children's commissioner
Championing Children and Young People in England

"If only someone had listened"

Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups

Final Report

November 2013

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About the Office of the Children's Commissioner

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) is a national organisation led by the Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson. The post of Children's Commissioner for England was established by the Children Act 2004. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) underpins and frames all of our work.

The Children's Commissioner has a duty to promote the views and interests of all children in England, in particular those whose voices are least likely to be heard, to the people who make decisions about their lives. She also has a duty to speak on behalf of all children in the UK on non-devolved issues which include immigration, for the whole of the UK, and youth justice, for England and Wales. One of the Children's Commissioner's key functions is encouraging organisations that provide services for children always to operate from the child's perspective.

Under the Children Act 2004 the Children's Commissioner is required both to publish what she finds from talking and listening to children and young people, and to draw national policymakers' and agencies' attention to the particular circumstances of a child or small group of children which should inform both policy and practice.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner has a statutory duty to highlight where we believe vulnerable children are not being treated appropriately in accordance with duties established under international and domestic legislation.

Our vision

A society where children and young people's rights are realised, where their views shape decisions made about their lives and they respect the rights of others.

Our mission

We will promote and protect the rights of children in England. We will do this by involving children and young people in our work and ensuring their voices are heard. We will use our statutory powers to undertake inquiries, and our position to engage, advise and influence those making decisions that affect children and young people.

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Inquiry team and panel

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Inquiry Panel

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Professor Jenny Pearce – Director of the International centre: researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking and Director of the Institute of Applied Social Research, University of Bedfordshire

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Sheila Taylor MBE – CEO of NWG Network – tackling child sexual exploitation

Kate Wallace – UK Programme Director, Barnardo's

Dr Deborah Hodes – Consultant Community Paediatrician, Camden, London; representing the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

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Dr Maddy Coy – Deputy Director of the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit and Reader in Sexual Exploitation and Gender Inequality at London Metropolitan University

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Shaila Sheikh – Principal Participation Advisor

Charlotte Grant – Administrative Support

Stanley Ruszczynski – Director, the Portman Clinic, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

In addition to the panel, the Deputy Children's Commissioner has established an advisory group, government officials group and a number of specialist advisory groups to confer with the wide range of people and organisations who have shown interest in the Inquiry.

The participation of children is intrinsic to the Inquiry. It has been our priority throughout to ensure that children and young people can participate safely and securely, and in a way that promotes their healing and best interests. All of the quotations in this report are the voices of children and young people unless otherwise specified.

Acknowledgements

This report has been made possible because of the dedication and commitment of a great many people, all of whom care deeply about the children and young people whose lives are so cruelly affected by sexual exploitation. Each is driven by a determination to expose the truth so that children and young people can be given the protection and support that they deserve. I am particularly indebted to the following without whom this Inquiry could not have been so successfully conducted and the report produced.

The Inquiry secretariat and OCC staff: Carlene Firmin; Dr Sandra Gulyurtlu; Gareth Edwards; Jenny Clifton; Oliver Berman; Shaila Sheikh; Dawn Rees; Charlotte Grant; and Vikki Julian.

I am profoundly grateful to the Inquiry panel members who have given their time so selflessly and ensured that the issues were comprehensively covered and critically examined. They are: Professor Jenny Pearce; Martin Houghton-Brown; Whitney Iles; Sheila Taylor; Professor John Pitts; Marai Larasi; Kate Wallace; Dr Miranda Horvath; Dr Mike Shaw; Dr Deborah Hodes; Professor Liz Kelly; and Dr Maddy Coy. It has been a privilege to work with them.

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Many agencies kindly hosted our visits and generously shared their knowledge, expertise and services with us. In addition many more individuals attended our seminars and workshops to help us in our learning and in developing our understanding of how to tackle child sexual exploitation. I am deeply grateful to all of you.

Above all, profound thanks are due to the young people who spoke so openly to us of their appalling experiences. Their courage and fortitude in the face of what they have endured remains humbling. It is for them, and the still hidden victims, that we do this work.

I extend special thanks to Dr Maggie Atkinson, Children's Commissioner for England, for her unfailing support and encouragement throughout this Inquiry.

Help and support

If you are a child or young person affected by abuse or exploitation you can call Childline for advice and support 24 hours a day on 0800 1111.

If you are an adult who needs support or information, or are concerned about a child or young person, call the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000.

Foreword by the Deputy Children's Commissioner

This Inquiry has been an extraordinary journey. A journey that has taken us into the world of violence, degradation, humiliation and abuse endured by the children and young people who are victims of sexual exploitation.

We have for the first time, demonstrated the true scale of sexual exploitation and violence that children and young people are suffering from perpetrators operating in both gangs and groups.

It has also been a journey for the country. Levels of awareness of sexual exploitation have grown enormously, fuelled by media and public outrage at the pain and suffering of the victims exposed during high profile court cases.

The response has been encouraging. National leadership, in addressing and tackling child sexual exploitation, has been clearly demonstrated by the Government, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and Keir Starmer, the former Director of Public Prosecutions, all of whom have taken significant steps to improve the experiences of child victims and increase the likelihood that perpetrators will be brought to justice.

We have found passionate and dedicated professionals in both statutory and voluntary agencies who devote themselves selflessly to protecting and supporting victims and disrupting and arresting their abusers. They all deserve our thanks – and above all, our support – for the work is emotionally and psychologically demanding and draining.

At the same time, for most parts of the country, it is a journey only just begun.

There has, until recently, been alarming resistance to the recognition that victims come from all ethnic and religious groups, as do the perpetrators. This has meant that too many victims in our minority ethnic communities are still not being identified.

The fact that some adults (usually men) rape and abuse children is generally accepted. There is, however, a long way to go before the appalling reality of sexual violence and exploitation committed by children and young people is believed. Our findings about the scale and nature of this form of sexual violence have left panel members aghast. We have found shocking and profoundly distressing evidence of sexual assault, including rape, being carried out by young people against other children and young people. While we have published chilling evidence of this violence in gang-associated contexts, we know too that it is more widespread than that. This is a deep malaise within society, from which we must not shirk.

Child sexual exploitation is fundamentally a child protection issue. In the course of the Inquiry, we heard from the police about victims of sexual exploitation who have disappeared and whose bodies have never been recovered. The failure of services to protect them from harm reflects that of hundreds of other children and young people who have suffered abuse. Too many Serious Case Reviews, whether examining sexual exploitation or the death of a child, tell us the same thing: no one spoke to the child; no one attended to the child; agencies failed to share information. In short, the child was invisible.

We publish, in this report, **See Me, Hear Me**: a new evidence-based Framework for protecting children and young people from sexual exploitation. It brings the child's voice right into the heart of the child protection process. *'I'm not an object – I'm human!'* cried one young woman. It is time to change culture and practice so that children are no longer invisible – silent victims that no one sees and no one hears.

See Me, Hear Me has the potential to improve not only the protection of children and young people from sexual exploitation but also from other forms of harm. Applying it will ensure that children who are suffering cannot be dismissed – the agencies must answer and be accountable to the children and young people they are there to serve.

Never again should a traumatised child have to say: *'If only someone had listened to me perhaps I would have been OK'.*

The Office of the Children's Commissioner will continue to listen and act. Our work on sexual abuse and exploitation does not end with this Inquiry – the journey to protect children and young people continues.

Sue Berelowitz
Deputy Children's Commissioner for England
Chief Executive of the Office of the Children's Commissioner

Executive summary

Key findings

Despite increased awareness and a heightened state of alert regarding child sexual exploitation children are still slipping through the net and falling prey to sexual predators. Serious gaps remain in the knowledge, practice and services required to tackle this problem. There are pockets of good practice, but much still needs to be done to prevent thousands more children falling victim.

This is the principal finding of *"If only someone had listened" – the Final Report of the Inquiry of the Office of the Children's Commissioner into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups* (CSEGG).

In many areas the required agencies have only recently started to come together to tackle the issue despite the statutory guidance issued by the Government in 2009. A comparison of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) current practice against this guidance indicates that only 6% of LSCBs were meeting the requirements in full, with around one third not even meeting half of them. Substantial gaps remain in the availability of specialist provision for victims of child sexual exploitation (CSE).

This report outlines the urgent steps needed so that children can be effectively made and kept safe – from decision-making at senior levels to the practitioner working with individual child victims – whether a social worker, police officer, health clinician, teacher or anyone else who has contact with children.

Phase 1 of the Inquiry reported that a total of 2,409 children were known to be victims of CSE by gangs and groups. In addition the Inquiry identified 16,500 children and young people as being at risk of CSE.

Many of the known victims had been badly let down by those agencies and services that should have been protecting them. The reality is that children and young people are continuing to fall victim to exploitation. Although there are heightened efforts to address this issue, too many agencies and services are still failing to safeguard children and young people effectively.

We have seen examples, however, of local services who *are* putting children at the centre of everything they do. In these places there is a coherent and collaborative response to CSE with utmost commitment from the most senior to frontline staff, thereby offering greater protection for children threatened by, or experiencing, sexual exploitation. These examples have informed our view of what needs to be done in those places where children are not being protected and is encapsulated in the Inquiry's new operational and strategic Framework – **See Me, Hear Me.**

Child Sexual Exploitation by Gangs and Groups

In this Inquiry we use the following definitions of gangs and groups.

- **Gangs** are relatively durable, predominantly street-based, social groups of children, young people and, not infrequently, young adults who see themselves, and are seen by others, as affiliates of a discrete, named group who (1) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence; (2) identify or lay claim to territory; (3) have some form of identifying structural feature; and (4) are in conflict with similar groups.

- **Groups** are two or more people of any age, connected through formal or informal associations or networks, including, but not exclusive to, friendship groups.

The Inquiry identified 13 patterns of child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups. These are set out in **Appendix 2** of the report.

Evidence base

The Inquiry gathered an unprecedented evidence base during Phase 2 to inform the findings of this report. We collected a wide range of qualitative and quantitative evidence from children and young people, parents, carers and a variety of professionals and agencies, as well as evaluations of interventions in place. This included 100% response from every LSCB and police force. A full breakdown of the evidence can found in **Appendix 1.**

Report structure

The second phase of this Inquiry sought to explore and identify good practice in addressing child sexual exploitation by gangs and/or groups around which the report is structured.

In ensuring that all children are being safeguarded, we need to first understand **Why are children and young people still slipping through the net?**

Chapter 1 seeks to outline what is and is not working in addressing CSE involving gangs and groups nationally. **Part A**: **What is going wrong?** describes the failings that are impeding the proper safeguarding of children. In contrast, **Part B**: **What is working?** describes how some children have been protected. It outlines nine key foundations for good practice.

Chapter 2: **Getting it right: The Framework for action**, builds on this evidence and outlines the overarching Framework (**See Me, Hear Me**) that is needed to ensure coherent and collaborative working between the various agencies and services involved in tackling CSE.

Chapter 3 closes the report by laying out **conclusions, recommendations and next steps**.

Inquiry findings

Chapter 1: The National Response to Child Sexual Exploitation

Part A: Why are children slipping through the net: what is going wrong?

> *'They talked about me like I wasn't even there. They were very harsh.'*

The Inquiry identified nine significant **failings** in the current response to tackle and address child sexual exploitation.

Many agencies are **forgetting the child**. Children who are at high risk of CSE, or already victims, are often simply ignored or discounted. They are often invisible – not seen or heard. Whilst 98% of LSCBs told the Inquiry that CSE is a strategic priority, almost half were unable to tell us how many victims had been identified during 2012 in their local area. During site visits we also continued to hear references to children 'putting themselves at risk', rather than the perpetrators being the risk to children.

Services are **failing to engage** with children and young people. There was a lack of awareness and understanding from some professionals and agencies on how to engage with children and young people. This was identified in 61% of (call for evidence) submissions from the voluntary sector. Specialist organisations, particularly working with minority groups and gender-specific organisations, highlighted that often statutory services have a poor understanding of the children and young people with whom they work and their specific needs. The Inquiry uncovered a significant difference between children and young people's views of their needs and what would help them, and professionals understanding of what would help. This has contributed to children and young people slipping through the net.

There is a **lack of leadership** amongst some of the most senior decision makers at local level, who are failing to grasp the gravity of CSE, commit resources and coordinate multi-agency responses. At both a national and local level it is also unclear whether CSE is being seen as predominantly a child protection issue or a crime and disorder issue.

We uncovered limited or **no strategic planning** in some LSCBs in relation to CSE. Almost half of all LSCBs do not have a strategy in place to tackle child sexual exploitation. An absence of strategy can result in differing approaches and an uncoordinated response across agencies.

Too many people who should be protecting children are **in denial** about the realities of CSE and therefore do not believe what children may tell them. One young person told us, '*They made me feel like it was my fault.'*

Professionals are **failing to recognise** victims. There are still pervasive and damaging myths about the profiles of both victims and perpetrators with the result that many different patterns of sexual exploitation are being ignored and the victims not being protected. Of the 323 gangs believed to currently be active in England and identified by police forces, only 16 have been associated with CSE. There has also been limited 'problem-profiling' (obtaining a detailed picture) of the scale and nature of CSE in local areas with only 35% of LSCBs having undertaken activity in this area.

Too many areas are still **working in isolation** to tackle CSE. Almost a third of LSCBs (comprising several agencies and services) have no plans to appoint a child sexual exploitation coordinator. Nearly half of all CSE sub-groups have no specific representative from sexual health services. Information sharing remains an issue with some agencies holding information on sexual exploitation that is not also held by or shared with the police, children's services and others. Although some agencies do engage in collaborative or partnership work, they are still not all communicating effectively.

A **delayed response** to CSE continues to hamper the development and improvement of practice to tackle CSE. Only two police forces have sought to 'map' (locate and log the connections of) girls and young women associated with street gangs despite recommendations made in the Interim Report.

Results are **not** being **monitored.** Statutory agencies are failing to check whether their actions are working and there is no common agreement between them as to what they are trying to achieve.

It is essential that these factors are urgently addressed to ensure child victims are not missed.

Part B: How some children and young people have been protected: what is working?

> *'The team and everything they did. It's more the fact that they got to know us. Not force it out of us but they got to know us. Built that relationship and um… obviously when we felt we could trust them, we bring it out and told them what is going on. It's better than the fact that "oh. I just met you. Tell me what is going on." It was building that relationship that was nice.'*

Having identified the failings, the Inquiry has also identified nine essential foundations of effective practice for safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation based on the evidence collected.

In all examples of good practice there was a **focus on the child.** Children and young people were clearly visible to those responsible for protecting them. These services sought to ensure that those at risk or who are victims are the primary focus of professionals and agencies at all times. They identified that providing support for a child who has been sexually exploited should not be seen as a quick fix. Professionals and agencies need to be mindful of children and young people's individual needs and equalities.

Gaining a child's confidence was found to be important to enable the children and young people to be equipped with the knowledge to recognise what is abuse, and feel supported to be able to tell someone about it. 52% of voluntary sector call for evidence submissions highlighted the importance of building positive relationships and trust when working with children and young people.

Conditions need to be created in school, the home and socially to support this process.

Effective **leadership** was instrumental in developing good practice. The good leaders we observed demonstrated and modelled their commitment to tackling child sexual exploitation and this translated into effective practice. In areas where we observed poor leadership, professionals lack a sense of direction as they carry out their work, and the likelihood of good governance, accountability and quality assurance was diminished.

Strategic planning was identified by the professionals we spoke to as being central to effective practice. 91% of LSCBs have a CSE sub-group in place or underway. In the areas where we observed best practice, they had a clear strategy in place. Some of the most effective strategies extended from prevention through to protection and included on-going support for victims and enforcement.

Everyone on alert – 78% of LSCBs have delivered awareness-raising activity programmes for professionals locally. We found that victims and children or young people at risk of CSE were more likely to be identified and be provided the right support when professionals, families, communities and local businesses were informed about CSE and understood the impact that it can have.

Spotting the warning signs – 70% of health agencies which responded to the dataset indicated that they had circulated the risk indicators/warning signs published in the Inquiry's Interim Report and a further 17% were planning to do so. Distributing and understanding these warning signs can improve the likelihood children and young people who are at risk or victims of CSE will be recognised without placing the onus on victims to tell their story.

Joined-up working improved identification and enabled all-encompassing child-centred practice. Evidence to the Inquiry conclusively shows that no single agency acting in isolation can adequately respond to child sexual exploitation. In areas where we observed joined-up working, there were higher levels of identification of victims and a more comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of the children and young people.

Early identification and **pre-emptive action** leads to the breaking-up of networks that exploit children. This is a far more effective approach than waiting until a child reveals that he or she is being exploited and avoids further exploitation and abuse.

Effective pre-emptive action was observed in agencies that combine all their data, intelligence, experience and know-how into a strategic plan for action. Pre-emptive action also included proactive prevention. This was particularly observed in schools-based programmes on the risks of CSE. These helped to educate children and young people to use the internet safely, address the very worrying attitudes that many boys have towards girls and make sure young people know where to turn for help.

Scrutiny and oversight was found to be essential to ensure that the intended outcomes are being achieved.

Are we really seeing, hearing and understanding the victims and are we truly acting in their best interests? Those are the questions that need to be asked at every stage. These questions are set out in the **See Me, Hear Me** Framework in Chapter 2.

