

Position Statement – Rochdale in 2017

1. The national context

1.1 In the nearly 23 years since the last pupil left Knowl View school there has been a sea change in the way that children and young people are safeguarded from abuse. Legislation, statutory guidance and policy concerning vulnerable children and young people, whether in care, care leavers, attending residential schools or at risk of abuse or exploitation in any way, has moved forward exponentially over these years.

1.2 In 1997, only 2 years after Knowl View finally closed, “People Like Us: the report of the review of the safeguards for children living away from home” was published. This report reviewed the safeguards that had been introduced by the Children Act 1989, and more recent measures to protect children living away from home, with particular reference to children's residential homes, foster care and boarding schools.

1.3 This was followed, in 1998, by “Quality Protects”, which set out the government's aspirations for improvement in the services provided for children and young people. 2 years later the Waterhouse Inquiry Report, “Lost in Care” (2000) reported on allegations of abuse in homes in North Wales. The Residential Care Regulations 2001 restated that all children had the right to be protected from abuse, including those in care.

1.4 Following the death of eight-year old Victoria Climbié in 2000, the Government asked Lord Laming to conduct an inquiry (Laming, 2003) to help decide whether to introduce new legislation and guidance to improve the child protection system in England. The Government's response was the Keeping Children Safe report (DfES, DH and Home Office, 2003) and the Every Child Matters green paper. “Every Child Matters”, published December 2003, set out the ‘five outcomes’, including ‘being safe’.

1.5 The Children Act 2004 took the philosophy of ‘Every Child Matters’ and placed it on a statutory basis, with safeguarding at the top of the agenda. The Act strengthened the roles of local authorities and created the new roles of Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services, the person ultimately accountable for the delivery of Children's Services. The Act also introduced the independent national Children's Commissioner (recommended by the Waterhouse Inquiry) and introduced statutory Local Safeguarding Children Boards. Through the creation of the new unified role of Director of Children's Services, the Children Act 2004 effectively integrated Education Departments and Children's Social Care, which had previously been very separate, across England and Wales,

1.6 The Bichard Inquiry report in 2004, following the Soham murders, led to a significant overhaul of the way vetting and barring processes for staff and volunteers working with children were managed.

1.7 The Children and Young Persons Act, 2008, enshrined the principles of “Care Matters” to drive forward high quality services for children in care.

1.8 In May 2011 Professor Eileen Munro published her Review of the Child Protection system in England and Wales. Her recommendations have influenced the development of improved practice, both nationally and in Rochdale. Professor Munro's report led to “*Working Together to Safeguard Children*”, published on 26th March 2015 (updated: 16th February 2017), the most recent Statutory Guidance on multi-agency safeguarding practice.

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1.9 In 2016, Sir Martin Narey's report "Residential Care in England" concludes "*Children's homes can and should be better...But the overwhelming majority of homes are already good or better and I have witnessed the care of children in some of which we, as a society, can be proud.*"

2. Services for young people in care, and leaving care, in Rochdale today

2.1 Cambridge House was a hostel for working boys, run by a small voluntary association between 1961 and 1965. As such it was not a local authority children's home and was therefore not subject to the level of management oversight that children's homes, even then, would have experienced. The boys that were placed in Cambridge House by the Council were young men who had reached school leaving age and were therefore probably viewed as care leavers, although they were only 15 or 16 years old. There was no statutory duty to provide after care for young people leaving care at that time.

2.2 Children and young people looked after by Rochdale in 2017 are in a very different position from that of children in care in the 1960s. Legislation, policy and practice have incorporated the principles and aspirations of Quality Protects and Care Matters to strengthen and enhance the services that the Council and other agencies provide to children in care. Since the implementation of the Children Act in 1991 the concept of Corporate Parenting has been used to refer to the collective responsibility of councillors and officers of the Council towards looked after children and care leavers. It is an issue that is taken very seriously in Rochdale with a Corporate Parenting Board, led by the Lead Member. The Corporate Parenting Board involves elected members, officers at all levels from a range of council services, foster carers and young people. It has a clear role in setting standards and expectations, quality assuring delivery and importantly, listening and responding to the views of cared for children

2.3 Nationally, the size of the looked after population is significantly smaller than in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, as far more resources have been channelled into preventative services and supporting children to remain within their birth families, or move on to new permanent families. Rochdale has recently been very successful in safely reducing it's looked after population by 100 as a result of successfully implementing a new permanence strategy. This has resulted in a huge increase in younger children being adopted in 2015/2016, which placed Rochdale as the 4th best performer on adoption in the country. Likewise there has been an increase in the number of children achieving permanence through Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs), with other family members; this means that when this is right of the child, a family foster placement can become a forever placement.

