

# **Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**30 November 2021**

## **Safeguarding, Prosperous and Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees Joint Review on Sexual Harassment in Schools – Scoping Report**

### **Summary**

#### **What is the Review Group being asked to do and why?**

1. At the beginning of the new municipal year each of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees raised sexual harassment in schools as an item of concern and something that needed further scrutiny. Each separate Committee included this issue on their work programme.

2. To avoid duplication the Committees agreed a joint piece of work to spotlight the issues and report findings back to their respective parent committees. It was agreed that one representative from each committee should undertake this work, as follows:

- Rev Preb Michael Metcalf, Prosperous Staffordshire Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Chairman of this spotlight review)
- Ann Edgeller, Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Kath Perry, Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3. Sexual harassment in school is an issue of concern nationally. The “Everyone’s Invited” website gave an indication of the level of the issue. The Government study conducted by Ofsted considered the extent of any problems and gave recommendations for addressing these.

4. This spotlight review is to consider the issues highlighted nationally and scrutinise whether they are reflected in Staffordshire Schools, to what extent and how and whether these are being address.

### **Report**

#### **Background**

5. In June 2020 the Everyone’s Invited anti-rape movement created an on-line forum which provided a safe place for survivors of sexual harassment and abuse to share their stories anonymously. It focused on exposing this abusive culture through “conversation, education and support”. This forum raised issues of harassment and abuse nationally.

6. “Keeping Children Safe in Education” is the statutory guidance to which all schools and colleges in England must have regard when carrying out their duties to

safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The most recent version came into force in September 2019.

7. Advice for schools on “Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges” sets out advice on how to deal with incidents and allegations.

8. Statutory Relationships Education at primary school, and Relationships and Sex Education at secondary level, became compulsory in all English schools from September 2020.

9. In March 2021 the Government asked Ofsted to undertake a review of safeguarding policies and of incidents of sexual abuse in schools and colleges with relation to sexual harassment and abuse. The review was published in June 2021, evidencing widespread sexual harassment in schools, and made recommendations for action in schools, government, and Ofsted to combat the problem.

## **Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Review**

### **Scope**

10. The purpose of this scrutiny review is for Members to:

- investigate the current issue of sexual harassment in schools, considering the national context and recent Ofsted report and recommendations;
- establish the extent of any of these issues within Staffordshire;
- consider whether work is already in place to address these, and if so, how successful this is,
- consider the remit of designated safeguarding leads in schools and how/if they are identifying and addressing sexual harassment;
- identify whether there are any concerns not currently being addressed; and,
- consider the longer-term impact of sexual harassment and what, if any, support is in place for both victims and perpetrators.

### **Review Arrangements**

11. Members of the Review Group will determine the information and evidence they require to address the Terms of Reference. It is recommended that Members undertake a spotlight review session where they may wish to invite representative of:

front line school based designated safeguarding leads; head teachers; Chairs from both the Primary and Secondary School Head Teacher Forum; the youth offending service; Police; social media specialists; The Voice Project; SCCs Education Safeguarding Officers; and officers responsible for this service area.

## **Timing**

12. With Members' agreement the Spotlight Session will be scheduled to accommodate the diary commitments of invitees, but hopefully will take place before the end of November 2021. Members will then need to determine whether they wish for further inquiry before producing their final report and recommendations.

13. To expedite this matter, the draft scoping report will be shared with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND). The Review Group will be expected to produce a final report, containing any recommendations they may wish to make for submission to the Cabinet Members and/or other body.

14. An Executive Response to any recommendations will be requested.

## **Intended Outcome**

15. A draft report of the Spotlight Session and research to be presented to the Safeguarding, Prosperous and Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees. With their agreement the final report will then be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and to the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) for an Executive Response. The report will capture the findings from the background research and Spotlight Session and make recommendations based on these.

## **Lines of Enquiry**

16. Lines of inquiry will be agreed at the initial preparation meeting with the Review Group Members, where they will decide what information they require, who they would like to invite to the Spotlight Session and develop questions they would like to ask invitees. This will not prevent additional questions being asked on the day but will enable a report on common issues to be written.

## **Link to Strategic Plan**

17. The County Council's Staffordshire Vision is to be "A county where big ambitions, great connections and greener living give everyone the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy.' Within this one of the key priorities is to: "Support more families and children to look after themselves, stay safe and well."

## **Community Impact**

19. The Committee will be expected to consider the implications of work, or proposed action, on the subject under review and to make reference to implications including those below in their final report:

- Equalities and Legal
- Resource and Value for Money
- Risk
- Climate Change.

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**Appendices/Background papers** – none.