Everyone involved – from service heads setting the strategic agenda to those handling cases day-in, day-out – needs to know what is required of them to make the system work.

Chapter 2: Getting it right – the Framework for action

This Inquiry found that no single agency can respond alone or on a case-by-case basis to child sexual exploitation by gangs or groups. A coherent local and national response to child sexual exploitation needs to cover the entire range of agencies and services that are involved in the protection and safety of children and young people, at both a strategic and operational level.

It is against this background that we have developed the **See Me, Hear Me** Framework which provides a child-centred approach for protecting children. This Framework focuses on:

- preventing the sexual exploitation of children
- identifying, protecting and supporting the victims
- disrupting and stopping perpetrators, securing justice for victims and obtaining convictions.

See Me, Hear Me ensures that children and young people who are victims of CSE or at risk of becoming victims, are seen, heard, supported and understood. It is about making the child visible. It has been developed with the assistance of a group of young people who have been victims of sexual exploitation and representatives from key agencies working in the field. It draws extensively on evidence of effective practice examined by the Inquiry.

The Framework sets out the agencies, networks and stage-by-stage coordination of what is needed to enable effective practice and to ensure joined-up working – from the top strategic level down to

the on-the-ground handling of cases with victims and perpetrators. This joined-up approach reflects all messages in *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DSCF, 2009) and all the major child abuse enquiries. It is underpinned by seven firm principles of effective practice.

Principles of effective practice

Evidence to the Inquiry demonstrated that a strategic and operational framework would struggle to be effective if it were not founded upon seven principles set out below. These are predicated on Articles 3, 12, 19, 24, 34 and 39 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Fulfilling the principles will ensure that children's rights under the UNCRC are honoured.

1. The child's best interests must be the top priority

The best interests of children and young people and their rights to protection must drive all decision making. The paramountcy principle (Children Act 1989) must be adhered to where applicable and children's rights under UNCRC Article 3 fully honoured.

2. Participation of children and young people

Services need to involve children and young people when decisions are being made about their care, protection and on-going support and be kept informed on any issues that affect them throughout. Professionals must be mindful of children and young people's needs and equalities. Their UNCRC Article 12 rights must be honoured.

3. Enduring relationships and support

Support must be tailored to meet the needs of the child, according to their age, identity, ethnicity, belief, sexual orientation, disability, language, and stage of development. Children and young people have told us that a consistent person who sticks with them throughout the whole period of their protection and on-going care is crucial to their recovery.

4. Comprehensive problem-profiling

It is critical that agencies regularly problem-profile their local area to analyse and understand all the patterns of exploitation to which children and young people are subjected to. A comprehensive problem-profile needs to be compiled with the oversight of the LSCB and should be shared across all key partners to inform the development of a multi-agency strategy and action plans, the commissioning of services and the delivery of training and awareness-raising activity to support local professionals.

5. Effective information-sharing within and between agencies

Every area should have a cross sector information-sharing protocol which is predicated on the best interests and safeguarding of children and young people. All relevant agencies and services should be signatories and it should clearly state what information should be shared, by whom and the process for doing this.

6. Supervision, support and training of staff

Services should invest in the development and support of staff including providing regular supervision and the opportunities for them to reflect on practice. Those professionals who offer direct support to sexually exploited children and young people might require further intensive training and must have regular opportunities to reflect on their practice with a skilled consultant or supervisor.

7. Evaluation and review

Evaluations and regular reviews of the effectiveness of the CSE strategy is necessary to ensure services and interventions are achieving their intended outcomes and meeting the child and young person's needs. Children and young people must be directly involved in this process in compliance with Article 12 of the UNCRC. This will ensure that performance is driven continuously by a cycle that leads to improvement.

These principles need to be in place to ensure children and young people are seen, heard and made safe.

The **See Me, Hear Me** Framework also details three sets of simple and essential questions under the headings:

1. **Voice of the Child** – brings the voice and experiences of victims of CSE and those at risk to the fore. These questions were compiled and quality assured by a group of young people who have been victims of sexual exploitation. They were emphatic that protection and support can only be effective when these questions are addressed.
2. **Voice of the Professional** – attends to the anxieties staff may have and highlights the questions which agencies must ask if they are to meet their responsibilities to care for and support their staff.
3. **Protecting the Child** – details some of the questions which agencies need to satisfactorily answer in order to fulfil their statutory responsibilities for keeping all children safe.

The questions have been developed to guide planning and decision making regarding the rights, welfare and protection children and young people who have been victims of CSE.

Finally, the **See Me, Hear Me** Framework outlines the functions and processes required to form a holistic response to sexual exploitation at a local level. The functions and processes are framed within the suggested structure within which the **See Me, Hear Me** Framework could be implemented. This ranges from accountability and strategic coordination to an end to end approach to intervention and service delivery at the ground level.

None of this will work without the commitment of leaders in every relevant agency who are held to account for the implementation of the local CSE strategy and the protection of individual children and young people.

This way of working now needs to become standard practice. Some agencies are already delivering a good service – all now need to do that.

Recommendations

1. The Department for Education should review and where necessary, revise the *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DCSF, 2009). This should include a review of the definition of CSE.

2. Every Local Safeguarding Children Board should take all necessary steps to ensure they are fully compliant with the *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DCSF, 2009).

3. Every Local Safeguarding Children Board should review their strategic and operational plans and procedures against the seven principles, nine foundations and the **See Me, Hear Me Framework** in this report, ensuring they are meeting their obligations to children and young people and the professionals who work with them. Gaps should be identified and plans developed for delivering effective practice in accordance with the evidence. The effectiveness of plans, procedures and practice should be subject to an on-going evaluation and review cycle.

4. There need to be nationally and locally agreed information-sharing protocols that specify every agencies' and professional's responsibilities and duties for sharing information about children who are or may be in need of protection. At the national level, this should be lead and coordinated by the Home Office through the Sexual Violence against Children and Vulnerable People National Group. At the local level, this must be led by LSCBs. All member agencies at both levels must be signatories and compliance rigorously monitored.

5. Problem-profiling of victims, offenders, gangs, gang-associated girls, high risk businesses and neighbourhoods and other relevant factors must take place at both national and local levels. The Home Office, through the Sexual Violence against Children and Vulnerable People National Group, should lead and coordinate the development of a national profile. Local Safeguarding Children Boards should do the equivalent at the local level.

6. Every local authority must ensure that its Joint Strategic Needs Assessment includes evidence about the prevalence of CSE, identification and needs of high risk groups, local gangs, their membership and associated females. This should determine commissioning decisions and priorities.

7. Relationships and sex education must be provided by trained practitioners in every educational setting for all children and young people. This must be part of a holistic/whole-school approach to child protection that includes internet safety and all forms of bullying and harassment and the getting and giving of consent.

8. Through the Sexual Violence against Children and Vulnerable People National Group, the Government should undertake a review of the various initiatives being funded by the Home Office, Department for Education, Department of Health and any others as relevant, in order to ensure services are not duplicated and that programmes are complementary, coordinated and adequately funded. All initiatives should be cross-checked to ensure that they are effectively linked into child protection procedures and local safeguarding arrangements.

Introduction

The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England, using powers of inquiry in the Children Act 2004, has undertaken a comprehensive two year Inquiry into the nature and extent of child sexual exploitation (CSE) in England. This Inquiry has been the most in-depth investigation of child sexual exploitation by gangs and groups in England. In November 2012 we published evidence of prevalence which, for the first time, laid bare the realities of this type of abuse.

This final report is the culmination of over two years work by a small team of staff led by the Deputy Children's Commissioner and supported by a panel of experts. In total, the Inquiry has now published six reports.

- The emerging findings of the Inquiry with a specific focus on children in care (at the request of the Secretary of State).
- "*I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world*": The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation In Gangs and Groups Interim Report
- *"Basically... porn is everywhere"*: A Rapid Evidence Assessment on the Effects that Access and Exposure to Pornography has on Children and Young People
- *"Sex without consent, I suppose that is rape"*: How young people in England understand sexual consent
- *"It's wrong but you get used to it"*: A qualitative study of gang-associated sexual violence towards, and exploitation of, young people in England
- *"If only someone had listened"*: The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, Final Report.

All the reports are available at www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

This Final Report focuses on what can and should be done to protect children and young people from sexual exploitation, how to support those who have been victims and how to reduce the prevalence of sexual violence perpetrated by gangs and groups.

It is worth recapping what is meant by child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups, as we defined in our Interim Report (Berelowitz et al, 2012):

> *[This] 'involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability'* (DCSF, 2009)

- **Gangs** are relatively durable, predominantly street-based, social groups of children, young people and, not infrequently, young adults who see themselves, and are seen by others, as affiliates of a discrete, named group who (1) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence; (2) identify or lay claim to territory; (3) have some form of identifying structural feature; and (4) are in conflict with similar groups.
- **Groups** are two or more people of any age, connected through formal or informal associations or networks, including, but not exclusive to, friendship groups.

We have listened to hours of evidence from young people and the professionals whose job it is to protect and work with them. We have taken account of evidence submitted by government departments, local authorities, health services, the police, voluntary sector agencies working with sexually exploited children and young people, academic institutions and numerous other organisations.

Most importantly, we have spoken with many victims directly and hundreds more have participated in our research projects. Their voices and experiences have shaped and influenced this report.

National awareness of the suffering and degradation of victims of CSE was raised primarily as a consequence of the trial and conviction of a group of men who sexually exploited children and young people in and around Derby. The agencies failed catastrophically to protect the victims who endured relentless rape for years. At the same time research was published into the impact on women and girls of gang and serious youth violence (Firmin 2010; 2011). The reports identified that gang-associated young women were at risk of offending, domestic abuse, and sexual violence amongst other issues. In response the Home Office committed £1.2 million of funding for young people's sexual violence advocates in gang-affected neighbourhoods. It included gang-related violence in its action plan to tackle violence against women and girls. However, the links to sexual exploitation were yet to be made, and the scale of the problem remained unknown.

Given the gravity of the concerns, the Office of the Children's Commissioner launched this Inquiry.

In the 25 months since the Inquiry was launched considerable progress has been made: awareness of the crime and its impact has increased; new policies and practices to prevent it and to protect and rescue victims have been introduced; and there is better agency coordination. Following our report on the impact on children of viewing pornography (Hovarth et al, 2013), the Government has introduced tighter controls on accessing pornography via the internet and is working with server providers to block illegal and undesirable materials.

There is a very long way to go, however, before we can confidently state that children and young people are being fully protected. We have seen some impressive practice across a range of agencies and highlight exemplars in this report.

However the picture remains very patchy. Children and young people continue to be let down. Nowhere in any part of the country can we conclude that there is a fully joined-up muli-agency, child-centred approach to address child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups. The cases that come to court continue to demonstrate that too often victims are being overlooked or slipping through the net because agencies and individuals fail to listen to them, and fulfil their responsibilities with regard to child protection, or that there was not sufficient strategic and managerial oversight to coordinate their actions.

The Inquiry believes the measures outlined in this report will help to put in place the protection and support to which young people are entitled.

Phase 1

Phase 1 of the Inquiry provided the most accurate information to date on the scale, nature and extent of the sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse to which girls and boys under the age of 18 in England are subjected to both in street gangs and groups.

Published in November 2012, the Interim Report of the Inquiry, reported that 2,409 children and young people were confirmed victims of child sexual exploitation in gangs or groups in the 14 months from August 2010 to October 2011. The Inquiry also identified that between April 2010 and March 2011 there were 16,500 children and young people who were at high risk of child sexual exploitation.

CSE involves the abusive exercise of power by perpetrators over those who are vulnerable. We were informed of cases involving victims from a range of backgrounds and ethnicities, both males and females, some of whom were disabled.

In gang and group contexts control is exerted over victims in many different ways including: threats of reprisals; violence; terrorising, victimising, corrupting, isolating, filling them with a fear of not being believed if they report what is happened to them; grooming; and coercion.

The majority of victims are girls while boys comprise a significant minority. The vast majority of perpetrators are male, of all ages. Boys and young men comprise 28% of perpetrators about whom we received evidence.

The Interim Report documented cases involving children and young people who had been subjected to the most significant and diverse types of sexual violence. The abuse can impair the physical, emotional, sexual and mental health of victims. We met young adults who were struggling to deal with the aftermath of their abuse years after it had ceased.

We noted the methodical, devious and violent ways used by perpetrators to control children and young people and do with them what they wished.

From the evidence, we developed lists of warning signs and risk indicators to enable the identification of victims of CSE and the prevention of this abuse. These were published in the appendix of the Interim Report and should be used by every single practitioner who has contact with children and young people. They are reproduced in Appendix 3 of this report.

The Interim Report was published as more and more cases of group-based sexual exploitation were coming before the courts. At the same time, the revelations that emerged from the Jimmy Saville case alerted the country to past cases of child sexual abuse committed by single perpetrators and resulted in a significant increase in people coming forward to talk about the abuse they had suffered years previously.

Phase 2

In the second stage of the Inquiry, the questions that needed to be addressed were: how can we stop this happening and how can victims be quickly identified, rescued and supported in their recovery? The Inquiry focused on identifying effective practice in targeting CSE in the context of gangs and groups.

To inform this, qualitative and quantitative evidence was collected from a range of sources (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Evidence collected for Phase 2 of the Inquiry

Evidence source	Volume and coverage
Call for evidence: Open call to collect examples of a practice that agencies and/or professionals consider to be effective and barriers to practice	• **96** submissions representing **180** agencies (see Appendix 1 for full breakdown)
Dataset responses: Uniform request to collect data on strategic and operational activity from police forces, LSCBs and certain health services	• **146** LSCBs (**100%** coverage) • **39** police forces (**100%** coverage)[1] • **237** Health Services – CAMHS, GUM, Sexual Health and Substance Misuse services
Site visits: Gather evidence from visits to services and meetings with professionals	• **11** sites visited – **62** agencies consulted
Workshops, interviews and seminars with children and young people, professionals and academics: Gather evidence from presentations, group discussions and interviews	• **23** in total, involving: – **15** of children/young people[2] – **11** parents/carers – **74** professionals – **11** academics
Collection of evaluations: To observe effectiveness of interventions that have been evaluated	• **121** evaluations analysed
Commissioned research from academic institutions	• Sexual violence in gang affected neighbourhoods • Children and young people's understanding of consent to sex • Impact of pornography on children and young people

Examples of good practice

Encouragingly, we have seen some examples where the right measures *are* in place and where local agencies and services are working together successfully. Throughout this report, we offer exemplars of promising practice which were identified through the Inquiry's evidential capture processes. These are highlighted in boxes throughout.

However, it is important to note that although some of these practices have been evaluated and found to be effective, others may have not been subject to formal evaluation or detailed review by the Inquiry and therefore outcomes cannot be corroborated in all instances. The examples are also designed to highlight individual strands of practice and not relate to all aspects of the services/activity undertaken by the agencies/organisations referenced.

1 Figures in this report have excluded a response from City of London Police (see Appendix 1) which was reviewed separately. Therefore percentages are based on the responses from 38 other police forces in place across England.

2 In addition 180 children and young people supported our work on gangs (Brodie et al, 2013) and 607 supported our work on consent (Coy et al, 2013).

Most Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) have now committed resources to tackle CSE. A comparison of data collected from LSCBs by the Inquiry and that gathered by the University of Bedfordshire (Jago et al, 2011) in the previous 18 months, indicates that progress has been made or that the required activity, for example, running awareness-raising programmes and/or appointing a CSE coordinator, was complete in 63% of instances. This is a significant improvement on 2011. However, we consider that nowhere is this sufficient to comprehensively safeguard all children and young people from all forms of CSE.

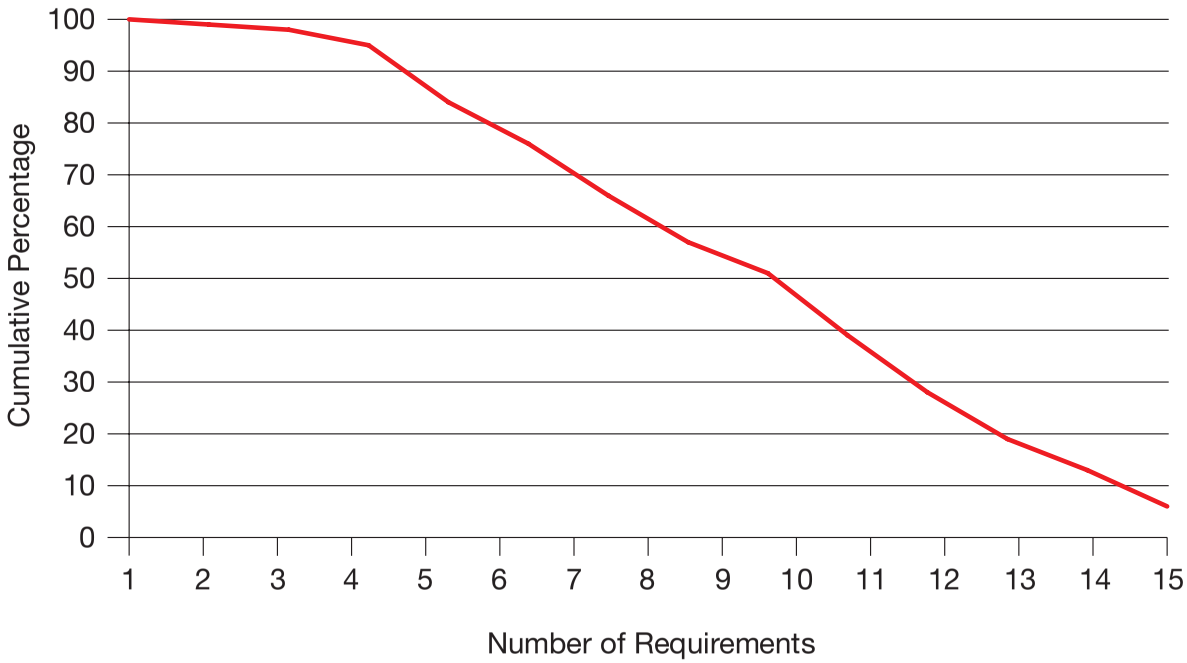
We have also uncovered some alarming gaps in how the problem is being tackled.