2.4 There has also been a major shift nationally between the proportion of looked after children living in residential care and foster care. In Rochdale in 2017 only 8% of looked after children live in children's homes.

2.5 There are a number of performance indicators that measure how well Councils are performing in relation to their responsibilities towards looked after young people in their care. Two of the most important of these relate to the stability of placements, as that is such a crucial determinant in relation to outcomes. Currently only 5% of Rochdale's children in care have experienced had 3 or more placements in a year, which is the best performance in the North West region.

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Key Performance Indicator	2015/16	2016/17	Latest	SN Av	Eng. Av
Placement Stability - 3 moves	5.80%	3.9%	5.0%	8.1%	10.0%
Placement Stability - Long Term	71%	69.9%	64.8%	69.9%	68.0%

2.6 Every looked after child has a regular statutory review to ensure that their care plan is working well for them, that their placements are meeting their needs and that they are achieving their expected outcomes. In Rochdale 98.8% of all reviews for children in care in 2016-17 took place within the prescribed timescales.

2.7 In relation to young people leaving care in 2017, the Children Act 1989, followed by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and more recently the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010, enshrined in legislation the responsibilities of local authorities towards care leavers. The current guidance regarding support to care leavers is up to 21 for all and 25 for those in full time education. This is changing imminently as the legislation is changing; guidance is currently awaited on this. The new care leaver offer will be open to all care leavers up to the age of 25. Each care leaver is allocated a Personal Advisor (PA) at age 16 to provide a 2 year cross over of PA and social worker (SW) support.

2.8 There are a number of performance indicators that measure how well Councils are performing in relation to their responsibilities towards care leavers. These measures look at how many care leavers the Council is in touch with, where they are living and whether they are in education, employment or training. On these measures Rochdale's performance is consistently ahead of similar Councils and the National average. These means that the focus of Rochdale's service for care leavers now is on the quality of intervention and targeting particularly vulnerable cohorts of young people, such those not in education, training or employment.

Key Performance Indicator	2015/16	2016/17	Latest	SN Av	Eng. Av
% Care Leavers now aged 19-21 in touch with LA	91.2%	89.7%	93.0%	89.7%	87.3%
% Care Leavers now aged 19-21 in EET	50.0%	55.0%	52.0%	46.5%	49.0%
% Care Leavers now aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	88.0%	91.7%	89%	83.8%	83.8%

2.9 In terms of commissioning residential care placements for looked after young people, Rochdale is part of the Greater Manchester Residential Framework. All providers on the

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framework have been through a rigorous tender process including quality checks. Rochdale monitors every residential provision that is used on a regular basis, including reviewing Regulation 44 reports, and Ofsted visits and through regular monitoring visits, in addition to the visits by social workers to young people resident in such settings.

2.10 There is also a North West Leaving Care contract in place for care leavers' placements which is utilised for all 16+ placements including Supported Accommodation, flats with floating support and group living. All providers have to meet Minimum Standards to be part of the contract. Any unresolved concerns emerging from any placement settings are shared with the other Local Authorities in the in the North West.

2.11 All Rochdale placements which are externally commissioned are reviewed by either a Placement Panel or a Multi-Agency Panel to ensure that they continue to meet the needs and deliver the intended outcomes for the young people in placement

2.12 Some of the other young men in Cambridge House could have been otherwise homeless. In 2017 young people in Rochdale age 16 to 18 potentially at risk of homelessness are offered an assessment, and if they agree, accommodated as looked after young people under the Children Act 1989, in line with the Southwark Judgement of 2010. Rochdale never uses bed and breakfast provision for these young people.

2.13 However there remains a concern that whilst children's homes are regulated and inspected nationally, this is not the case for semi-independent settings for 16-18 year olds. This highlights the importance of Rochdale Council taking additional steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people living in such settings, through monitoring processes alongside the work with young people as individuals.

2.14 Since May 2014, fostered young people in England have the right to continue to live with their foster families when they reach 18, if both parties agree. There are currently 21 Rochdale young people in Staying Put placements (5 x18 year olds, 5 x19 year olds, and 11 x 20 year olds). This provides care leavers with a stable and settled launching point towards adulthood. In addition the council has introduced the "Staying Close" approach (continued support to young people to remain in semi-independent living with support beyond their 18th birthday). Legislation currently prevents young people who wish to remain in their residential placement beyond their 18th birthday, but the council continues to be involved in regional and national developments that are aimed at creating continuity into young adulthood for this smaller group of young people.

