks that this is the case.
- 3.4 The Chair also recognised that, despite the well-rehearsed history of Telford, that it was “now an admirable model – for holding up a mirror to itself...and taking bold action, with the most important of objectives – safeguarding children from CSE”. This was reflected by Ofsted who, in spring 2024, confirmed that Telford & Wrekin Council’s services were Outstanding and reflected that the work of the Council’s Children Abused Through Exploitation (CATE) team was a key strength of the Council’s safeguarding arrangements.

- 3.5 Even though the Chair has published his review report, the Council remains committed to continuous improvement and has continued to work with the individuals with lived experience who have supported the Council's work since 2022 to refine and embed the work that has taken place since that time.
- 3.6 It is worth noting, at this point, some of the work that has taken place and that continues to take place to demonstrate the commitment of the Council, and its officers, to doing all it can to address CSE. A summary of some of the activity that has taken place in the last reporting period is set out below:-
- Every secondary school and college within the Borough (including academies, the independent sector and those working with children with special needs) has appointed a CSE Designated Safeguarding Lead (a CSE DSL). These roles are filled by an individual that differs from the statutorily required Designated Safeguarding Lead and are particularly specialised in matters relating to CSE. The CSE DSLs meet collectively at a forum hosted by the Council's Education Safeguarding Coordinator to ensure that intelligence around CSE within the Borough is shared appropriately, that training is delivered across the Borough and to enable focussed updates on the subject to be shared. Representatives of the West Mercia Police have also attended these meetings;
 - Council officers have continued to meet with the three individuals with lived experience for several hours every week to enable continuing development of improvements and to continue to facilitate discussion with partners where relevant;
 - The Council has continued to refine the post-17 transition meeting process to ensure that young people open to CATE who are soon due to move into adulthood have appropriate wrap-around support to help them through that transition and ensure that support does not fall away when they turn 18 – the lived experience consultees are part of these meetings so that they can offer peer to peer support as the young person turns 18 (should it be wanted by the young person);
 - The Council has continued to promote the use of the Explore More document – the document co-produced with the lived experience consultees to provide detailed information around the potential indicators of CSE – to ensure that the quality of referrals from professionals improves and provides sufficient information for a high quality assessment of a child's circumstances;
 - Several face-to-face training sessions have been delivered by our lived experience consultees to a wide variety of services both within the Council and externally. This includes enforcement teams, licensing, housing, legal, senior management team, the Contact Centre, CSE DSLs CATE, children's services and adult services. Externally, sessions have been delivered to health professionals from GP's, sexual health service, midwives, school nurses and safeguarding teams. The online training that all Council staff are required to

complete and was co-produced with lived experience consultees continues to be completed by staff;

- The Council has recruited an National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Coordinator to ensure that the quality of information that is shared with the Home Office nationally is of a high standard, maximising the potential for a child / young person to be accepted onto the NRM which, in turns, provides access to a wide range of support services including access to a counsellor, sexual health victim services, housing (when needed), legal support and much more. In addition, the Council is intending to participate in a pilot for local NRM decision making specifically for children. Previous pilots have found that the speed of local decision making is significantly quicker compared to that by the Home Office. The Leader has written to the Home Secretary stating our desire to participate in this pilot.
- Perhaps more significantly, the number of children / young people being supported by the CATE team and confirmed as victims of child sexual exploitation has halved when compared to the last annual report.

3.7 Within the initial report published by the Tom Crowther KC, several of the recommendations related to the preparation of an annual report. This report is prepared jointly by partners; the Council, West Mercia Police and NHS and also involves input from schools. The report in respect of 2023/24 is attached at Appendix A.

3.8 Telford & Wrekin Council is the only local authority that carries out work of this nature and publishes it in this way. That being the case, it is not possible to undertake any sort of benchmarking in respect of CSE data. Officers are very clear that this work on the CSE data has proved invaluable in getting a breadth and depth of understanding of CSE in the borough based upon clear evidence. It has enabled the Council to adapt its approach to ensure resources are targeted to those areas where it is shown they are needed most. The Council, and its officers, are of the view that the benefit that this work brings is such that every authority should be required to take similar action. To that end, full Council is asked to approve that the Leader writes to relevant departments within government, including the Department for Education, the Home Office and the Safeguarding Minister asking that this work is mandated on a national level as part of the continuous improvement agenda in respect of safeguarding children.

3.9 Members may be aware that CSE has been a subject of focus on a national level recently. The Council remains committed to sharing its learning and experiences in order to support the local government sector who may be facing similar situations to those within Telford. Officers have attended regional meetings within the local government sector to share some of the key actions that have been implemented both in terms of data and practice. Additionally, the Council is working with the Local Government Association to consider how best to

disseminate our learning as widely as possible. As has been the case throughout, this is a piece of work that we are doing jointly with the lived experience consultees.

- 3.10 The Council has also reached out to other local authorities who may benefit from speaking with us to understand the steps taken to engage with the Inquiry process and then, subsequently, following the publication of its report.
- 3.11 Finally, it is National Child Exploitation Awareness Day on 18th March 2025. As part of its role in raising awareness of CSE, the Council will be undertaking a range of activities with two main aims; raising public awareness of how to report concerns and ongoing development of professionals working across a range of sectors within the Borough around CSE.
- 3.12 In terms of raising public awareness, the Council will use its usual communications channels to promote the Seen Something, Say Something campaign which is mentioned further in the Annual Report.
- 3.13 With regards to the ongoing development of professionals, the CATE team will carry out two weeks' of intensive activity comprising a mixture of drop-in sessions and formal sessions. These are designed to be interactive and prompt attendees to participate in activities so that they can build upon their understanding. This includes workshops, quizzes and exercises. More organisations than ever have asked to participate in these activities with attendees coming from schools, multi-academy trusts, third sector organisations working with young people, safeguarding practitioners, sports clubs and youth clubs. This includes organisations from neighbouring authority areas.

4.0 Council Priorities

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report align with the following Council priorities:-
- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their communities;
 - All neighbourhoods are a great place to live; and
 - A community-focussed, innovative council, providing efficient, effective and quality services.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report. All costs associated with the work linked to the Inquiry are met from within existing budgets.

6.0 Legal and HR Implications

6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report. Where required, legal advice is sought in relation to specific matters and in relation to the discharge of the Council's safeguarding responsibilities.

7.0 Ward Implications

7.1 There are no direct ward implications arising out of this report although the work undertaken by the Council in response to the Inquiry is Borough-wide.

8.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

8.1 The work undertaken in response to the Inquiry has a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of those who are at risk of CSE.

9.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

9.1 The contents of the Annual Report identify demographic data which allows the Council, and partners, to have a better understanding of any equality and diversity implications in relation to the discharge of safeguarding functions.

10.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

10.1 There are no direct Climate Change and Environmental Implications directly arising from this report.

11.0 Background Papers

[Agenda for Full Council on Thursday 14 July 2022, 6.00 pm - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)
[Agenda for Full Council on Thursday 13 July 2023, 6.00 pm - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)
[Agenda for Full Council on Thursday 18 July 2024, 6.00 pm - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

12.0 Appendices

A Annual CSE Report

13.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	19/02/2025	19/02/2025	RP
Finance	17/02/2025	19/02/2025	MLB