Based on the complete national response to the Inquiry's LSCB dataset response, it has been possible to compare whether LSCBs are meeting some of the key requirements set out for them in the *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DSCF, 2009). 15[3] specific areas were comparable against factors including: the establishment of a LSCB CSE sub-group; delivery of training; monitoring of prevalence; establishment of local procedures; identification of CSE leads across key local agencies (a full list of areas compared can be found in Appendix 4). Only 6% of all LSCBs nationally indicated that their activity covered all 15 of these requirements. We remain concerned that around one third of LSCB responses indicated that they are not meeting 50% of the requirements set out in the guidance. It is also clear from Figure 2 below that there is significant variation in the extent to which practice meets national guidance across LSCBs nationally.

3 15 specific areas were comparable; 13 fully and two partially based on what the guidance recommends (see Appendix 4). Where LSCB activity could only be compared against the guidance and their dataset response suggested they had completed this partial aspect, the analysis positively attributed the activity for that LSCB as meeting the guidance.

Figure 2: Cumulative percentage of LSCBs meeting the guidance in 15 areas set out in *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DCSF, 2009) through comparison with the Inquiry LSCB dataset

Number of requirements	Count of LSCB's meeting requirements	Cumulative percentage
15	9	6%
14	10	13%
13	9	19%
12	13	28%
11	16	39%
10	17	51%
9	9	57%
8	14	66%
7	14	76%
6	12	84%
5	16	95%
4	4	98%
3	2	99%
2	1	100%



This comparison highlights that too many authorities are still failing to comply with the *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DSCF, 2009). This leads to large unacceptable variations in local practice around the identification of/response to victims of CSE. Ultimately too many children and young people are still either being ignored, or falling victim to inadequate responses.

Since 2008 there have been five Serious Case Reviews into child sexual exploitation involving groups and a further two are currently being completed. There have been none involving gangs. In those published so far, it is clear that the victims were ignored, discounted or even blamed for their own abuse and that a coordinated, multi-agency, child-centred approach has been lacking.

The Inquiry has found that it is often left to invaluable but stretched voluntary sector providers to coordinate and call for child-centred action.

We pledged to come up with recommendations on how to put measures into force that ensure effective practice. Based on the evidence we gathered, we have identified seven defining principles for protecting children from CSE.

1. The child's interests must be top priority
2. Participation of children and young people
3. Enduring relationships and support
4. Comprehensive problem-profiling and proactive identification
5. Effective information-sharing within and between agencies
6. Supervision, support and training for staff
7. Evaluation and review

This report outlines the measures needed to put these principles into practice and makes recommendations for doing so.

Every child or young person has the right to be free from all forms of harm and violence, specifically from sexual exploitation, as set out in Articles 19 and 34 of the UNCRC. The goal must be to confer that right upon every child.

It is time to call an end to victims being invisible. No child should lament again, *"If only someone had listened…".*

1. Inquiry findings: The national picture

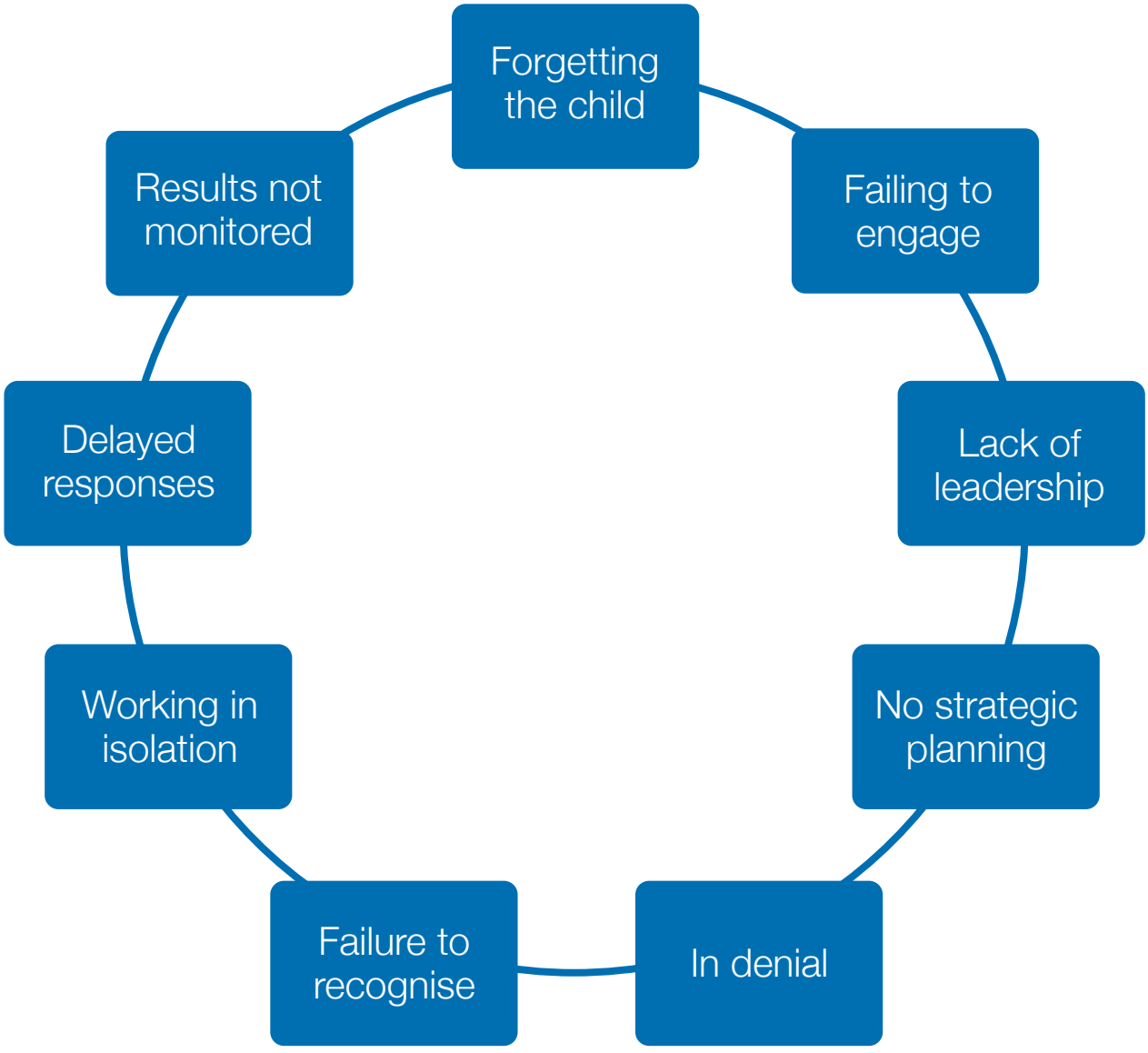
Part A: Why are children slipping through the net – what is going wrong?

'They talked about me like I wasn't even there. They were very harsh about me.'

Understanding why so many children and young people are slipping through the net and how the systems for protecting them fail is essential if we are to arrive at ways of ensuring all children are being safeguarded. We need to examine what's going wrong before we can start to put things right.

The Inquiry has identified nine major failings or barriers in the system that may present themselves at different levels across each local area and lead to victimisation occurring.

Figure 3: System failings



1) Forgetting the child

The rapid increase in professional and public awareness of child sexual exploitation has generated a sense of urgency that something must be done to keep children and young people safe.

Major gaps have come to light in how child sexual exploitation is being tackled. The truth is many children and young people are being lost or overlooked by the system, as our Inquiry findings demonstrate.

- While 98% of LSCBs told the Inquiry that they considered child sexual exploitation to be a strategic priority, almost half (49%) were unable to tell us how many victims had been identified during 2012 in their local area.
- Of health agencies queried, 91% believed that they had come into contact with victims, typically every one to six months. Despite this, only 28% of agencies had processes in place to record and track how many children and young people they had identified as being at risk of CSE. Only 18% could provide actual data for 2012.
- During site visits we continued to hear references to children '*putting themselves at risk'*, rather than perpetrators being the risk to children.
- Research commissioned for the Inquiry and evidence collected on site visits, revealed that children largely remain out of sight ('*hidden*') when they are: exploited by their peers or street gangs; from minority ethic groups; or are disabled.
- We heard from too many professionals that children and young people, even though they were being exploited, were '*not hitting the threshold for statutory interventions*', a complaint echoed in call for evidence submissions.
- Only 36% of the 83 LSCBs with a CSE strategy had included children and young people in its development.
- Only 47% of LSCB areas involved children and young people in planning meetings about their own care and protection.

In terms of direct support to children and young people:

- 31% LSCBs reported no specialised CSE services in their area
- Of the 69% that did have access to specialist services, some were short-term or time-limited, and not all of these were able to work with children throughout or after the criminal justice process
- Over two thirds (68%) of LSCBs reported that their local authority did not have specialist provision in place for young people once they turned 18
- 36% of LSCB areas reported they have needed to use secure accommodation as a refuge for sexually exploited children. 74 such cases were reported in 2012.

The Inquiry notes that finding a child secure accommodation is sometimes a necessity. However, an Inquiry workshop on care, accommodation and the protection of sexually exploited children and young people revealed that not all areas are making use of secure provision even when it is indicated as being necessary for the safety of a child or young person. On the other hand, inappropriate use of secure accommodation is sometimes used only because of a lack of other available options.

At present children and young people continue to experience inconsistencies and a postcode lottery in terms of their care and protection.

2) Failing to engage

It was clear from the evidence gathered that there was a lack of awareness and understanding from some professionals on how to engage with children and young people.

Of the call for evidence submissions from voluntary sector organisations, 61% noted a lack of awareness and understanding from statutory agencies particularly social care, health, education and the police on how to engage effectively with children and young people. This has contributed to children and young people slipping through the net.

Specialist organisations, particularly working with minority ethnic groups; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children and young people; disabled children and young people; and gender-specific organisations, highlighted that often statutory services have a poor understanding of the children and young people with whom they work and their specific needs. Organisations working with parents and communities are also facing similar challenges.

> *'I had to speak to a man. I don't want men to be there.'*

Statutory services were often identified as being inaccessible to children and young people and professionals failed to understand, recognise and accommodate to their individual needs, language, beliefs and feelings. This made it hard for organisations and the children and young people with whom they work to engage with statutory services.

> *'They didn't even ask me if I was OK or if it's OK to talk about it.'*

According to the dataset, lack of engagement with children and young people was a concern for 16% (23 in total) of LSCBs, and more notably, for 45% (18 in total) of police forces. However, these agencies were placing the onus for engagement on the victims.

Of the 18 police forces that stated this was an issue:

- 61% stated that children and young people were not engaging with their services
- 56% were concerned with the lack of disclosure from victims
- 56% stated that there was a lack of cooperation from victims
- 50% stated that some victims did not believe they were in need of support and they did not know how to address this issue.

These police forces and LSCBs did not know how to address these barriers. Even in police force areas where the Inquiry observed some exemplary practice, we found that they were still struggling to engage with victims from specific groups and communities.

3) Lack of leadership

Without local and national leadership, dedicated professionals will work in a vacuum as they try to protect children and young people. During an Inquiry workshop, all participants called for strong direction from central government. They emphasised:

- child sexual exploitation is primarily a child protection issue

- there are many patterns of child sexual exploitation and all warrant attention
- several equality issues, in addition to race and ethnicity, need to be considered when developing work on sexual exploitation including gender, sexual orientation and disability
- in order to prevent sexual exploitation, every education institution has to provide effective sex and relationships education embedded in a whole-school approach to child protection.

On behalf of the Government, the Minister for Policing and Crime has established a National Strategic Group on Sexual Violence against Children and Young People, supported by a group of experts. It has stated its determination to tackle CSE and is demonstrating its commitment to dealing with the above issues amongst others.

In addition to funding independent sexual violence advocates, rape crisis centres, and a national teenage relationship abuse campaign, over the past two years different government departments have funded a range of initiatives to tackle CSE, including:

- 13 young people's advocates to work with young people affected by sexual violence and living in gang-affected neighbourhoods funded by the Home Office
- a separate national programme of advocates, coordinated by Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Violence (CAADA), to support young people affected by all forms of violence (including sexual violence), funded by the Department for Education
- specialist foster care placements for victims of child sexual exploitation and trafficking, to be developed by Barnardo's, with funding from the Department for Education
- online training on child sexual exploitation and on trafficking, funded by Department of Health
- online training on trafficking, funded by the Home Office
- training on sexual violence and exploitation, including that which is gang-associated, commissioned and funded by the Home Office.

While these initiatives demonstrate a welcome focus by government departments on child sexual exploitation, and commitment to address it, there is still a lack of inter-departmental coordination to ensure these activities are well targeted and effectively linked into child protection procedures and local safeguarding arrangements. A review of the various initiatives being funded by the Government should be undertaken in order to ensure services are not duplicated and that programmes are complementary, coordinated and adequately funded. Furthermore, it would be helpful for the Government to communicate to voluntary and community sector agencies working with violence against women and girls, child sexual exploitation, missing, and serious youth violence, about the range of activities it is funding to ensure all agencies are fully informed and are able to work together effectively.

The issue of national leadership provided by the Government is therefore being partially addressed but would greatly benefit from improved coordination. Fundamentally, the Government must not lose sight of the fact that child sexual exploitation is a child protection matter and the important role of the Department for Education must be emphasised.

The local picture is not as encouraging and the Inquiry became aware of too many examples of ineffective and disjointed local leadership with agencies taking the lead in an ad hoc way often driven by the passion and determination of one individual:

- in some areas the police had assumed leadership for tacking child sexual exploitation (funding 16 local child sexual exploitation coordinators)
- in others it was children's services (funding 17 local child sexual exploitation coordinators)
- in others the LSCB (and all agencies on it) were leading the response
- in others a local sexual exploitation project would be working alone, without the strategic backing of the local authority.

A matrix model of local leadership is required which clearly sets out the agency which has lead responsibility for the diverse aspects of child sexual abuse: awareness-raising; child protection; enforcement; justice; on-going care; health and wellbeing and community initiatives. There must be one over-arching lead to drive the local response.

Professionals told us that many agencies simply ignored the glaring reality that there were sexually-exploited children and young people within their local area. The evidence we found was compelling: where there are committed local leaders who do not flinch from the grim reality of child sexual exploitation, children and young people are much more likely to be effectively protected.

4) No strategic planning

Responses to the Inquiry dataset show that 43% of LSCBs do not have a strategy to tackle child sexual exploitation. The absence of a joint strategy results in differing approaches and conflicting priorities between local agencies. Participants at the Inquiry workshop emphasised the importance of both a national and local strategy to tackle child sexual exploitation.

The Government, Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), Local Government Association (LGA) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have led the way in the development of national strategic plans to tackle CSE.

It is important to agree a joint local strategy. Once agencies have an idea of the nature of the problem in their local area, a strategy ensures that everyone travels in the same direction. They can then work together to prevent and end the sexual exploitation of children and young people.

5) In denial

'People should have thought of these questions…'

Many people who should be protecting children and young people remain in denial that the problem exists despite the mounting public, political and media interest in child sexual exploitation.

Voluntary sector agencies working with victims reported through the call for evidence that one of the most significant barriers identified was resistance from statutory agencies.

Responses to the dataset show that three LCSBs did not consider child sexual exploitation to be an individual strategic priority. Thirty three of those that do exclude that perpetrated by street gangs or groups.

Site visits uncovered misconceptions around CSE in gang and group contexts. These included: ignoring links between a child or young person being abused at home and then subsequently exploited; the denial that street gangs exist or that, if they do, they do not sexually exploit anyone; and forgetting that children and young people can be both victims and perpetrators of sexual exploitation.

During a site visit, two youth workers told the Inquiry about a girl with whom they had been working. She was being pressured by her male peers into sexual activity while she was under the influence of alcohol. The workers said they considered this to be a type of sexual exploitation. They had not been able to refer it to the sexual exploitation team because this was outside that team's remit.

Evidence gathered during Phase 2 site visit

Worryingly, we also heard of professionals who dismiss what a child is telling them about what they are suffering because it doesn't fit in with their pre-conceived notion of what constitutes child sexual exploitation. Allegations that surface from other sources are similarly disregarded.

Ending Gang Violence Areas: dataset summary

Given the concerns around the lack of identification/focus on CSE within a gang context a specific review of the LSCB returns for the Ending Gang Violence (EGV) areas was undertaken. A review of practice in 32 of the 33 EGV areas was possible. This raised a number of concerns with regards to gang-based CSE. Despite the national attention the problem has attracted, local practice clearly requires significant development.