3. Residential Education today

3.1 Knowl View was a residential special school. In the 1970s and 1980s there was much more reliance on residential education than there is today and Rochdale no longer has any residential special schools. Such placements are very unusual now and most residential education placements are now commissioned in partnership with children's social care. Currently there are only 5 children in residential school placements. 3 of these placements are joint funded with children's social care.

3.2 For this very small number of pupils with specific educational needs where provision in the borough is insufficient to meet their complex needs, there is a robust and detailed commissioning process. The school has to be able to provide the provision outlined in the child's Education, Health and Care plan (EHC) plan. The development of this plan has been recognised in Rochdale as fully engaging parents and children in identifying the most appropriate ways of meeting each child's needs. Prior to consulting with a school the most

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recent OFSTED reports are read, and if the local authority has not used a school before the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Officer visits the school prior to consulting with the head teacher. All residential school placements are monitored regularly via individual Annual

Reviews and OFSTED reports. Services to support children with additional educational needs are now co-produced in partnership with parents through a parental engagement process, “The Voice”.

3.3 Rochdale is continuing to extend its in-borough special school provision to ensure that as many children’s needs are appropriately met as close to home as possible, in a context in which the number of children with special educational needs is growing as in many other parts of the country.

4. Safeguarding Rochdale children in 2017

4.1 Rochdale Council has acknowledged that there were significant failings in the way concerns about the safety of children in Knowl View School were responded to in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. The processes and systems that now operate when referrals are received in relation to issues of peer on peer abuse, concerns about sexual exploitation or allegations of abuse by staff or volunteers are much more developed and robust than what was in place then.

4.2 Referrals of Concern

Nowadays all referrals about suspected harm to child or young person come through Rochdale’s Multi-agency Safeguarding Service (MASS). This is a partnership approach located in the police station with police, NHS and voluntary sector partners. How each referral is responded to will depend on the nature of the referral.

4.3 Child on Child Abuse

Allegations about possible child on child abuse are treated in the same way as any other concerns about risks to children of significant harm. Children’s Social Care (CSC) leads a strategy meeting with relevant partners (i.e. police, NHS, school, placement as appropriate) on both children (or more if more are involved). The alleged perpetrator would be considered in his or her own right as a as a potential victim of previous or ongoing abuse. Based on age perpetrators may also be referred to the Youth Offending Service for an AIM2 assessment in relation to harmful sexual behaviour. If the referral raises concerns about possible Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) the specialist CSE team Sunrise would also be involved.

4.4 Sexual Exploitation

Children at risk of CSE can be supported through either a Child in Need plan or a Child Protection plan, depending on level of assessed need and analysis of risk. If there are concerns about child on child abuse in a school setting the potential risks would be managed through a detailed risk assessment to inform a risk management plan to keep all children safe. In extreme circumstances, if the risk cannot be managed safely within the school or setting the alleged perpetrator may need to be moved to a different setting.

4.5 When there are concerns about suspected Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) the multi-agency Sunrise team would become involved to engage the young person, to prevent, investigate or disrupt abuse. Nowadays, a young person denying that they are in an abusive relationship is–would not end professional involvement, recognising that sexually exploited young people may not see themselves as victims of abuse. If they refuse to engage in direct work, the police and CSC continue to share information and work with families to try to keep

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them safe. In extreme situations where the risk cannot be contained it may be necessary to place the young person away from an abusive network in order to disrupt abusive patterns of behaviour. Partnerships with a wide range of other organisations means that civil legislation is also used to disrupt activities where criminal investigations have not succeeded..

4.6 Allegations of abuse by professionals

Allegations of abuse by professionals are referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer, known as the LADO. The role of the LADO is governed by Local Authorities' duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015) sets out the procedures to be used when an allegation has been made that an adult in a regulated setting has: -

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015) also sets out the role of the LADO, which is to is to:-

- Provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations
- Liaise with the Police; and
- Monitor the progress of all cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly and consistently as possible through the use of a fair and thorough process.

There may be up to three strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- Police investigation of a possible criminal offence;
- Enquiries and assessment by children's social care about whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services
- Consideration by an employer of disciplinary action in respect of the individual.

