

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

DATE: 2018 January 15

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

FILE: 1750 20
Reference: Sexual Exploitation

SUBJECT: **UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BURNABY-NEW WESTMINSTER TASKFORCE ON SEXUALLY EXPLOITED AND AT-RISK YOUTH**

PURPOSE: To provide an overview of recent and planned activities of the Burnaby-New Westminster Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$3,500 from the 2018 Boards, Committees and Commissions budget and the allocation of \$2,000 from the 2019 Boards, Committee and Commissions budget to the Burnaby-New Westminster Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth to support its two-year workplan, as detailed in Section 3.0 of this report.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Sustainable City Advisory Committee for information.

REPORT**1.0 BACKGROUND**

The Burnaby-New Westminster Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth (the Taskforce) has been working since 1998 to address the sexual abuse of children and youth in the sex trade. The Taskforce is a multi-sectoral coalition, with staff representation from the City of Burnaby, the City of New Westminster, the Burnaby and New Westminster School Districts, the Burnaby RCMP, the New Westminster Police, the Fraser Health Authority, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and a number of non-profit agencies who provide services to youth. Over the years, the work of the Taskforce has focused on two goals:

- to ensure provision of adequate support, services and treatment for sexually exploited children and youth; and
- to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth.

The Committee and Council were last updated on the overall work of the Taskforce in 2016 January. This report provides an overview of the Taskforce's key activities since that time, and outlines the Taskforce's priorities for its next two-year workplan (January 2018 – December 2019).

2.0 OVERVIEW OF RECENT TASKFORCE ACTIVITIES

Since 2014, the Taskforce has focused its efforts on three main areas: targeted service delivery for exploited and at-risk youth; community/youth engagement and education; and Taskforce Operations.

2.1 Targeted Service Delivery

In order to advocate for appropriate and effective services and supports for sexually exploited youth and their families, the Taskforce undertook its fourth “count” of sexually exploited and at-risk youth to gain a greater understanding of the scope and nature of youth sexual exploitation locally.

Count of Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth

The Taskforce conducted its fourth one-month “count” of at-risk and sexually exploited youth in February 2017. The count was conducted by local service providers who, for the entire month, tracked the youth with whom they worked who were at-risk of being lured into sexual exploitation, were suspected of being sexually exploited, or were known to be so. The intent of the count was to identify the number of local youth meeting those criteria, and to obtain information about them including age, gender and ethnicity; methods of recruitment being used; living situations; habits with regards to substances such as alcohol and drugs; and degree of connections to schools or other supports. The total number of youth surveyed in 2017 was 155, which is a decrease from the 180 youth who were surveyed in 2015. Approximately 17 youth service locations took part in the count. Similar counts were conducted in February 2011, 2013 and 2015. The count provides valuable information about youth experience with sexual exploitation in our community, including that:

- Sexual exploitation is not a female specific issue; nearly a third of youth surveyed identified as male or transgender.
- Sexual exploitation can affect any youth, including those who live with their families and attend school regularly. 88% of surveyed youth who were 17 or younger, and 96% of surveyed youth under 15 years of age, attended school at least some of the time. 62% of surveyed youth live with their families.
- All ethnic communities can be vulnerable to youth sexual exploitation. 39% of youth surveyed were Caucasian and the remaining 61% were from other ethnic communities.
- Youth do not always view sexual exploitation as forced, as it can happen among peers and in relationships. 46% of youth surveyed reported receiving/being offered gifts in exchange for sexual acts or as a recruitment or grooming method used by exploiters. Self- or peer exploitation through sexting¹ was reported by 25% of surveyed youth.
- A significant amount of sexual exploitation or recruitment happens online. It can happen through social media websites, phone apps, online games and gaming consoles, dating websites, chatrooms, texting and image sharing, or other online spaces. Internet exploitation was reported by 43% of surveyed youth.
- Forms of recruitment and exploitation appear to differ slightly between genders, though all forms of exploitation can and do affect all youth. Female youth reported internet exploitation and receiving/being offered gifts most commonly, whereas male youth reported

¹ The sending of sexually explicit digital images, videos, text messages, or emails, usually by cell phone.

To: Public Safety Committee
From: Director Planning and Building
Re: Update on the Activities of the Burnaby-New Westminster
Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth
2018 January 15.....Page 3

receiving/being offered gifts and street exploitation. Transgender youth surveyed were most vulnerable to internet exploitation.