Evidence showed:

- All LSCBs agreed that CSE is a priority but two excluded gangs-based CSE from this prioritisation as CSE in this context had not been identified in these areas to date.
- Only 11 LSCBs have a strategy that incorporates CSE in all its forms and includes gangs (18 are planning activity, three did not indicate any plans to do so).
- Only two LSCBs produced a CSE strategy linked to its local gangs strategy. One of these also linked it to their strategies on violent extremism, youth offending, self-harming and missing strategies.
- Only nine LSCBs suggested that they had profiled CSE in their area, two of which did not include gang-based CSE. An additional 19 were planning activity.
- Only nine LSCBs indicated that they are collecting prevalence data on gang-associated CSE. 11 are not collecting any data on CSE. The rest are seeking to collect data across all forms but are not able to distinguish gang-associated CSE within it.
- Only nine LSCBs said that they had an ending gang violence multi-agency team in place.
- Seven LSCBs said they classified gang membership as an indicator of CSE and seek to collate data around this in order to identify CSE victims.
- Four LSCBs had not delivered any training on CSE although some activity was being planned. Three LSCBs had provided training but it focused exclusively on sole perpetrator CSE.

Evidence gathered from Phase 2 LSCB dataset request

6) Failure to recognise

Turning a blind eye to child sexual exploitation stems from misconceptions and misinterpretations about to the nature of abuse.

Responses to the Inquiry dataset reveal the patchy understanding of child sexual exploitation around the country.

- Only 35% of LSCBs have analysed or developed a 'problem-profile' (detailed picture) of child sexual exploitation in their local area. Of these, 41% have not included street gangs, and 31% have not included groups, in the profile that they have developed.
- Limited attempts have been made to identify street gangs involved in sexual exploitation. Although 21 police forces have identified 323 street gangs,[4] only 16 of these gangs have been associated with cases of child sexual exploitation. Of these, only 12 were being targeted through intelligence-gathering operations. Only two forces[5] had logged those females linked to gang members, despite the recommendation made by the Inquiry in its Interim Report.

During site visits and other meetings with professionals we repeatedly came up against worrying prejudices that prevented professionals from recognising both victims and perpetrators when they did not conform to their preconceptions.

> During a site visit, a police force demonstrated how they mine their intelligence database to look for cases of child sexual exploitation. During the presentation, the Inquiry was shown a list of search terms that the police used to find victims or perpetrators who might be on their systems. Terms on the list included 'missing', 'girl', and 'Asian male'. We asked the force what cases they had identified using these search terms. They said all of them involved groups of Asian males.
>
> *Evidence gathered during a Phase 2 site visit*

> During a meeting with two health workers, the Inquiry asked about the profile of perpetrators in the local area. We were told that they were exclusively 'Asian males'. We asked the workers to talk us through one of their live cases. They said the victim had first been exploited in school by her peers, who were all white boys. She was then exploited by an older boyfriend who was an Asian man in his twenties. Following this, she was exploited by an older white man who filmed her having sex with his friends. She was then exploited by a group of older Asian men who sold her at parties. Finally, an older white man, who was addicted to drugs, exploited her. He took her to the homes of much older, disabled men, and sold her to pay for his drug habit.
>
> These health workers had mentally screened out the white perpetrators.
>
> *Example given at a meeting during Phase 2 of the Inquiry*

4 May include some double counting as some street gangs will affect more than one locality.

5 Eight forces indicated that they had undertaken some form of partial activity in this area.

7) Working in isolation

Misconceptions about child sexual exploitation occur when various agencies and services fail to work together.

When organisations and sectors work independently of each other, they fail to arrive at a comprehensive picture of the problem in their local area. Evidence submitted during Phase 2 demonstrated the importance of child sexual exploitation coordinators forming and maintaining partnerships between different agencies.

It is concerning, therefore, that close to a third (32%) of LSCBs have no plans to appoint a child sexual exploitation coordinator. Other evidence came to light showing how agencies are failing to collaborate.

- Only 6% of LSCBs embedded child sexual exploitation in their tackling of gang and serious youth violence.
- Nearly half of all child sexual exploitation sub-groups (46%) had no specific representatives from sexual health services. Housing services were represented on only a quarter (25%) of the sub-groups.
- Only 23% of LSCB areas have a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (focal point for information-sharing teams known as a MASH) to identify child sexual exploitation cases.
- 57% of LSCBs, 55% of police forces and 31% of call for evidence submissions stated that an inability to share information acted as a barrier to safeguarding children from sexual exploitation.
- As the age of a potential victim increases, the likelihood that health services will share information with other safeguarding agencies decreases. Of the agencies responding, 78% said they would share info when approached around a potential victim who was aged 10 to 13, 9% of those said that their decision to share would be different if the individual was aged 13 to 15 years old and 19% said it would be different if they were aged 16 to 18.

The Inquiry has acquired its extensive understanding of CSE by listening to children and young people and the agencies that work with them. Youth offending teams; youth service projects; sexual health agencies; housing providers; the violence against women and girls sector; and the specialist voluntary sector organisations and projects, amongst others, all hold information on sexual exploitation that is not held by the police, children's services and CSE projects.

Each sector views child sexual exploitation through its own lens. It is only by combining the intelligence held by all of them that the true nature of the sexual exploitation of children in gangs and groups can be pieced together.

In many instances these difficulties are compounded by limited and incompatible IT systems which impede information-sharing and effective communication between agencies.

8) Delayed response

The Inquiry's Interim Report (Berelowitz et al, 2012) urged agencies to be proactive in finding victims of child sexual exploitation, rather than waiting for young people to tell someone that they are being abused. We made a recommendation that:

> *All directors of children's services, the chief medical officer, directors of public health and chief constables, the Royal Colleges, Police and Crime Commissioners, and the Department for Education, the Crown Prosecution Service and Chief Crown Prosecutors, should circulate the warning signs of child sexual exploitation to all professionals who come into contact with children and young people, and ensure they understand and act on them.*

Every area was also urged to map (locate and log the connections of) girls associated with gangs. However, responses to the Inquiry dataset demonstrate that:

- only two police forces have comprehensively mapped girls and young women associated with street gangs while a further eight have undertaken some partial mapping
- only eight police forces were able to evidence their use of behaviour orders to stop cases of child sexual exploitation in gangs and/or groups
- delays are further aggravated in some areas by bureaucratic and time consuming processes often driven by agency procedural requirements.

One local authority observed that the key for successful intervention is designated oversight and without this, work becomes an addition on top of other work commitments. They highlighted that in their local authority there has been an increase in demand for feedback and consultations and this has been time consuming. They noted the absence of standard reporting tools/recording data as often information is requested in a number of ways which would ameliorate this process.

Evidence gathered from a Phase 2 call for evidence submission

9) Results not monitored

The Inquiry call for evidence collected 121 evaluations of child sexual exploitation interventions since 1998. There were 85 organisations represented in these evaluations of which 92% were led by voluntary sector agencies. Responses to the call for evidence and dataset indicate that statutory agencies are failing to check whether their actions are working. Furthermore, there is no common agreement among agencies as to what they are trying to achieve.

- The 22 police submissions that responded to the call for evidence named over 40 objectives that they were striving to meet. However, there was no agreement between forces as to which of these should take priority. The most common, mentioned by half of the respondents, was arresting perpetrators and bringing them to justice.
- Between January 2009 and December 2012 only 12% of LSCBs received notifications of potential Serious Case Reviews. Only 35% of these Boards acted upon cases involving groups. Not a single Board took forward cases that involved gangs.
- While 84% of LSCBs said that agencies in their area used a detailed risk assessment when a potential victim was identified, the quality of these varied considerably. Some employed the standard common assessment framework (30%). Others used local child sexual exploitation assessments (52%). 33% used a whole host of others. The lack of a common assessment leaves

the potential for different areas to measure risk differently, and therefore measure their success rates differently.

- There is still a lack of agreed indicators and evaluative measures between agencies working within specific localities.

Given that so many areas are only now developing a response to CSE, it is perhaps not surprising that so few have evaluated their effectiveness. However, at a time when resources are limited, it is important that the actions local areas put into place are monitored regularly to ensure the effectiveness of their outputs in safeguarding children and young people.

In addition, few local areas are monitoring the impact that this work is having on their staff. It is concerning, therefore, that 71% of LSCBs are unaware of any support mechanisms in place to protect the welfare of professionals who are working with both victims and perpetrators of child sexual exploitation, including, in some cases, children and young people who are both victims and perpetrators.

A number of agencies said that a lack of resources was a significant barrier to effective practice. While budget reductions are a fact of life, we saw substantial variations across England of the apportionment of resources and clear evidence of effective service delivery within the context of reduced budgets.

The Inquiry was concerned about the reductions to voluntary sector grants as these agencies were often the only dedicated CSE service in a locality and the withdrawal of the grant meant the complete loss of the service.

Poor practice is expensive in monetary terms and because of its impact on children and young people. Applying sound evidence-based practice is the best way to ensure resources are utilised efficiently and achieve the desired outcomes.

Summary

In this section of the report we have identified nine key barriers and failings that continue to impede the identification and protection of victims of CSE and the disruption of perpetrator activities. It is imperative that these are tackled urgently.

In the next section, we set out evidence of those approaches that have led to effective practice.

Part B: How some children have been protected – what is working

'The team and everything they did. It's more the fact that they got to know us. Not force it out of us but they got to know us. Built that relationship and um… obviously when we felt we could trust them, we bring it out and told them what is going on. It's better than the fact that "Oh. I just met you. Tell me what is going on". It was building that relationship that was nice.'

In Part B of Chapter 1, we examine what is working in more detail. We look at examples of where CSE is being tackled successfully and which provide supportive evidence to the **See Me, Hear Me** Framework set out in Chapter 2. This Framework encapsulates the good practice identified in this chapter and needs to be applied around the country.

We have learned much from those areas and agencies that are being proactive in protecting and caring for victims and disrupting and apprehending the perpetrators.

As a result of our evidence gathering, we identified nine key foundations of good practice that have contributed to exemplary approaches to protecting children and young people against exploitation at the hands of gangs and groups.

Figure 4: Essential foundations for good practice

1) Focus on the child

The child should be at the centre of any professional decision making regarding their safety, welfare, care and protection. Whereas 97% of submissions from the voluntary sector explicitly mentioned placing the child at the centre of their approaches and services, this was only referenced in 21% of submissions from statutory services.

The limitations of fixed-term interventions were identified in the site visits and workshops. In addition, 11% of agencies submitting to the call for evidence were concerned about the lack of follow-up and continuity of interventions and care. The protection of victims and their on-going support should not been seen as a quick fix, lasting just three to six months.

It is important that professionals are given the time and space to focus on supporting children and young people, and focus on their individual needs and equalities. Dataset and call for evidence

submissions highlighted how conflicting priorities impeded effective practice. Often this was the inevitable result of limited or insufficient resources, a reason cited as a key factor in 38% of call for evidence submissions, 50% of police and 32% of LSCB dataset submissions as a significant barrier to practice. 18% of police and 10% of LSCB submissions to the dataset identified difficulties in managing conflicting priorities within their given resource base.

11% of the sample of LSCBs which responded to the University of Bedfordshire's *What's Going on?* data collection (Jago et al, 2011) indicated that the availability or planning towards the establishment of a specialist service for CSE has reduced over the year and a half time period between this and the Inquiry's LSCB data capture.

We have received anecdotal reports of specialist services closing down due to lack of funds. However, this has not been quantified. Often these services are already oversubscribed and once they close, the children and young people using their services have nowhere to turn.

In Phase 2 we heard from a project currently working alongside a CSE police operation. This project is now supporting the young people involved in this operation. Intelligence on the abuse was partly uncovered via activities run by the project with young people. They have been running their services without support from their local authority and they have stated that it is their commitment to the young people caught up in CSE that is preventing them from withdrawing their services. However, this project has failed to secure funding for the next financial year and unless they are able to, they will have to cease running the service. This will mean that they will have to stop supporting the young people in the middle of the police operation.

Evidence gathered from the Phase 2 Call for Evidence Submission

In contrast, the Inquiry observed an example of a response coordinated by a specialist sexual exploitation service, that is working.

SECOS is a **Barnardo's** CSE service that has been in place for over a decade, sticking by young people for as long as is necessary and meeting their individual needs at every stage. SECOS provides:

- emergency accommodation (two, two bedded shared properties and seven independent living flats) in partnership with local housing providers
- decisive outreach into known and new CSE hotspots
- individual and group awareness-raising
- individual therapeutic work with victims
- independent sexual violence advocates to support victims through court proceedings and/or ensuring healing/recovery/support work is made available to them
- work with young people to explore the influence of the media and music, using art and other creative methods for young people to question harmful ideas/stereotypes.

Under strong leadership, members of staff build steadfast and enduring relationships with the children and young people they support, speaking up for them and seeing them through to a safe place.

The Inquiry often came across cases where too much emphasis was placed on a victim making an upfront, full disclosure about the sexual exploitation they had endured. This was particularly evident in police forces with 26% recording a lack of disclosure as a barrier to taking protective and enforcement action.

However we saw examples of more sympathetic and responsive approaches where the professionals were highly attuned to the non-verbal cues being given by victims as well as being alert to the signs children and young people show when they are either at risk or are already victims of CSE.

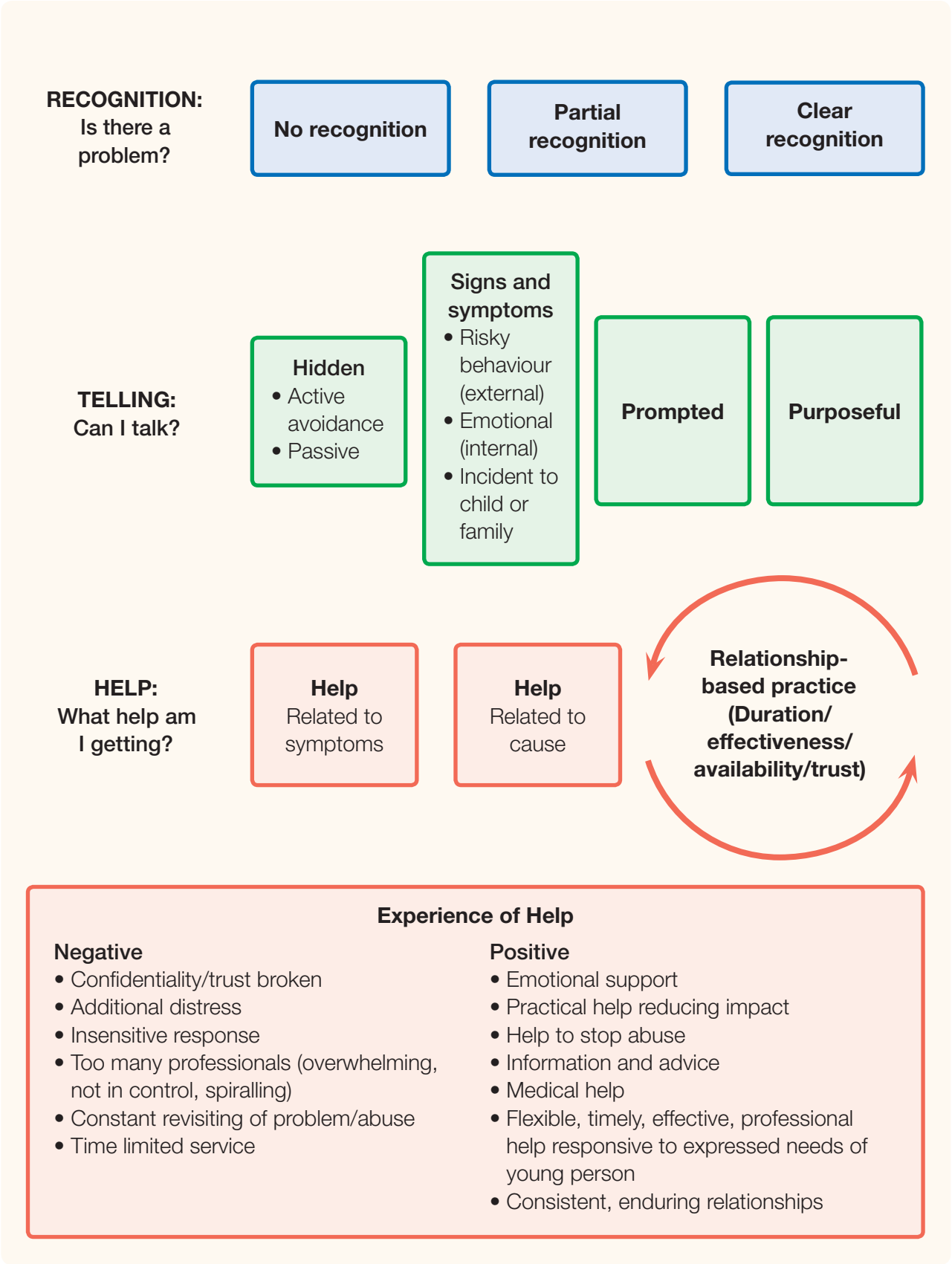
It is important to create the conditions at school, at home and in the wider social context in which everyone is alert to the signs that a child may be at risk or is a victim and that there is a climate of belief and respect that gives the child or young person the confidence to tell a trusted person about their experience.

