

Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Training

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Purpose

To consider the introduction of child sexual exploitation (CSE) awareness training for prospective applicants and current licence holders in South Somerset.

To update members on the current work taking place in relation to CSE within Somerset and how this is likely to affect potential licence applicants and current licence holders.

Recommendation

That the Licensing Committee:

1. Note the report
2. Instruct the Licensing Manager to prepare a report detailing how CSE awareness training can be delivered in South Somerset. The report to consider the following:
 - a) The financial implications and funding sources for the delivery of training.
 - b) The content of the training.
 - c) Who will require the training?
 - d) Timetables for delivery of the training.
 - e) The officer resource required to deliver the training.
 - f) Any policy changes that will be required in order to enable the training.

Background

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) has emerged as a real issue over the last few years, with enquiries taking place in Rochdale¹ and Rotherham². A key issue that has emerged is that much of this CSE takes place around the "Night Time Economy" (NTE) hotels, bars, guesthouses and take-aways and involves the use of taxis for the transportation of the children involved.

The Somerset Licensing Officers Group have had concerns in relation to this matter and have sought to address these concerns by asking Taunton Deane Borough Council in conjunction with Avon & Somerset Police and Somerset County Council to devise a training program in relation to CSE that can be rolled out across the County by each and every district.

A meeting to discuss this training and the proposed roll out of the training is scheduled for the 7th October 2016.

In addition to this work, and recognising the seriousness of this issue, an amendment was made to the latest Policing and Crime Bill, which is still progressing though the legislative process.

¹<http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/policies-strategies-and-reviews/reviews/Pages/independent-review-of-cse.aspx>

² http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1407/independent_inquiry_cse_in_rotherham

The amendment which was introduced would require local authorities to 'carry out its functions with a view to preventing Child Sexual Exploitation.'

This has been replaced by a government proposal on 14th June 2016 which currently stands as clause 56 (in italics below).

'CL56 Licensing functions under Taxi and PHV legislation: protection of children and vulnerable adults.

(1) The Secretary of State may issue guidance to public authorities as to how their licensing functions under taxi and private hire vehicle legislation may be exercised so as to protect children, and vulnerable individuals who are 18 or over, from harm.

(2) The Secretary of State may revise any guidance issued under this section.

(3) The Secretary of State must arrange for any guidance to be issued under this section and any revision of it, to be published.

(4) Any public authority which has licensing functions under taxi and private hire vehicle legislation must have regard to any guidance issued under this section.

(5) Before issuing guidance under this section, the Secretary of State must consult –

a) The National Police Chief's Council

b) Persons who appear to the Secretary of State to represent the interests of public authorities who are required to have regard to the guidance

c) Persons who appear to the Secretary of State to represent the interests of those whose livelihood is affected by the exercise of the licensing functions to which the guidance relates, and

d) Such other persons as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

6) In this section 'taxi and private hire vehicle legislation' means –

a) the London Hackney Carriages Act 1843;

b) Section 37 to 68 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847;

c) the Metropolitan Public Carriage Act 1869;

d) Part 2 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976;

e) the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998

f) the Plymouth City Council Act 1975

The overall purpose of taxi licensing is to protect the public and that already covers that of protecting children and vulnerable adults from harm. This is guidance to be issued by the Secretary of State and it is yet to be seen as to whether it actually becomes statute.

The Rotherham report into child sexual abuse highlights the fact that the safety of the public should be of the uppermost concern of any licensing and enforcement regime and that "there is nowhere more important than in taxi licensing where sometimes vulnerable people are unaccompanied in a car with a stranger"

Legal & Financial Implications

None at this stage

Implications for Corporate Priorities

None at this stage

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

None

Equality and Diversity Implications

None

Background Papers: Report of Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
by Louise Casey
Independent Serious Case Review Rochdale Borough Council
Policing & Crime Bill