These results continue to inform local service provision, engagement and education efforts and have also strengthened partnerships between Taskforce member agencies.

The results of the latest count will be shared with Burnaby's recently elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in 2018 February at a meeting with Taskforce representatives. The intent of the meeting is to inform the MLAs to the work of the Taskforce.

Advocacy for a Youth Safe House

Over the past two years, the Taskforce was focused on advocacy for a youth safe house to address identified gaps in service for youth. Some youth have had to seek services such as emergency housing or drop-in services (e.g. laundry, showers, hot meals) in other communities.

The Taskforce convened a meeting in 2017 February with staff from several Provincial ministries, BC Housing, and elected officials and staff from the Cities of Burnaby and New Westminster to discuss the feasibility of a youth safe house. At the meeting, it was determined that MCFD was in the process of developing a new service delivery model that would provide additional youth outreach services through established local agencies as a means of addressing some of the identified gaps in service which a youth safe house aimed to address.

A new outreach program, the North Fraser Youth Outreach Services, funded by MCFD is due to launch in early 2018. Two local agencies, Lower Mainland Purpose Society and St. Leonard's Society, are members of the Taskforce and assisted with the development of the pilot program and will be implementing it in Burnaby and New Westminster. The Taskforce will be kept informed of its progress and future evaluations of its effectiveness.

2.2 Community/Youth Engagement and Education

The intent of the Taskforce's work in youth engagement and education is to promote fun and healthy activities for youth in order to build self-esteem and trusting relationships with adults, and to educate/raise awareness among youth – via the technology favoured by them – of the dangers of participation in the sex trade. To this end, the Taskforce – with the help of Youth Voice² – has hosted an annual youth-oriented awareness raising activity in conjunction with annual Youth Week activities in early 2017 May. Youth Voice also coordinated a youth mental wellness series of workshops in 2016 March to empower their peers with self-care skills.

The Taskforce also partnered with the Burnaby School Board's District Parent Advisory Council (SD41-DPAC) to host a parent's education evening on 2016 January 25. This event was hosted at Burnaby Central Secondary School and included a panel of Burnaby RCMP and relevant service providers. The content focused on 'safe' relationships, consent, online safety and the appropriate use of technology by youth, as well as stories from youth with lived experience of sexual exploitation.

² Youth Voice is a facilitated, regularly-scheduled advisory group of local youth created by the Taskforce in 2007. This group's role has now expanded and it also assists with the planning and delivery of annual Youth Week activities, as well as providing input to youth-related programs and services as required.

To: Public Safety Committee
From: Director Planning and Building
Re: Update on the Activities of the Burnaby-New Westminster
Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth
2018 January 15.....Page 4

Finally, the Taskforce initiated a review of its youth services website “Where to Find 411”³, which was launched in 2011 October. The independently-hosted website provides information on the work of the Taskforce, the issue of youth sexual exploitation, relevant local programs and services, and links to other pertinent supports and resources. The Taskforce held focus groups with youth to determine how they seek information and their impressions of the Taskforce’s website. Based on the results of this consultation, the Taskforce has decided to phase out the “Where to Find 411” website. Further work will include ensuring that the resources are available through other websites (e.g. Kids Help Phone⁴ and Burnaby Youth Hub⁵) and to explore new means of getting information to youth in the community (e.g. social media campaigns).

2.3 Taskforce Operations and Representation

The final primary area of focus for the Taskforce over the past four years has been to further expand its membership in order to ensure appropriate and broad representation. In 2016, representatives from MOSAIC began attending Taskforce meetings in order to bring the perspectives of newcomers to Taskforce discussions. As well, the Taskforce has endeavored to remain briefed on current legislative changes and updates which may impact its initiatives.

3.0 2018 – 2019 WORKPLAN

In spring 2018, Taskforce members will undertake a strategic planning session to review past accomplishments and challenges, as well as identify priorities, focus energy and resources and guide the next 5-6 years of work. The Taskforce last undertook a review of its accomplishments and challenges in 2013. With the inability to reopen a youth safe house in Burnaby and the introduction of the new North Fraser Youth Outreach Services program, the Taskforce is looking to reassess its goals and priority actions within this new environment. The outcomes of the session will inform the development of its next two-year workplan for 2018 and 2019.