> *'I thought it was normal. I thought I was having fun. They opened my eyes to what was happening.'*

The Office of the Children's Commissioner recently published a report setting out the evidence for the critical nature of the above approach (Cossar et al, 2013). This research was prompted by a concern to improve access to protection and support for children and young people at risk of harm. The findings from the study were used to generate a conceptual framework for understanding recognition, telling and help from the point of view of the child or young person.

The Recognition and Telling Framework (see Figure 5) can help adults to understand what might be going on for a child or young person who comes to their attention because of their behaviour. A child or young person might not recognise their situation as abusive and there are many reasons why they do not tell or may deny there is a problem. The individual child or young person's pathway through the Recognition and Telling Framework is not necessarily linear: their progress may not be solely from the top level (recognition) towards the bottom (receiving help) and individuals can follow different pathways including reaching 'dead-ends' in the process, when for example, adults do not pick up on the signs or do not believe them.

Figure 5: Recognition and Telling Framework



Using the Recognition and Telling Framework can assist practitioners to understand the barriers to recognition and telling for a child or young person and to be mindful that telling is emotionally difficult and maybe tentative and delayed. Children and young people may be encouraged to talk about their experiences if they have built a trusting relationship with a professional who shows concern and is sensitive and persistent.

Cossar et al's research (2013) found that recognition often occurs as a result of conversations with others: it does not always happen before telling or receiving help, but can also be a result of help received. This links the Recognition and Telling Framework to one developed by the Women and Girls Network (WGN) (see Figure 6).

Crucially Cossar et al's (2013) research emphasises how important it is not to rely on verbal means of telling but to respond sensitively to signs of problems.

2) Gaining a child's or young person's confidence

> '[We] *built a relationship and they got to know us and when we felt trust we told them what was going on.'*

We have examined examples of practice which have built an informed and supportive environment that enabled children and young people to have the confidence to come forward to talk to professionals when they are worried. Of voluntary sector submissions to the call for evidence, 52% highlighted the importance of building positive relationships and trust when working with children and young people.

It is important to create the conditions at school, at home and in wider society in which everyone is alert to the signs that a child or young person may be at risk or is a victim of CSE and that there is a climate of belief and respect for them that gives them the confidence to tell a trusted person about their experience. This is illustrated by the Jimmy Saville revelations, which resulted in people opening up and knowing they would be believed, having kept their experiences of abuse secret for decades.

The WGN has a specific treatment model to meet the needs of children and young people who have experienced sexual violence. They seek to address the impact of trauma and build a child or young person's confidence by:

- providing interventions to minimise trauma
- providing age-specific interventions, as children and young people experience, express and manifest the impact of trauma in different ways according to developmental and chronological age
- addressing their additional vulnerabilities and stressors that may impact on the traumatic experience and management of recovery e.g. family situation, gang association, disabilities, cultural harmful practices and minority ethnic communities.The WGN has developed the following framework to address these issues.

Figure 6: Women and Girl's Network therapeutic model

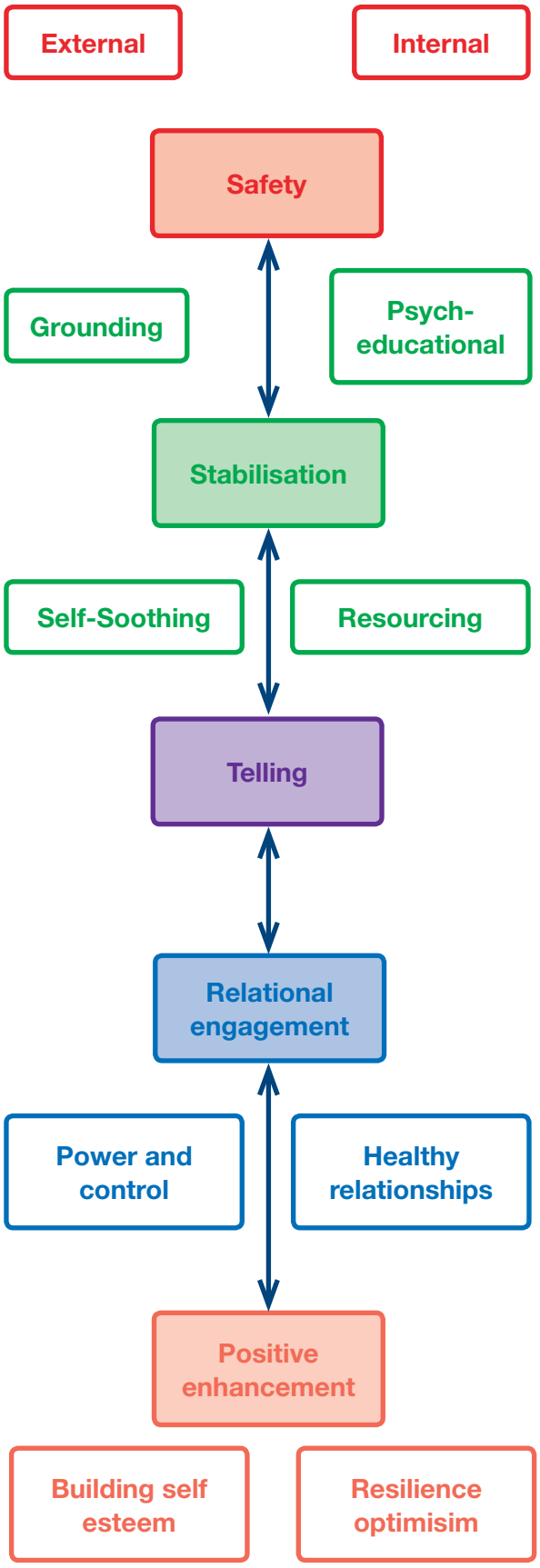
Exploration of external threats i.e. continued CSE, gang involvement and or reprisal from gang members.

Stabilisation facilitates control of emotions and thoughts, using grounding techniques to manage stress and self-soothing/care to develop positive ways to deal with distress.

Disclosure of events is a key task to support young women's recovery and aids with locating responsibility with the perpetrator and ensures a shift from self-blame and shame.

By focusing on power and control in relationships aids understanding the subtle and range of controlling and coercive behaviours. The development of conflict resolution strategies, pro social communication and emotional intelligence are vital life skills to protect against future abuse.

Positive enhancement optimises self-protective factors i.e. positive self-belief and competency which builds self-esteem and a confident future orientation.



Creating internal safety to enable young women to identify the possible threats and risks to self, e.g. self-harming.

Psycho-educational work facilitates young women's understanding of the tactics of perpetrators and address issues of responsibility. Additionally, to explain and normalises trauma responses.

Resourcing enables young women to gain a sense of mastery and competency generating a positive sense of self, with the identification of signature strengths.

Relational engagement involves the exploration and development of boundaries in relationships with peers, family and others. The understanding and identification of unhealthy relationships contrasted with healthy relationships helps to develop a confidence and control in asserting rights and needs in relationships.

Development of internal and external resilience to promote a positive adaptation to withstand risky environments, whilst creating a sense of optimism is good for positive mental health.

'Sometimes you are feeling better and have built up your self-confidence. But then something happens and you feel afraid and feel down and are afraid to tell someone. That is why they should stick with you…'

The Inquiry recognises that a child or young person is unlikely to be taken systematically through all the stages outlined by the previous examples.

For example, they might have reached the stage after sexual exploitation where rebuilding their life is their primary focus. Then a new threat comes along, in which case it might be back to square one and their safety becomes the priority.

The **See Me, Hear Me Framework** (see Chapter 2) sets out a gradual and logical stage-by-stage approach towards rescuing a vulnerable or exploited child or young person and returning them to a safe life.

3) Leadership

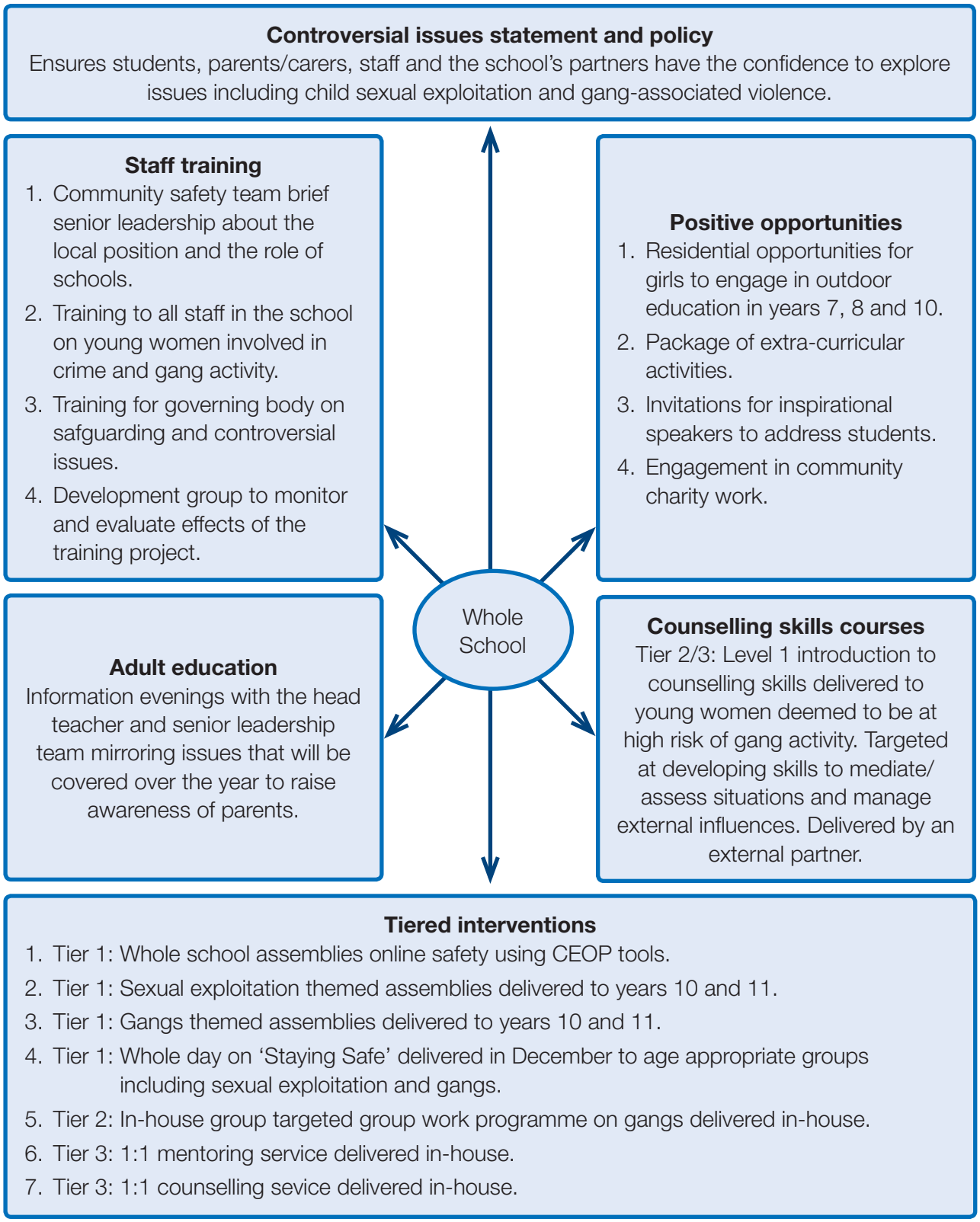
Child sexual exploitation is tackled effectively – from prevention to protection, enforcement, securing justice and long-term recovery – when there is clear and committed leadership that imports unambiguous messages stressing the importance of doing this work.

Data collected from LSCBs show that 77% of key agencies have appointed a lead CSE professional. Whereas the police routinely provides leads for CSE, under half of LSCBs have CSE leads from education and youth offending teams. It is clear that further work is required to ensure universal coverage in this area.

The Inquiry also notes that both ACPO and the CPS have appointed child sexual exploitation leads in each region/force area. These steps make it easier for agencies in each area to collaborate in tackling child sexual exploitation. Consequently, professionals have a sense of direction as they carry out their work.

We came across one school where leadership from the head teacher and school governors ensures a 'whole-school approach' to protecting children and young people (involving the whole school community – teachers, parents, pupils, governors etc.).

Figure 7: Flixton Girls' School approach to protecting children and young people from CSE



Under the leadership of the head teacher, and with the support of governors and parents, this all-girls secondary academy has taken a whole-school approach to tackling controversial issues including sexual exploitation. The school has published a controversial issues statement and policy outlining its approach and commitment to safeguarding students. The Inquiry found that young people at Flixton Girls' School were aware of and understood the risks they might face associated with CSE. They felt able to talk to a member of staff and staff were able to identify risk factors.

4) Strategic planning

Having established the nature of sexual exploitation in their area, decision makers can develop a strategy to respond to it.

The evidence shows that most parts of the country are drawing up a strategic response to CSE. The Inquiry welcomes the fact that 98% of LSCBs consider sexual exploitation to be a strategic priority and that this is echoed by 87% of police forces.

According to responses to the dataset:

- 91% of LSCBs have a child sexual exploitation sub-group in place or underway
- 47% of LSCBs have appointed a child sexual exploitation coordinator.

43 LSCBs submitted their strategies or protocols to the Inquiry dataset. During site visits, workshops and the call for evidence process other LSCBs informed us of their strategic approach. LSCBs are at different stages of developing an effective strategic position to tackle all forms of child sexual exploitation and this process enabled us to identify those that had made considerable progress.

Nine LSCBs operating across **Cheshire** and **Merseyside** police force areas have sought to coordinate activity and develop a harmonised CSE strategy. In most of the individual areas the CSE strategy has also been linked with their 'missing' strategy and enables consistency in approach to be developed. The strategy covers the following five themes; self-assessment, prevention, safeguarding, bringing offenders to justice and governance.

The Inquiry is encouraged by the national leadership being shown by ACPO regarding the formulation of a national action plan to tackle CSE and a related task and finish group which is monitoring and overseeing its delivery. This has already resulted in every force having an appointed CSE lead and local action plans and is helping to bring greater consistency to service delivery and local planning in this area.

5) Everyone on alert

'I didn't know what was happening. I thought it was normal. I thought they were my friends.'

A child gains confidence in the system when professionals, children and the public at large know what child sexual exploitation is all about and understand the impact that it can have on a child.

The Inquiry saw first-hand how to raise the awareness of communities, professionals and children and young people through campaigns and training.

38% of LSCBs have or plan to run awareness-raising programmes for parents and carers on how to spot the early signs of child sexual exploitation. 46% have carried out awareness-raising activity directed at young people; 78% have delivered awareness-raising programmes for professionals; and just over half (53%) of health agencies we contacted told us they had provided staff training on how to identify children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

Of the health agencies that we questioned, 90% said that they had measures in place to identify sexually exploited children and young people, although only 25% of these measures were specific to

CSE. Elsewhere, CSE was registered under broader safeguarding measures. 58% of health agencies had disseminated tools to staff to help them identify sexually exploited children and young people.

The Inquiry learned of one local campaign involving officials and the public working together.

Camden local authority helped parents set up a 'Stop Sexual Exploitation' campaign aimed at other parents and carers in the borough. Campaign members put up posters on local buses and at tube stations highlighting the main warning signs of CSE and giving details of a webpage providing further information. Also, local parents wrote leaflets and designed special key rings, each bearing the same warnings, to help parents open up conversations with their children about staying safe.

Given that some exploitation takes place at or via local businesses, some local agencies are working to alert transport hubs, shopping centres, hotels and off-licenses on how to look out for the signs of child sexual exploitation and 13% of LSCBs carried out awareness-raising sessions with local businesses and/or community groups.

Protect and Respect is bespoke service run by the NSPCC for young people aged 11–19 years who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation or who have been sexually exploited. In addition to the individually tailored support they provide to children and young people, they also train professionals in a multi-agency setting, and provide awareness-raising to parents, as well as engaging the local Muslim community through seminars at a Mosque.

Other local initiatives having an impact include **Say something if you see something** and **Just Whistle**.

As well as working with local neighbourhoods and businesses, it is imperative that professionals understand and spot child sexual exploitation. 75% of LSCBs said they had provided, or planned to provide, professionals with training in how to spot children who are experiencing, or are at risk from, all forms of child sexual exploitation. 62% said they were doing this in training programmes on preventing child sexual exploitation. In addition 87% of police forces (all but four) have provided some level of training on handling child sexual exploitation, while the remaining four said they had training planned.

Understanding that there are various patterns of sexual exploitation and how best to respond to them is crucial in ensuring that every victim can be found and safeguarded – not just those who experience commonly recognised patterns of abuse. The Inquiry identified at least 13 different types of CSE involving gangs and groups as Figure 8 illustrates, although this list is not exhaustive. (Further details of each type can be found in Appendix 2).

Figure 8: Types of child sexual exploitation by gangs and groups

6) Spotting the warning signs

Increased knowledge and understanding of sexual exploitation will in turn improve the recognition of cases. Agencies that are on the lookout for warning signs identify more children and young people than those who rely on a child or young person coming forward and disclosing the abuse.

In the Inquiry's Interim Report (Berelowitz et al, 2012) we published two lists: one identified children who were particularly vulnerable to being sexually exploited; the other listed the warning signs that a child or young person is being abused (see Appendix 3). 70% of health agencies that responded to the dataset said they had distributed these lists to their staff. Of the remaining agencies, 18% said they were planning to do so.

