

Strategic Management Group (Operation Equinox) Progress Update (June 2016)

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide updates on:

- the investigations into allegations of historical abuse in children's residential homes;
- the work of the Strategic Management Group;
- the current position in respect of an independent review.

2. Context

2.1 In 2010, 5 individuals lodged civil claims in respect of allegations of abuse at Beechwood, a former approved school, observation and assessment centre, remand home, and latterly a community home before its closure in 2006. The allegations were subject to a joint investigation by the City Council and Nottinghamshire Police, with the City Council commissioning an independent investigation by the NSPCC. In 2011 an individual made further allegations to the police, at which stage Nottinghamshire Police launched Operation Daybreak, to investigate all allegations in respect of Beechwood and related matters. A second police operation, Xeres, was launched in December 2014 to investigate allegations in respect of Skegby Hall, a former approved school and community home with education until its closure in the early 1990's, and related matters. A number of other former Nottinghamshire children's homes along with named establishments in other Local Authorities outside of Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire have been named along with a former school and juvenile detention centre.

2.2 Beechwood was within the jurisdiction of Nottingham City Council pre 1974 and again post Local Government reorganisation in 1998. Skegby Hall has always been with Nottinghamshire County Council.

3. Current Position

3.1 Nottinghamshire Police have established Operation Equinox as an overarching name for the individual operations of Daybreak and Xeres. It also includes two other operations, Lyric and Bulbed, established in 2015 to investigate allegations made by two particular individuals that fell outside of the remit of the existing operations. The creation of Equinox allows resources to be utilised responsively to the needs of each operation. Nottinghamshire County Council have established a dedicated social work team to investigate all allegations of historical abuse including the operations described in this report. This team is co-located with the police. Nottingham City Council has an identified a named Duty-Team Manager as a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) and continues to review the resources needed to respond to required demand.

3.2 Operation Equinox as of April 2016, involves 283 individuals making allegations of emotional, physical and sexual abuse (this includes 25 allegations regarding Whatton when it was a juvenile detention centre, although the complainants were over 18 at the time of the alleged incidents). Operation Equinox has to date resulted in two people being convicted of a number of serious sexual offences committed in the 1980's. The first conviction was a victim's stepfather who was found guilty and imprisoned. In March Andris Logins was convicted for offences related to physical and sexual abuse of children while working at Beechwood in the 1980's, he was sentenced to 20 years in prison. There are further trials scheduled and there are a number of advice files currently with the Crown Prosecution Service. It is expected that there will be other people charged and a number of people remain subject to investigation. There have been 116 civil claims (across the City and County) made with the majority relating to times between 1974 and 1998 and therefore the financial liability lying with the County Council. 61 claims have so far been settled at the request of insurers, with another 14 offered. The civil proceedings in respect of the disputed claims are currently subject to a stay in light of the ongoing criminal investigations and are due back in court in February 2016.

4. Management

- 4.1** The Strategic Management Group (SMG - as described in the last update report) continues to meet monthly. A multi-agency Implementation Group was established in accordance to the LSCB multi-agency procedures for organised and complex investigations. A Gold Command group continues to manage the police investigations providing reports to the SMG. The governance structure (attached as Appendix A) describes the relationship and flow of information between these meetings.
- 4.2** The SMG (established in accordance with LSCB procedures for complex investigations) continues to monitor its Learning Log. Learning to date has been identified through reports and discussion at the SMG as well as the independent reviews of the criminal investigations that were detailed in the last report to Boards.
- 4.3** A Task and Finish Group of the SMG have developed a Victim/Survivor Support Strategy on behalf of Nottingham City/Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Adult and Children Boards in line with their procedures, and in partnership with; Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottinghamshire Police, Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commission, NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust. The key objectives of the strategy are:
- To identify and publicise services available for victims/survivors of sexual abuse by January 2016.
 - To ensure those people who might be the first point of contact for victims/survivors are aware of where to signpost people.
 - To ensure that services meets the needs of victims/survivors.
- 4.4** An SMG Risk Register has been developed which incorporates and is in addition to all partner organisational risk registers. This document (Appendix B) identifies those

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risks common across the organisations and that requires, or would benefit, from a coordinated response.

5. Review

- 5.1** The chronology which details the provision and legislative framework around residential care from the 1940's has been updated to include key information from the Police and Health. This combined chronology will be a working document and is being utilised to inform the current investigations relating to allegations to the police and civil claims.
- 5.2** Terms of Reference have been written and agreed for a Serious Case Review to be commissioned by Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Boards. Counsel's advice to the Nottinghamshire Police is that the review should not start before the completion of the criminal investigations due to their complexity. Following the announcement of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, Safeguarding Board Independent Chairs have agreed that if, at the end of the inquiry, there are areas that still need review – we will undertake a Serious Case Review (The outcome of the 2016 Wood Review of LSCB's/SCRs may impact on this). The public inquiry is Goddard, anything else more locally is a Serious Case Review. This will be subject to ongoing review by the SMG and in discussion with the two Independent Chairs.
- 5.3** In November 2015 the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA and also known as the Goddard Inquiry) announced that Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Councils are to be one of 13 case studies. The Inquiry will look into the extent of any institutional failures to protect children in the care of Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Councils from sexual abuse and exploitation. Solicitors from the Inquiry wrote to both Council's in January 2016 requesting a variety of current and historical policies, procedures, guidance and investigation reports. In February 2016 both DCS's met with solicitors from the inquiry to further define the scope of the investigation. At the time of writing this report both Councils are still awaiting further details around the scope of this investigation. More information on the IICSA can be found here <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/>

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That Safeguarding Board members note the updates contained within this report.**
- 6.2 That Safeguarding Board Chairs confirm their position regarding the independent review (detailed in 5.2).**
- 6.3 That Safeguarding Board members consider their role in ensuring that victims/survivors access the appropriate support and promotion of the Victim Support Strategy within their organisation.**

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6.4 That Safeguarding Board members cross-check the SMG Risk Register against their own agency risk register.

Written by Michelle Roe on behalf of the SMG.