3.1 Ongoing work from Community/Youth Engagement and Education

As noted, the Taskforce is working to change its approach to sharing information with both youth and adults. This work includes reviewing all resources listed on the website and ensuring that Burnaby and New Westminster specific resources can be found on other commonly used resource websites, such as the Kids Help Phone or Burnaby Youth HUB websites. It also involves developing a social media campaign to publicly share the results of the 2017 Count during the Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth Week in 2018 March. Additionally, a series of posters will be developed to be shared with Taskforce members to post in spaces where youth visit. These posters are anticipated to serve as a conversation piece between service providers and youth.

As well, in order to ensure an integrated case management approach is properly informed by the local context, the Taskforce is planning to facilitate a fifth “count” of sexually exploited and at-risk youth in Burnaby and New Westminster in 2019. The Taskforce will undertake a review of the Count checklist to better ensure that the desired data are collected in a consistent manner.

³ The website can be found at: www.wtf411.ca

⁴ Local youth resources can be accessed through Kids Help Phone at https://apps.kidshelpphone.ca/resourcesaroundme/search.html?q=&category=&location=burnaby_british-columbia.

⁵ Burnaby Youth Hub website can be found at <http://www.burnabyyouthhub.org/>

To: *Public Safety Committee*
From: *Director Planning and Building*
Re: *Update on the Activities of the Burnaby-New Westminster*
Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth
2018 January 15.....Page 5

To ensure adequate funds are available to complete the activities described above, the Taskforce is requesting an allocation of \$3,500 (\$1,500 for strategic planning process and \$2,000 for other projects) from the 2018 Provisional Boards, Committees and Commissions budget and \$2,000 from the 2019 Provisional Boards, Committees and Commissions budget. For accounting purposes, these requests are required to be separated between the two fiscal years.

Such a request, with the exception of the strategic planning funding request, is consistent with requests made previously through the Public Safety Committee to support Taskforce activities in past years⁶. Sufficient budget funds are available in the Boards, Committees and Commissions budget for this purpose, and would support the workplan over the next two year period, including costs related to undertaking a strategic planning process to develop a new 5-6 year plan, new communications projects, improved data collection for the Count and ensuring information shared with the public remains current. All Taskforce members contribute in-kind support to workplan initiatives, including members' staff time, provision of event venues, and contributions towards the development of educational content.

4.0 POLICY SECTION

The work of the Burnaby New Westminster Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth aligns with the Corporate Strategic Plan by supporting the following goals and sub-goals of the plan.

- A Safe Community
 - Crime prevention and reduction (sub-goal 1)
 - Emergency services (sub-goal 3)
- A Connected Community
 - Social connection (sub-goal 2)
 - Partnership (sub-goal 3)
- An Inclusive Community
 - Serve a diverse community (sub-goal 2)
- A Healthy Community
 - Healthy life (sub-goal 1)

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Burnaby-New Westminster Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth has been working since 1998 to address the sexual exploitation of children and youth in the sex trade. In 2016 and 2017, the Taskforce focused on activities that:

- undertook research to better understand the scope and nature of youth sexual exploitation in the community;
- built a foundation for advocacy for services to adequately support vulnerable youth;
- raised awareness among youth of the dangers of the sex trade and resources available to support vulnerable youth; and
- raised awareness among the general public, particularly parents, of methods of preventing sexual exploitation of youth, online safety and appropriate use of technology by youth.

⁶ Similar requests were made, and approved, in the years 2001, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016.

To: Public Safety Committee
From: Director Planning and Building
Re: Update on the Activities of the Burnaby-New Westminster
Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth
2018 January 15.....Page 6

The Taskforce will undertake a strategic planning process in order to reassess its goals and priority actions for the next 5-6 years. In addition to the activities outlined in Section 3.0, the strategic plan will inform the development of its next two-year workplan (2018 and 2019).

To support these Taskforce priorities it is recommended that the Public Safety Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$3,500 from the 2018 Boards, Committees and Commissions budget and \$2,000 from the 2019 Boards, Committee and Commissions budget to the Burnaby-New Westminster Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth to support its two-year workplan, as described in Section 3.0 of this report.

It is further recommended that a copy of this report be forwarded to the Sustainable City Advisory Committee for information.


Lou Pelletier, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

CS:sa

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