Barnardo's (Paskell and LGA, 2012) have reported that whenever they open a sexual exploitation service, more victims are identified. As a result of their awareness-raising training for multi-agency

professionals, they noted an increase in identification of victims and children and young people at risk. They highlighted one case where, as a result of services being improved because of their training, there was a five-fold increase in a period of three months of children and young people being identified as being at risk.

Similarly an LSCB submitted information about a project that was developed to offer awareness-raising about CSE and intensive individual support for victims. Shortly after the project began, the profile of CSE across the area increased and agencies became more aware of the issues. As a result referrals to the project increased and demand for awareness training escalated. An organised CSE gang was uncovered in the local area. This resulted in further referrals to the project, which was the only specialist CSE service in the city.

9% of LSCBs reported that they have no known cases of children and young people being sexually exploited by gangs or groups. A number of these had a paucity of specialist voluntary service provision. 34% of LSCBs also cited limited victim identification as a broader barrier which they experience.

7) Joined-up working

Responses to the dataset showed that 46% of LSCBs had linked strategies with neighbouring Boards. This was particularly the case between Boards that fell within the same police force area. Working in partnership, both within and between agencies, was found to be an effective approach identifying victims of CSE and providing a comprehensive approach to tackling this area.

We will set out below some of the exemplary examples of joined-up working.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH)

Bringing together a number of agencies including police, children's and health services under one roof ('co-location'), a MASH can combine the expertise and resources of several bodies in order to identify children and young people who are at risk of child sexual exploitation and refer them to the appropriate agency for action and support.

During the Inquiry, MASHs have been set up around the country.

- 23% of LSCBs reported having a MASH in their area
- 18% have one under development
- 28% planned to introduce a MASH.

During Inquiry site visits and workshops, we were told of the role of the MASH in the initial identification and referral of sexually exploited children and young people.

In one local area the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is led by the police. It includes children's and health services and other agencies working together to assess safeguarding referrals. This improved information-sharing so that multi-agency assessments can be undertaken in one place. A multi-agency, rather than a single-agency, assessment is conducted. This is then referred to the appropriate agency for action. The work of the MASH is linked to that of the area's missing children, domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation coordinators. The MASH takes in many cases beyond the remit of CSE, for example numerous domestic abuse referrals. The hub therefore acts as an initial point of assessment but does not handle individual cases.

Evidence gathered from a call for evidence submission and the Inquiry workshop

This process means that professionals have a single referral point where information is collated and then shared. For example, a MASH can bring together data on children who:

- are reported missing from home or care
- repeatedly attend sexual health clinics
- have committed offences.

Having compiled this information, risks can be identified and a referral made.

Such coordination is particularly important for children and young people who face, or potentially face, several different risks. For example, they might be missing from home, be at risk of sexual exploitation and be gang-associated. A MASH would streamline the initial referral process for the relevant agency.

However, a MASH deals with a range of safeguarding issues other than child sexual exploitation and their remit extends beyond children and young people.

In the absence of a MASH there needs to be another on-the-ground multi-agency team to which an individual child can be referred and which can decide what action to take to support the victim and help bring the perpetrator(s) to justice.

The MASHs are an encouraging development, though the following were identified as impeding effective practice in some areas:

- absence of joined up IT systems
- relevant agencies being absent i.e. education/schools only have a presence in 50% of MASHs, voluntary sector only in 10% and health representation is also patchy.

Vulnerable Adolescents/Young People's Panels

In some areas, a MASH can refer cases to a Vulnerable Adolescents/Young People's Panel, particularly when a sexually exploited child or young person faces other risks such as gang-association or honour-based violence.

Children and young people who are sexually exploited tend to be aged ten and over. The exploitation generally takes place outside the family. The Inquiry heard repeatedly that this resulted in sexual exploitation cases not meeting the threshold for statutory children's services to take action.

In other instances, sexually exploited children and young people were experiencing more than one form of abuse. For example, they might be at risk of forced marriage, while at the same time being sexually exploited. As a result, sexual exploitation was not the main cause for concern when the case was referred to professionals and so it was ignored.

Some local children's services departments have set up a Vulnerable Adolescents or Young People's Panel to close these gaps and to identify vulnerable children and young people and come up with a plan of action to help them.

The panels can also review cases being dealt with by voluntary bodies and refer them up to children's social care which can then take protective action.

Ealing Children's Social Care Department has a Vulnerable Adolescents Panel chaired by the Director of Children's Services. Several agencies sit on the panel, which meets every six weeks to discuss its most complex cases. The panel agrees actions to be taken in each case and monitors and reviews progress until the desired outcomes are achieved. The fact that the Director of Children's Services chairs the panel ensures that there is accountability, commitment and strategic leadership in the safeguarding of young people within the local authority.

The establishment of a multi-agency forum has been included as a necessity for tackling CSE precisely because some sexually exploited children and young people face dangers from multiple sources.

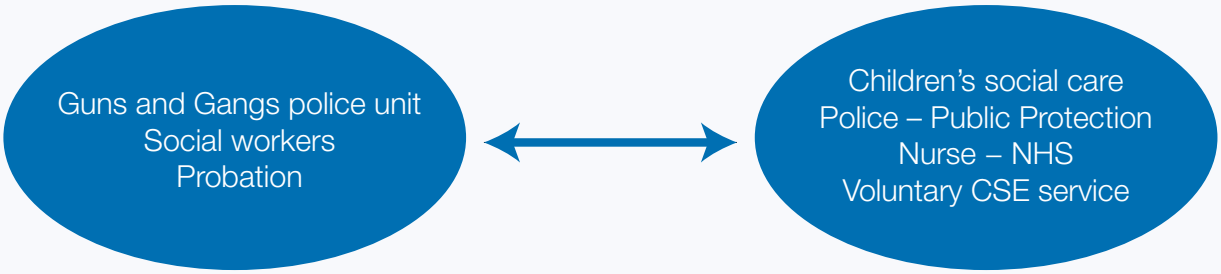
In addition to strategic groups, the Inquiry observed effective multi-agency collaboration on individual cases of child sexual exploitation. This enabled specialist, and often voluntary sector, interventions to work directly with a sexually exploited child or young people, with the support of the wider child protection system and other statutory agencies. Some areas chose to do this through co-located teams.

The **Messenger Partnership** is a strategic partnership which has been formed between the police, the council, the NHS Foundation Trust and a local voluntary sector CSE service. A multi-agency operational group that meets fortnightly, and involves all key agencies in the local area oversees the partnership. The partnership funds a CSE co-located team that includes:

- 1.68 FTE (full time equivalent) CSE specialist voluntary organisation project workers
- one local authority social worker
- four assigned police officers.

The police and social worker are based in the police station, while the voluntary organisation is in a separate building that children and young people can visit. All agencies work together as a team to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation.

Greater Manchester Police has brought together two co-located teams: its integrated gangs unit and its child sexual exploitation team. This has been designed to improve the identification of gang-associated young women who are being sexually exploited, having recognised that the general response to CSE might overlook gang-associated victims.



The area has seen an increase in the identification of gang-associated sexual exploitation as a result.

The Inquiry realises that co-location will not be possible for all agencies. In these instances, an effective alternative model for safeguarding children has proved to be a 'virtual partnership' (agencies that are not under the same roof, but which co-ordinate their services) by phone or online. A virtual partnership can deliver a specialist child sexual exploitation service, supported by other local agencies.

Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board oversees virtual teams operating to respond to CSE across their police force area. Referrals are received from co-located safeguarding hubs, following which either a multi-agency CSE meeting or strategy discussion will be arranged. The meeting is used to coordinate a partnership response to the referral including: an assessment of the case; decision-making about investigations; actions to meet the safeguarding and health needs of the child. Virtual requests (requests from 'virtual partnerships') from all partners are made for information pertaining to the cases. This information is shared at the earliest opportunity. Information from the meeting is circulated across the virtual partnership, with different agencies assigned to taking forward actions.

Whether local areas opt for a co-located or virtual partnership is a matter for them. However, it is imperative that one of these options is adopted, as no single agency acting alone can handle child sexual exploitation.

In addition to child sexual exploitation partnerships, many local areas will have strategic and/or operational groups to address gang-related violence, missing children and young people and vulnerable adults and/or violence against women and girls. These partnerships can provide additional support and intelligence for professionals.

The link between 'missing' children and young people and sexual exploitation is well understood by professionals. Having expertise in one of these areas encourages them to become more confident in dealing with others, as these findings show.

- 46% of LSCB strategies are linked to local strategies on children and young people missing from home and care.
- 95% of police forces said they routinely identified their most frequently missing children and young people.

- 79% of police forces collate intelligence on missing children and young people to strategically profile the local picture.
- Police forces that responded to the call for evidence reported that, after child sexual exploitation, their next priority was dealing with missing children and young people.

The Inquiry was concerned to learn that only 79% of police forces currently employ missing person coordinators. On average they employ 4.6 posts per force. Only two thirds of forces (65%) reported that their missing person coordinators had 'missing' as their sole responsibility. When we compared the number of coordinators employed by each police force to the number of children and young people reported missing in their area, we identified a disparity across police forces in terms of the workload of each coordinator. Whereas three police forces employ one coordinator for every 0–99 children and young people reported missing in a year, five police forces employ one coordinator for every 400–499 children and young people reported missing.

Site visits and call for evidence submissions demonstrated the benefits of linking work on 'missing' children and young people to that on CSE.

Safe@last supports children and young people who are missing from home or from care. The organisation offers the following services in order to reach as many children as possible.

- Universal awareness-raising in school, using games, DVDs and real-life stories.
- A local helpline.
- Interviews with any child who returns home after going missing or running away.
- A refuge for children who have no other place of safety.

The service is able to identify children and young people who are missing as a result of sexual exploitation or who, by going missing, are vulnerable to being exploited. The service works in partnership with other agencies to ensure that sexually exploited children and young people who go missing receive continuing and specialist support.

The links between gangs and serious youth violence are equally important, but rarely made:

- of the 83 LSCBs that had developed a strategy to tackle child sexual exploitation, only five (6%) linked it to a local gangs strategy
- only 25 (17%) LSCBs had a gangs multi-agency forum, 19 of which stated that they used it as a means of identifying children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

The appointment of 13 young people's sexual violence advocates in gang-affected neighbourhoods in England has demonstrated the importance of recognising the links between street gangs and child sexual exploitation. At a meeting with eight young people's sexual violence advocates, they told us that they were identifying girls and young women who are being exploited by street gangs, many of whom would not be identified through traditional responses to child sexual exploitation.

Young people's sexual violence advocates each cover one or two local authorities and deliver:

- one-to-one case work specifically for girls and young women who are sexually exploited by street gangs. Advocates report handling up to ten cases at any one time, each of varying severity
- training and awareness-raising sessions for professionals. Advocates report that the more training they give, the more professionals identify and refer cases to them
- group work with vulnerable young women – this process identifies even more victims
- strategic and operational action by local multi-agency groups covering sexual exploitation, gangs and serious youth violence and domestic abuse. Often the advocates are the only people making these links, identifying victims who would otherwise be overlooked.

Evidence gathered during an Inquiry workshop with young people's sexual violence advocates

The Inquiry notes the impact of the advocates in identifying these 'invisible' victims. It is concerned, though, that they are being relied upon to make all of the strategic and operational links between gangs and child sexual exploitation. The local authority and its partners should assume this role.

An effective response would be to clarify the role of the sexual violence advocate – for example, handling case work – and then use the intelligence resulting from their work to draw up the local strategy for tackling gangs and serious youth violence. The local training programme should then be planned accordingly.

Site visits and Inquiry workshops demonstrated the importance of partnership in order to reinforce the police response to child sexual exploitation from the moment a victim is identified to a conviction being obtained.

Of the 22 police submissions to the call for evidence, the Inquiry was encouraged to note that 16 (73%) said they were working in partnership with schools, and 12 (55%) with CSE interest groups. In terms of supporting victims through the investigation process, 32% of forces that responded to the dataset said they routinely used special measures, and 50% used them on a case-by-case basis. Responses to the call for evidence reinforced this message. Seventeen forces said that helping victims through the criminal justice process, including trials, and as they recovered from their ordeal, was how they most frequently supported children and young people. During site visits, the Inquiry panel met victims who had received on-going support from police officers throughout the investigations. One young person said: *'They saved my life'.*

8) Pre-emptive action

If the partnerships described above are in place, everyone involved should know what they are supposed to be doing. They can then take a pre-emptive approach towards protecting children. This means combining all their data, intelligence, experience and know-how to intervene much earlier when children are being sexually exploited. The early flagging-up and breaking up of the networks that exploit children should become the norm, rather than waiting to be told that a child is being exploited – by which time it is too late.

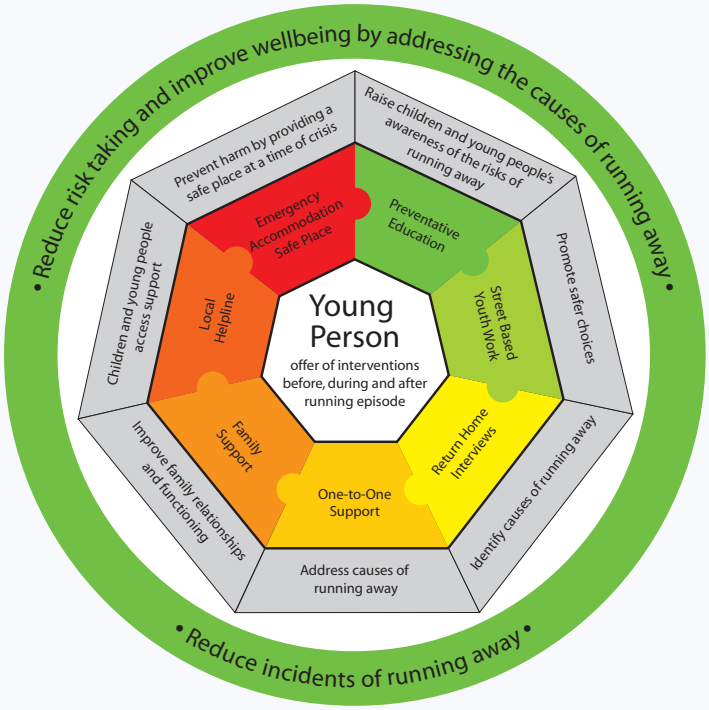
We have visited, and received evidence from police forces around the country that have highlighted the effectiveness of determinedly pursuing abusers in this way, while voluntary and safeguarding services protect children and young people.

Lancashire Police leads six co-located CSE teams. Each team collaborates to identify children displaying warning signs of child sexual exploitation and the locations/premises where abuse has taken place. This information is used to plan the action to be taken, including high-visibility and covert policing methods.

While voluntary sector agencies and children's social care, alongside health and other partners, offer support to victims and their families, action against perpetrators remains a high priority. The force uses intelligence on locations and perpetrators to work directly with hotels and other businesses to encourage them to report incidents of concern. For example, when perpetrators have tried to use hotels, the police have been called to the hotel, conducted a forensic examination of the bedding and clothes in the room and used the evidence to charge and prosecute perpetrators for sexual activity with children.

A number of police forces can build on the fact that they are monitoring both missing children and young people and those exposed to sexual exploitation. We were informed of the Reach Model developed by Railway Children, which is illustrated below.

Railway Children's Reach Model aims to reduce missing episodes and associated risks and can be used for working with victims and children and young people at risk of CSE who go missing. It has been evaluated, and although not all risks were erradicated for the 53 cases assessed, there was a improvement in the reduction of risk and missing episodes.



Submissions to the call for evidence highlighted that proactive investigation and work result in identification of victims and/or children and young people at risk. All organisations which conduct return interviews that submitted evidence emphasised how crucial they are in identifying and uncovering risks and potential victims.

71% of police forces said they would use covert operations to expose child sexual exploitation. Ten forces provided the Inquiry with examples of such operations which they consider to have been effective, one of which is outlined below.

> One police force created detailed contingency plans to assist the safeguarding of children and young people involved whilst conducting surveillance. During the operation, three interventions were required in order to safeguard young people whilst trying to protect the covert activity. On one occasion young people were removed from a risky situation using Police Protection Powers; the second involved a young person being taken home under a cover story. The third occasion led to several men being arrested. Running a covert operation and not alerting the suspects is extremely challenging.
>
> *Evidence gathered from LSCB dataset request*

Four police forces also raised questions about the risks posed to victims during covert operations. One force highlighted a risk checklist they had drawn up to be used at each stage of an undercover operation to ensure children and young people were not placed in danger as the police closed in.

> Covert activity on CSE in **West Midlands Police** involved directed surveillance for which a risk matrix had been developed. This is used by a nominated Safeguarding Detective Sergeant, working as part of the Covert Command Team under the direction of the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO). In conjunction with the SIO, the Detective Sergeant will make a risk-based decision based upon the matrix and decide when intervention is necessary. West Midlands Police is also in the process of developing a covert strategy for CSE for use by all its SIOs to enable consistency in approach.

In addition to covert activity, almost two-thirds of police forces (63%) reported that they use behaviour orders to break up CSE rings or exploitation by individual perpetrators. However only 22% could actually provide data regarding the types of order in place. This would suggest that their frequency of use is low. We received evidence of only 42 Child Abduction Warning Notices and 15 Sexual Offences Protection Orders (SOPOs) issued to date to tackle child sexual exploitation involving gangs and groups.

