

Meeting:	Spotlight Review – Peer on peer abuse in schools
Meeting date:	Monday, 16 December 2019
Title of report:	Spotlight Review – Peer on peer abuse in schools – background and programme
Report by:	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To provide background to the spotlight review and a programme containing details of the order of business and the presentations to be delivered on the day.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) That the spotlight review is undertaken in accordance with the programme contained in appendix 2.**

Alternative options

1. This report sets out the background to the spotlight review and the programme for the day. An alternative option would consist of not undertaking a spotlight review on the topic but this has been selected by the children and young people scrutiny committee as a priority. The spotlight review could have been undertaken in private session but it was

agreed that due to the public concern regarding peer on peer abuse the session should be held in public.

Key considerations

2. At its meeting on 15 July 2019 the children and young people scrutiny committee requested the convening of a spotlight review concerning peer on peer abuse in schools as part of the setting of its work programme priorities. The committee agreed to undertake this review due to reports of increasing levels of peer on peer abuse and public concern at schools in Herefordshire. At the following meeting on 16 September a scoping document for the spotlight review was presented. The committee proposed some amendments with final agreement given to the scoping document (attached at appendix 1) at its meeting on the 25 November.
3. A number of partners and local agencies were invited to participate in the spotlight review and the following bodies and organisations will be represented: Herefordshire Council; Public Health; West Mercia Police; Primary and Secondary schools in Herefordshire; West Mercia Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC); The Children's Society; and Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. A full list of organisations and attendees is attached in appendix 2.
4. The presentations that will be provided are as follows (slides for the presentations are contained in the appendices listed below):
 - Herefordshire Council presentation – appendix 3
 - Public Health presentation – appendix 4
 - WMRSASC – appendix 5
5. In accordance with the scoping document in appendix 1, the spotlight review will seek to make recommendations to the children and young people scrutiny committee with regard to: an understanding of the current statistics and data around peer on peer abuse in schools; assurance that the advice schools are receiving and providing is compliant with statutory guidance; and assurance that the council is working with schools and local agencies to support the introduction clear and unambiguous policies to address peer on peer abuse.

Community impact

6. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council must ensure that those making decisions and delivering services are accountable for them. To support effective accountability the council is committed to a scrutiny function which undertakes task and finish groups on topics of interest and concern locally. The spotlight review on peer on peer abuse seeks to conduct scrutiny on an issue of topical interest and local public concern.

Equality duty

7. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
8. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires the council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that 'due regard' is paid during decision making concerning the design of policies and the delivery of services. The spotlight review seeks to consider policies in place at schools to address peer on peer abuse as part of the council's responsibility to have due regard to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Equality Act. It is recognised that this is an Equality issue as although not exclusively a female issue girls are disproportionately affected by this form of abuse.

Resource implications

9. The hosting of the spotlight review will be met by existing budgets for the operation of the scrutiny function at Herefordshire Council.

Legal implications

10. The rules concerning the convening and operation of tasks and finish groups are contained in Part 4 Section 5 – Scrutiny rules of the Herefordshire Council constitution. In summary, a selection of the relevant rules are as follows:
- A scrutiny committee may appoint a task and finish group for any scrutiny activity within the committee's agreed work programme. A committee may determine to undertake a task and finish activity itself as a spotlight review where such an activity may be undertaken in a single session; the procedure rules relating to task and finish groups will apply in these circumstances.
 - The relevant scrutiny committee will approve the scope of the activity to be undertaken, the membership, chairperson, timeframe, desired outcomes and what will not be included in the work. It will be a matter for the task and finish group to determine lines of questioning, witnesses (from the council or wider community) and evidence requirements.
 - As working groups of the committee, the task and finish groups will not be making decisions, and have the discretion to meet either in public or in private. If a task and finish group chooses to meet formally in public it may exclude the press and public including other members in attendance from any such meeting in accordance with the access to information rules (Part 4 section 2).
 - Task and finish groups will report their findings/outcomes/recommendations to the relevant scrutiny committee who will decide if the findings/outcomes/recommendations should be reported to the cabinet or elsewhere.

Risk management

- 11.

Risk/opportunity	Mitigation
There is a reputational risk to the council if the spotlight review does not produce recommendations.	The scoping document for the spotlight review and programme provides a structure and process to facilitate the production of recommendations.

Consultees

12. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Peer on peer abuse in schools spotlight review - scoping document

Appendix 2 – Peer on peer abuse in schools spotlight review – programme

Appendix 3 – Peer on peer abuse in schools spotlight review – Hereford Council presentation

Appendix 4 – Peer on peer abuse in schools spotlight review – Public Health presentation

Appendix 5 – Peer on peer abuse in schools spotlight review – WMRSASC presentation

Background papers

None