4.7 The LADO is involved from the initial phase of the allegation through to the conclusion of the case. The LADO provides advice and support to agencies and keeps the Safeguarding Board up to date about any concerns emerging from this area of work.

5. Rochdale's approach to tackling Child Sexual Exploitation

5.1 The council and its partners have a nationally-recognised strategy that focuses on preventing and disrupting CSE through effective partnership working, information sharing and the wide-ranging use of council enforcement powers. The Strategy is intelligence based, which is why so much work takes place to raise awareness of the risks and signs of CSE in our schools and communities. This includes specially developed plays about CSE and about relationships which we use to teach children from primary school upwards, helping them to recognise the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

5.2 Rochdale's multi-agency Sunrise Team has been acknowledged by Ofsted and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies for its partnership work and innovative approach within and outside Rochdale in disrupting CSE, protecting children and young people and prosecuting those who perpetrate it. The Sunrise Team is considered a model of national best practice in tackling this issue, and uses the most modern and effective techniques to

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protect victims and prosecute offenders. Rochdale's innovative practice in this area has resulted in DCLG funding to continue this work.

6. Quality of Practice and Management accountability

6.1 Rochdale now has an increasingly stable and experienced social work workforce. The Council's reputation is improving regionally and skilled people are choosing to work in Rochdale. Consequently the number of agency social workers has reduced by over 80% in the last 3 years. Feedback from social care and education staff indicates that morale is high, the Council's vision is understood and there is a listening leadership team in place.

6.2 Across Children's Social Care (CSC) there is a constant drive to improve performance and practice standards. Rochdale has well embedded Performance and Assurance systems in place to ensure that managers are accountable for the quality of practice. CSC managers and leaders are actively engaged in auditing cases, supervision records and 'closing the loop' activity, and the findings of audits are used to continually improve practice. Feedback from children, young people and parents is regularly sought in order to continuously drive further improvements in practice.

6.3 There is a comprehensive staff development and training programme in place to build the skills and confidence of the workforce.

6.4 The Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) have a QA framework to provide further assurance through monitoring, audits, escalation and feedback loops in performance clinics.

7. Integrated Children's Services in Rochdale

7.1 As referenced in 1.5 above, in 2004 the Children Act effectively joined up the previously separate Council departments responsible for services to children and young people; the Education Department and the Children's section of the Social Services Department. As can be seen from the way in which the concerns about Knowl view school were handled in the 1990s, this separation between education and social care was not always in the best interests of children.

7.2 In contrast, in 2017 Rochdale's Children Services provide a joined up approach across education and social care, with senior managers and practitioners from all disciplines physically working alongside each other, facilitating good communication in order to promote the optimum outcome for every child and young person in the Borough.

8. Partnership Working in 2017

8.1 In the 1980s and 1990s partnership working in Rochdale, as elsewhere at the time, was in its infancy, largely dependent upon relationships between individuals rather than governance arrangements between the agencies themselves. Since that time the climate

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has changed considerably; there is now widespread recognition that child abuse, including child sexual exploitation and online exploitation, can only be tackled effectively by agencies working together.

8.2 Partnership working in Rochdale today, as evidenced through the work of the Corporate Parenting Board, the Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP) and Rochdale Safeguarding Children Board (RBSCB) and Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) is a world away from the days of the Area Review Committee of the 1980s and the Area Child Protection Committee of the 1990s. The Rochdale Safeguarding Children Board (RBSCB)

operates effectively, with a well- embedded Quality Assurance (QA) framework and provides appropriate challenges to RBSCB agencies. The partnership is responsive to learning and seeking improvement through Multi-agency RBSCB audits, which consistently demonstrates the improving quality of local practice in all areas.

8.3 Rochdale Council and its partners also play a major role in influencing continued improvement across Greater Manchester (GM). The 10 councils have a programme of development in transforming children's services, working collaboratively to share learning, challenge areas of weakness and build collectively on evidence based working. The Director of Children's Services in Rochdale leads on the development of complex safeguarding across the 10 areas of GM, building on the Manchester wide success of the Phoenix CSE programme.

8.4 In the last 2 years, as part of the DfE innovation programme, Rochdale and Wigan councils and their partners have worked with academics and Research in Practice to both research and build evidence with survivors of CSE to define what works. The same group of young adults have been involved in co-designing strengths based approaches to work with young people at high risk of CSE where their home or placement setting may be at risk of breakdown. This model of working, known as ACT, has been positively evaluated by NatCen and University of Bedfordshire and will be rolled out to all councils in Greater Manchester over the next 2 years.

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