The Inquiry welcomes the recent proposals by Nicola Blackwood MP to strengthen existing behavioural orders when sexual offences are involved. If proposals are enacted it is important that suitable checks and reviews are put in place to monitor the implementation and effectiveness as a tactic to disrupt perpetrators and to ensure any effective practice that subsequently emerges is shared accordingly.

Call for evidence submissions demonstrated how police forces worked in partnership with housing, sexual health, social care, domestic abuse and missing children's services, alongside anti-social behaviour teams and schools, to compile intelligence on CSE and then take steps to stop it happening. The measures that can be taken are outlined below.

- Behaviour orders including abduction notices.
- Road Policing and use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology.
- Follow-up visits for potential victims and return interviews when missing.
- Use of licensing authorities and related powers.

- Covert activity including surveillance.
- Directed patrols in identified hotspot locations.
- Safety planning as part of the care and placement plans.
- Targeting of perpetrators through other known criminality (e.g. drug warrants).

A different approach is required when the perpetrator is a child or young person.

Phase 1 of the Inquiry found that 28% of identified perpetrators were children and young people (the youngest being 12 years of age), and that many young perpetrators were also victims of exploitation and abuse (Berelowitz et al, 2012).

Traditional policing methods in handling sexual exploitation by adults can involve the serving of abduction notices, and the withdrawal of its license if a business is allowing exploitation on its premises. This does not work when a child is abusing another child. In such cases, children's services and others should focus on safeguarding both, as well as taking action to stop the exploitation and support the children and young people into recovery.

9) Scrutiny and oversight

Having developed and begun to implement a strategy to tackle the sexual exploitation of children and young people, it is important that local areas review the impact of the measures they take.

Is this working for children? That is the question that needs to be asked at every stage. Scrutiny and oversight are required at a number of levels.

- National oversight and evaluation of government-commissioned interventions and policies.
- Local oversight and evaluation of strategies, interventions and the individual experiences of children and young people.

At a local level, child sexual exploitation sub-groups, supported by child sexual exploitation coordinators, can provide this oversight. Both were recommended in the Government's *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DCSF, 2009). We found that 91% of LSCBs have a CSE sub-group either in place or underway.

The Inquiry has been provided with evidence of sub-groups that effectively co-ordinate the local area response to child sexual exploitation.

The issues of gangs and child sexual exploitation are amongst the strategic level priorities for **Derby Safeguarding Children Board**. Derby has a coordinated multi-agency strategy to tackle CSE proactively, including a specialist police child sexual exploitation unit, an operational CSE lead based within the child protection unit, a specialist voluntary agency and a multi-agency gangs team that consider all forms of sexual exploitation.

Derby operates a three-pronged approach of prevention, protection and prosecution and has an equal focus on each. The work is coordinated and quality assured strategically through the Vulnerable Young People's sub-group of the Safeguarding Children Board, who have a remit to:

- develop and oversee the implementation of a Vulnerable Young People Strategy and Action Plan in Derby
- evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the Strategy and Action Plan through outcome and performance monitoring
- promote the sharing of information across priority agendas to identify those young people most at risk and the effective co-ordination of agency responses.

The strategy is coordinated operationally through the CSE sub-group of the LSCB. Their task is to:

- implement the CSE Strategy and Action Plan as directed by the Vulnerable Young People's sub-group of Derby Safeguarding Children Board
- oversee the multi-agency operational work in relation to CSE in Derby
- develop work in relation to CSE in Derby, taking into account local feedback and national developments, advising and informing the VYP sub-group.

Information on children and young people at risk of CSE and on perpetrator behaviours is collated through the Police Central Referral Unit using CSE information report forms. Any professional can complete these forms and they are filed in one place and easily accessible to facilitate the sharing of information. This is invaluable in enabling the police to build local intelligence and apprehend offenders.

A CSE Risk Assessment Toolkit has been developed to enable professionals to identify and measure indicators of CSE as well as additional vulnerability factors and to determine appropriate thresholds for intervention. Just one indicator of CSE should result in support for a child or young person and their family to prevent any escalation in risk. Training on CSE and gangs is offered through the Safeguarding Children Board and is free to all professionals in Derby.

Working in partnership with children and young people and their families to reduce and remove the risk of CSE is central to the success of the work being led by Derby Safeguarding Children Board.

Summary

The Inquiry has drawn together examples from around the country of what is working in tackling child sexual exploitation. These examples have helped us identify nine foundations that need to be in place to prevent CSE, protect victims and support their recovery.

In the next section we set out **See Me, Hear Me** Framework showing how these foundations can be incorporated into practice.

2 Getting it right: The Framework for action

Given the complex nature of child sexual exploitation, and the significant scale of the problem, no single agency can respond alone or on a case-by-case basis, as highlighted in the previous section.

A coherent local and national response to child sexual exploitation should span the entire range of agencies and services that are involved in the protection and safety of children and young people, at both strategic and operational level.

Whatever their role, every professional and organisation involved needs to be clear about the importance, and often urgency, of their work. The following three overarching aims should drive them:

- preventing the sexual exploitation of children and young people
- identifying, protecting and supporting the victims
- disrupting and stopping perpetrators, securing justice for victims and obtaining convictions.

It is against this background that we outline how a comprehensive plan for tackling child sexual exploitation should come together.

See Me, Hear Me is the Framework for protecting children and young people, from strategic planning to operational interventions, in order to prevent child sexual exploitation and to deal with it when it occurs.

It is a child-centred framework focusing above all, on ensuring that children and young people who are victims of CSE or at risk of becoming victims, are seen, heard, attended to and understood. It is about making their needs and experiences the central and driving force behind all decisions and actions. It is about making the child visible.

This Chapter and the Framework itself is divided into three sections. In Part A we will set out the seven key principles that underpin the **See Me, Hear Me** Framework that need to be considered throughout its implementation.

Part B highlights simple and essential questions that will guide planning and decision-making regarding the rights, welfare and protection children and young people who have been victims of child sexual exploitation under three headings: Voice of the Child, Voice of the Professional and Protecting the Child.

Part C highlights the functions and processes that are needed to develop and implement this Framework. It also explores structures and posts that would enable its execution.

Part A: See Me, Hear Me – defining principles of safeguarding children from CSE

The Inquiry has identified seven essential principles for safeguarding children from CSE that underpin the **See Me, Hear Me** Framework.

1. The child's best interests must be the top priority
2. Participation of children and young people
3. Enduring relationships and support
4. Comprehensive problem-profiling
5. Effective information-sharing within and between agencies
6. Supervision, support and training for staff
7. Evaluation and review

Evidence to the Inquiry demonstrated that a strategic and operational framework would struggle to be effective if it were not founded upon these seven principles, focusing as they do on providing dependable support for children and young people.

These are predicated on the following articles in the UNCRC.

- Article 3 – the best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children.
- Article 12 – every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.
- Article 19 – governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and mistreatment by their parents or anyone else that looks after them.
- Article 24 – every child has the right to the best possible health.
- Article 34 – governments must protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Article 39 – children neglected, abused, exploited, tortured or who are victims of war must receive special help to help them recover their health, dignity and self-respect.

Fulfilling the principles set out in this section will ensure that children's entitlements to their rights under the UNCRC are honoured.

We now examine the seven essential principles for safeguarding children and young people from CSE that underpin the See Me, Hear Me Framework in more detail.

1) The child's best interests must be the top priority

The best interests of children and young people and their rights to protection must drive all decision making. The paramountcy principle (Children Act 1989) must be adhered to where applicable and children's rights under UNCRC Article 3 fully honoured.

Over and over again, Serious Case Reviews and national inquiries into child deaths and serious injuries report the same failures. At the heart of these is the failure to see, hear, and attend to the child – essentially they are invisible.

This has been equally true of child sexual exploitation. During the Inquiry we have heard some professionals at all levels blaming the child or young person for their own abuse – '*they are just prostituting themselves'* said the chair of an LSCB.

We have heard myths that only white girls are exploited and as a result we have evidence of black and minority ethnic victims being ignored. Boys too often remain invisible victims, as the assumption is that only girls are subjected to these assaults. We have spoken with victims who begged for help and no one listened or took the actions necessary to meet their needs .

2) Participation of children and young people

When a child or young person is sexually exploited, their abusers control them. They have no say in what happens to them. The care of child victims should not, by default, replicate this process.

Children and young people told us repeatedly that 'being done to' by the agencies charged with their care compounded their sense of powerlessness and hopelessness. They want to be partners in their protection and recovery plans and those that had this experience valued it immensely and felt stronger for being involved.

At **Brook** sexual health service, young people are given the opportunity to get involved at all levels of the organisation.

Strategic Involvement:

- as trustees, their voice is heard in setting the organisation's sexual health agenda
- having a say in funding applications
- participating in a local and national young people's panel that advises the service on how to run its sexual health projects.

Education:

- involving young people in sexual health programmes in their schools, pupil referral units and further education colleges. This is through universal and targeted groups and one-to-one education
- training other young people to pass on sexual health advice to their friends or fellow pupils
- providing drop-in sessions for young people wanting to learn about sexual health.

Clinic:

- ensuring young people feel they are in safe hands and are treated in a friendly way at a clinic. All young people are spoken to on their own, even if friends and/or family accompany them to the clinic
- explaining confidentiality and 'consent', and encouraging information-sharing with other young people. Clinical staff are on hand if a young person wants to discuss a matter of concern
- suggesting to young people different ways in which to communicate their views and anxieties, e.g. using pictures, storytelling, or interpreters
- using feedback cards so that young people can suggest ways of improving the service.

Ensuring children and young people have a say in how sexual health services are run is a significant step forward in dealing with child sexual exploitation. Without their input, agencies will have little grasp of how the problem is seen by the very people they are supposed to be helping.

Groups of children and young people should contribute to drawing up the local strategy for tackling exploitation. They should be invited to contribute in several ways:

- having a say in how they are being cared for
- having their views taken into account when local bodies consider how to respond to child sexual exploitation in their area
- providing feedback on their experiences, so that other victims will benefit from any lessons learned
- taking part in programmes unrelated to sexual exploitation, so that they can start to put their distressing experiences behind them and rebuild their lives.

Professionals and agencies need to be mindful of the individual needs and equalities of children and young people.

3) Enduring relationships and support

> *'If it wasn't for her I wouldn't be here. She stuck by me through everything. She was understanding. I can still call her…'*
>
> *'I had the same social worker for three years. I liked her. Then one day the doorbell rang and a stranger was there. He said "Hello. I am your new social worker".'*

Children and young people who are victims of CSE voice one point above all others: the importance of continuing and consistent support.

Too often, support is funded on a short-term basis. This is a time period that might satisfy the interests or timetable of the agency involved but is insufficient to meet the needs of children and young people who have been sexually exploited.

In addition, many children and young people reported multiple changes of social workers and placements which meant constantly repeating their stories, constantly being expected to make new relationships and rapidly build trust. The reality was a permanent sense of being let down, being unimportant, being devalued, compounding their sense of abandonment and reinforcing their lack of trust in adults.

The Inquiry heard of specialist child sexual exploitation services and police forces staying in touch with children and young people years after they were exploited. For children and young people, knowing that there is always somebody who will be there for them is crucial in building trust and keeping them safe. One young person said: '*She* [police liaison officer] *was there for me 24/7. I couldn't have done it without her.'*

It is also important that services identify if there is a particular adult (e.g. parent, carer, relative) that the victim trusts and that services engage with them at the outset, maintaining contact where possible.

4) Comprehensive problem-profiling

It is critical that all the patterns of exploitation to which children are subjected in their local area are captured (problem-profiling). All areas visited by the Inquiry demonstrated several patterns of abuse in both street gangs and other groups. Not all were recognised in local strategies or problem-profiles.

A comprehensive problem-profile needs to be compiled with the oversight of the LSCB. Led by the police and children's services, working in partnership with other agencies, it should draw upon the following.

- An assessment of children who show the warning signs (see Appendix 3) through the collation and matching of multi-agency data.
- Intelligence on local street gangs including their structure, inter connections and the mapping of the females associated with them.
- Intelligence on cases of sexual bullying and school exclusions for sexual misconduct.
- Intelligence on local businesses that are of concern.
- Intelligence on local prostitution and drugs markets.
- Tasking of covert policing assets and collection of intelligence from across all multi-agency partners which are likely to come into contact with sexually exploited children (e.g. sexual health services, youth offending teams, schools).
- A map showing the location of local residential children's homes.

Such a profile would log exploitation by: organised groups; opportunistic and/or ad hoc groups; individuals; street gangs; local businesses; young people (in a peer-on-peer context); and the other forms of CSE identified by this Inquiry and findings. It should be shared across all key partners.

A comprehensive problem-profile will significantly improve the ability to safeguard all children and young people as it will enable the effective:

- development of a multi-agency strategy and related action plans
- commissioning of services.
- delivery of training and awareness-raising activity to support local professionals.

For further information on problem-profiles see Appendix 5.

5) Effective information sharing

Effective information-sharing is the necessary precursor to a comprehensive problem-profile being compiled as well as to the safeguarding of individual children and young people.

The impact of information-sharing was demonstrated by a chlamydia screening-programme, the data from which were used to identify a young person who was being sexually exploited.

The **RUclear Chlamydia Screening Programme** covers all ten Greater Manchester Local Authority areas and screens around 8,000 young people a month from 1,400 screening sites. All the testing data is held in one place.

The Programme acts a failsafe, as they can see where young people have taken multiple tests from multiple sites and the result of those tests. RUclear liaises with screening sites to ensure key information is shared making the bigger picture apparent and enabling appropriate safeguarding and care to be provided. Both repeat negative tests as well as repeat positive tests have been identified as indicating a risk of CSE.

The RUclear Programme Lead has identified young people at risk of, and experiencing CSE, from the chlamydia testing data. Currently a flagging system on the stand alone patient database is in place to identify young people who have tested more than six times in a 12 month period. A full anonymised analysis of the dataset is planned to enable further identification of normal patterns of testing by young people and determine whether the thresholds currently used are appropriate to indicate a risk of CSE.

At the Inquiry workshop, participants were clear that every area needed an information-sharing protocol that stipulated:

- what information needs to be shared
- the circumstances in which such information should be shared
- the process for sharing that information.

Furthermore, this protocol needs to involve the following agencies in order to be effective:

- children's social care services
- police
- sexual health services
- hospital trusts
- community health services, including GPs
- drug and alcohol misuse services
- mental health services
- all schools, further education colleges and pupil referral units
- CPS
- the Probation Service
- youth offending services
- housing providers
- the voluntary and community sector.

Once agreed, the LSCB must have oversight of the protocol and the authority to review the performance of agencies on a regular basis.

6) Supervision, support and training of staff

Over the course of the Inquiry we met hundreds of professionals, some of whom have been working with sexually exploited children and young people for decades and others for whom the work is new.

An effective local response to CSE requires investment in the development and support of staff to ensure that they can safeguard children and young people.

Professionals working in this area require training to:

- understand the nature of child sexual exploitation and the different ways in which it manifests itself
- spot the warning signs of sexual exploitation
- know to whom to refer when there are concerns that a child or young person is at risk or is being sexually exploited
- know and understand their specific responsibilities and how to discharge them.

Those professionals who offer direct support to sexually exploited children and young people might require further, more intensive training and must have regular opportunities with a skilled consultant or supervisor to reflect on their practice and case management.

It is essential that all staff working in services that offer treatment to or management of both victims and perpetrators of child sexual exploitation have access to regular reflective practice consultation. Staff are inevitably emotionally affected by such work which can be profoundly disturbing and result in the unconscious putting up of defences to avoid being distressed by what they are hearing. These feelings can be particularly evoked if the child or young person's behaviour, whether victim or perpetrator, is highly sexualised.

Staff can experience a variety of feelings including disgust, anxiety, shock, anger or a desire to be punitive. Such uncomfortable feelings might be fended off by simply blaming either the child/young person or the abuser, even when both have been victims.

Alternatively, as a way of avoiding these disturbing feelings, some staff will unknowingly turn a blind eye to matters so that they do not have to think about them. Other staff may feel that they have the ability to affect significant change in clients when others have previously failed.

It is imperative that safeguarding measures remain paramount. Holding in mind the complexity of a child's feelings and emotions requires skilled staff with skilled support.

It is therefore essential that staff receive regular supervision and the opportunities to reflect on their practice so that the potential impact of disturbing thoughts and feelings can be minimised.

Such a reflective stance in the support and management structure of the organisations working with the child victims and both adolescent and adult offenders needs to be supported by an experienced colleague. Whoever takes up that role should have knowledge and clinical experience of working with victims and, where relevant, with people who act out in violent and abusive ways. An understanding and experience of attending to conscious and unconscious group and institutional dynamics is essential because the emotional turbulence of working with such behaviour can be corrosive and disturbing to staff and service managers, preventing them from seeing, hearing and being able to bear the unbearable.

7) Evaluation and review

'Nobody asked me what I thought of the decisions made or if I felt comfortable.'

Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2013) clearly states that a core function for LSCBs is to 'coordinate the work to safeguard children locally and monitor and challenge the effectiveness of local arrangements.' This is far from being achieved.

Agencies need to be made accountable for their actions and decisions that affect children and young people and ensure these needs are reflected in practice. In order to best meet the needs of children and young people, services need to measure whether they are achieving the intended outcomes and are having a positive impact through a regular process of assessment and review.

Of the 95 submissions to the call for evidence, only 17 were able to provide evaluations and a further five stated they had evaluations underway. These evaluations were of particular interventions provided by their service and not the service as a whole. Very few agencies reviewed their practice as a whole, and when they did, they failed to consult children and young people, families and professionals on their views about whether the intervention was working.

Overall, the Inquiry was informed of 121 evaluations. Only 9% of the 121 evaluations were from statutory services. These were the five main outcomes across all evaluations.

Figure 9: Main outcomes from evaluations

Outcome	Number of projects that have achieved this	Percentage of projects that have achieved this
Increased access to services for young people at risk	85	70.2%
Increased skills, knowledge and resources for people working with young people	51	41.1%
Increased access to advice and information for young people	39	32.2%
Better sector coordination	18	14.9%
Increased awareness of the issue by policy makers	16	13.2%

The main outcomes recorded and achieved related to the increased access to information and services, as well as an increase in knowledge particularly by professionals.

Very few evaluations recorded feedback from children and young people or whether there were improved outcomes for children and young people as a result of the work undertaken. When children and young people were consulted they found the following useful and important:

- being listened to and understood
- having their views considered
- having their individual needs and equalities addressed
- being kept informed of what is happening

- given space to talk in their own time and be flexible
- services that are attentive and respectful of their identity, culture, needs and wishes
- being able to trust and know the people who are working with them
- having one worker who sticks with them throughout
- when people keep trying and do not give up on them
- language that is accessible
- provide evidence that their input has been taken in to account and has made a difference.

This was also reflected in the Office of the Children's Commissioner's response to the DfE consultation on children's safeguarding performance information (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2012).

It is essential that services systematically and regularly evaluate and review their practice to ensure that the needs and best interests of children and young people are met. This includes:

- asking for feedback from children and young people
- establishing, reviewing and assessing aims and objectives for: children and young people and other related or external parties (e.g. families, communities etc.), staff and practice
- reviewing and assessing immediate, short and long term outcomes for children and young people
- assessing and monitoring practice, performance and compliance
- identifying gaps and areas for improvement
- the findings of these processes should always be used to inform further development and improve practice.

Some good examples of effective evaluation and review were submitted to the Inquiry. The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has agreed a National Action Plan to ensure the police address their responsibilities for tackling child sexual exploitation in a consistent manner. A rigorous process for evaluation and review is integral to these developments with areas for improvement flagged on a quarterly basis to the Chief Executive of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) who oversees the implementation of the plan.

The **National Police CSE Action Plan** was created in order to address seven elements of the police response to child sexual exploitation.

1. Public confidence
2. Safeguarding victims and managing risk
3. Effective investigations and bringing offenders to justice
4. Partnerships
5. Intelligence and performance
6. Leadership
7. Learning and development

The purpose was to reduce the gap between the threat of CSE and the capability of the police to deal with it.

A full time project manager has been seconded to the College of Policing to drive the CSE Action Plan across the 44 forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The first step in the project methodology was to benchmark forces in terms of CSE capability. An online self-assessment tool was devised which maps to each element of the plan. It contains 40 questions and requires very little data, making it simple and non-bureaucratic. This generated a score for each of the seven key areas as well as an overall score for every force.

This was followed by visits to every force and structured interviews with the CSE lead to reality-check the online responses. The results of both will be used to formulate bespoke development plans for individual forces as well as identify and embed good practice nationally. Forces will be then further reviewed in mid-2014 in order to evaluate progress and continually drive up standards.

The **College of Policing** have played a key role in driving the CSE Action Plan and have now produced Authorised Professional Practice (APP) for CSE which will allow police practitioners nationally to access guidance and resources to drive effective investigations and encourage best practice. This APP guidance will be supplemented by extensive resources on the Police Online Knowledge Area (POLKA) website maintained by the College of Policing.

Although this example illustrates how professional practice can be assessed, it does not measure the impact on children and young people and does not seek their views or feedback. Derby Safeguarding Children Board recently completed a review that involved collecting the views of young women. The following example details how this LSCB conducted a learning review following the completion of Operation Kern. This review sought the views of the young women involved.

Derby Safeguarding Children Board undertook a learning review of Operation Kern and the associated activity by a number of agencies following the arrest and prosecution of 12 males for sexually exploiting young women in Derby. Operation Kern followed immediately on from Operation Retriever (also involving CSE). The review sought to outline:

- a young person's journey of support before, during and after the trial
- a parent's/carer's experience of support and the trial
- a professional's journey through a complex CSE trial, identifying any organisational and procedural barriers to service delivery.

The support to young people involved in Operation Kern spans two and a half years. The learning review found that partnership arrangements to support young people through the trial worked best in the early and latter stages of the investigation. Although there was evidence of good single agency practice, there was little consistent communication or information-sharing between key partners until a few months before the trial. However, throughout the investigation and trial there was a high level of commitment from various agencies to supporting and safeguarding the victims. It was found that in the latter stages, multi-agency meetings were effective.

This learning review clearly showed the value of working together to improve outcomes for children and young people, meaning they were better protected as a result. There remains a concern about the complex needs of the individual young people and their long-term needs as they enter adulthood.

A strong recommendation is that agency responses need to be balanced with the recognition of long-term outcomes for young people as they transition into being adults and comprehensive transition plans need to be put in place to appropriately support those young people. The impact of what they have gone through has been so significant that some of them continue to be vulnerable and the longer term outcomes for them remain unclear. As a result of this review a number of detailed recommendations were outlined to improve future activity in this area.

The trial was very successful in terms of prosecutions, with 11 out of the 12 defendants being found guilty. They will serve a combined sentence of 42 years and 7 months. However this was at some considerable cost to the victims and witnesses who found the experience inaccessible and adversarial. They reported feeling distressed, degraded, exposed and unsafe in court and this prevented them from also leading a normal life in the community. This review found that support from agencies during the court process had a significant impact in addressing these issues.

In addition to the submissions from statutory agencies, the Inquiry also received examples of effective evaluation and review from the voluntary sector that not only assessed the effectiveness of practice and sought children and young people's views, but also measured their impacts in terms of outcomes for children and young people.

The following example illustrates how one voluntary sector organisation reviews practice to ensure objectives are being met and involves children and young people in this process.

Railway Children consistently evaluates and reviews their practice. They have six outcomes they seek to achieve:

- to raise children and young people's awareness of risk
- to promote safer choices
- to prevent harm by providing a safe place at a time of crisis
- to reduce risk taking and improve wellbeing by addressing causes of running away
- to reduce incidents of running away
- to improve family relationships and functioning.

They measure these outcomes by conducting evaluations, reviewing case records, self-assessment and worker assessment, and the reduction in frequency of missing episodes, where known. Young people's and worker's assessments of progress and change are measured by tools such as the Adolescent Wellbeing Scale and Five-point Rating Scale. Relevant third party information, where known, is also assessed.

In reviewing effective practice, measuring outcomes for children and young people and seeking their feedback is the most effective method to evaluate practice and assess whether it is having a positive impact. This will ensure that performance is driven continuously by an improvement cycle.

Part B: See Me, Hear Me – a Framework for protecting children from CSE

Throughout this Inquiry we collected views from children and young people. Some of them felt let down by the system. They informed us of how professionals paid little regard to their opinions and to their identity, beliefs and feelings. This made them feel they did not understand or care about them and that statutory services were more interested in their abuse.

'They acted like they knew everything about me, but they don't know me.'

They felt they were being judged by professionals who would talk over them with language that was harsh or that they did not understand or that was condescending. This made them feel confused and even more vulnerable and unsafe.

'I had to talk to crowds of people and tell my story over and over again.'

Children and young people stated how daunted they felt about the number of people they had to talk to and the number of times they had to revisit their personal experiences of abuse. Often the people working with them were constantly changing and this made it hard for them to develop trust and be open.

'They didn't do what they said they would.'

Children and young people told us how they felt let down by the system. Often professionals did not follow through on their decisions and failed to provide them with continuous support and care. Some children and young people we interviewed had lost hope and told us:

'I don't know what would make things better. I don't think there is anything that can.'

From the evidence we gathered, it was clear that those who failed to protect and support children and young people were not hearing their voices and failing to produce a child-centred approach. As a result, based on the expertise gained from this Inquiry, we developed **See Me, Hear Me** – a Framework to guide professionals and agencies through this process.

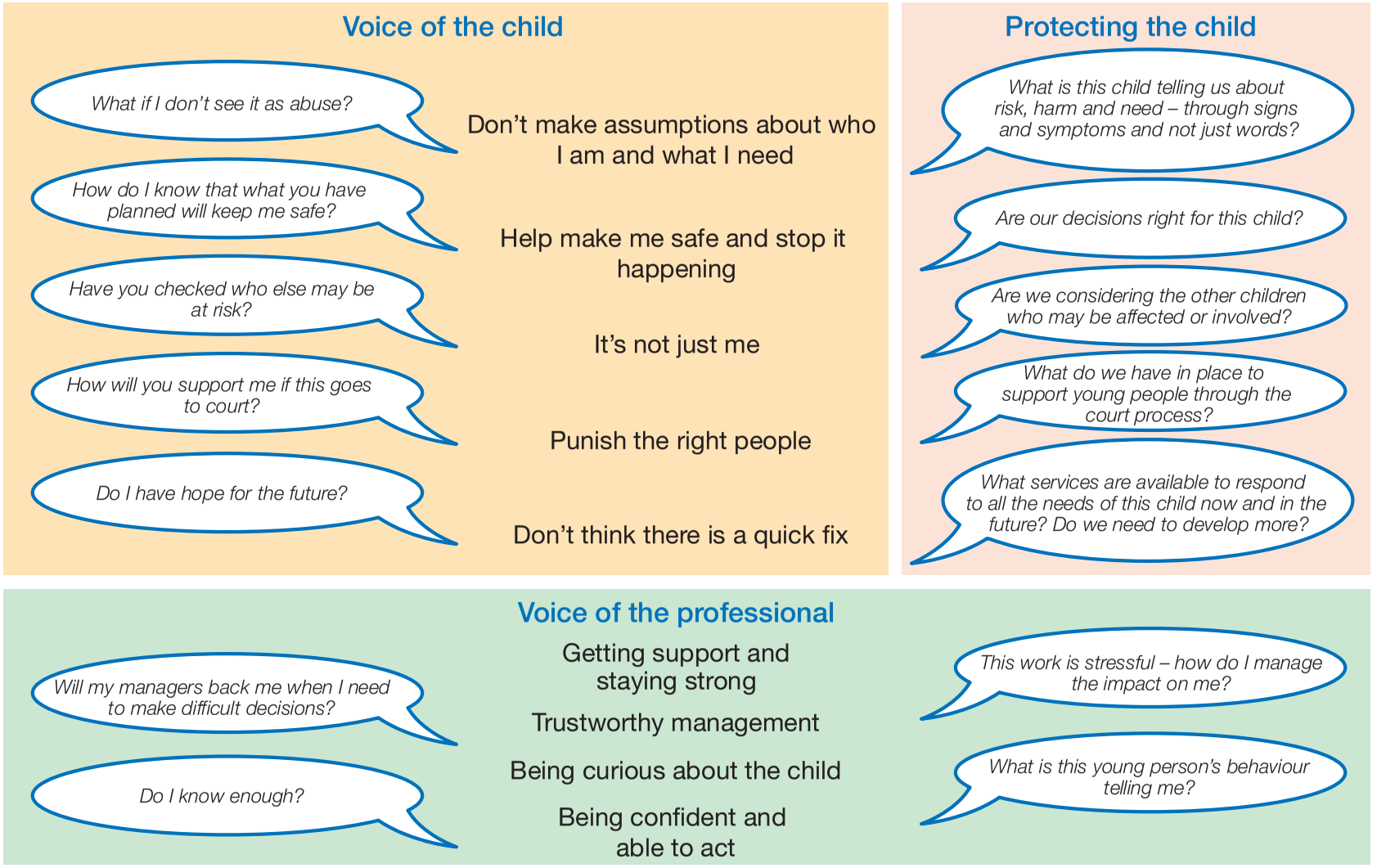
See Me, Hear Me is the Framework for protecting children – from strategic planning to operational interventions – in order to prevent child sexual exploitation and to deal with it when it occurs.

It is a child-centred Framework focusing above all, on ensuring that children and young people who are victims of CSE or at risk of becoming victims, are seen, heard, attended to and understood. It is about making their needs and experiences the central and driving force behind all decisions and actions. It is about making the child visible.

See Me, Hear Me

A Framework for protecting children

Figure 10: Getting the focus right



Underpinned by: Children Act 1989, UNCRC Articles 3, 12, 19, 24, 34, 39.
Seven Principles: 1) The child's best interests must be the top priority. 2) Participation of children and young people. 3) Enduring relationships and support. 4) Comprehensive problem-profiling. 5) Effective information-sharing within and between agencies. 6) Supervision, support and training for staff. 7) Evaluation and review.

Voice of the child

These are the questions that will be in the mind of a victim or potential victim of child sexual exploitation. At whatever level they are working, everyone involved in combating CSE should know who the child or young person is (their identity); what they are thinking; and ensure they have answers to the questions they are asking.

These questions have been compiled with and quality assured by a group of young people all of whom have been victims of sexual exploitation.

Voice of the child

Children and young people are too often left without help because they are invisible to the agencies charged with their protection. **See Me, Hear Me** has been developed with the help of young people who have been victims of sexual exploitation The purpose of questions below is to bring their voices right into the heart of all planning and decision-making about child sexual exploitation.

Children and young people devised these questions with us and have told us that the answers to all of them are important.

Don't make assumptions about who I am and what I need

- Have you thought about me from the start?
- What if I don't see it as abuse?
- Have you asked me what I want done and made sure I have a say?
- How are you going to tell me what is likely to happen?
- Why are there so many of you involved and talking about me? Have you explained that to me?

Help make me safe and stop it happening

- How do I know that what you have planned will keep me safe?
- Are you going to stick with me?
- How do I know I can trust you to help me?
- Who is taking the overall charge of helping me?
- Are you all working together – I don't want to keep telling my story over and over?
- I don't know how to talk about what's happened – how are you helping me do this at a pace that works for me?
- What are your plans if I go missing – I may have been abducted?

How to use these questions:

- Use them to think both about preventing abuse and responding to children's needs when they have already been victims of abuse.
- Involve them at every stage – when developing your local strategies, when building resilient communities, when taking action to protect an individual child. The questions are not in chronological order. Always start from where the young person is at and tailor your responses accordingly.
- You may need to revisit some questions repeatedly.
- Always check with the young person – it is their life.

For the LSCB:

- Use these questions to evaluate the interagency strategy; to consider information-sharing agreements and engagement with the local community in making children safer.
- The child sexual exploitation sub-group in particular should use these questions to guide strategy and ensure the involvement of children and young people
- Consider local information for children, their friends and family members so that they know who they can tell and how to access help.

For schools and colleges:

- Consider whether there is a safe environment and a culture within which children and young people can talk about abuse with someone they trust (Mortimer et al, 2012).
- Draw on these questions to consider how the planned curriculum includes ways to help children and young people recognise gender stereotyping, abusive situations, and so address issues of consent and how to develop healthy relationships.

For police and CPS:

- What do these questions mean for our process?

For commissioners of services:

- Do we have the right information and do we ask the right questions so we can commission services for addressing the emotional needs and mental health of exploited children and young people?

It's not just me

- Others at my school and where I am living are at risk – what are you doing about them?
- Have you checked who else may be at risk?
- Have you checked whether any of my family or my boyfriend/girlfriend are gang members?
- What about my family or friends – what do I tell them, what should they know, are they safe, will they help, will they be OK with me? What are you doing to help answer these questions?

Punish the right people (bringing the perpetrator to justice)

- How will you support me if this goes to court?
- There are lots of people who have hurt me. What are you doing about them?
- Some people who have hurt me are my age. What about them?
- So now if you've stopped them, what will you do to try to make sure it doesn't happen again?

Don't think there is a quick fix

- Have you helped me understand that it wasn't my fault?
- Are you supporting my family to help keep me safe?
- Do I have hope for the future?
- Who is going to help me to get on with my life, step by step?
- Although things are getting better, I am still fragile. Who will be there for me for as long as I need them?
- This shouldn't happen to anyone- what are you doing to help all children and young people to keep safe?

For all agencies:

- Are there specific equalities issues that need to be considered and responded to?
- Consider whether and how to provide a safe environment for children to tell. Make sure you understand the recognition and telling framework – children do not describe their experiences in a neat linear fashion.
- Consider how best to share information about vulnerable young people and manage the number of people involved in working with them.
- Do cross agency prevention strategies address these questions?
- What about your children who are out of area – how are they being supported and protected?
- Have we mapped all gangs and gang associated girls?

For all:

- Don't turn your back, it happens, talk about it.
- If the child or young person does not recognise the situation as abuse, consider what to do to help them see it is not acceptable.
- Make sure that there is a shared plan you are working on with the young person so they can have a bright future.
- Plan ways of engaging with children and young people and getting their feedback on whether prevention and protection processes work for them.

Voice of the professional

Working with children who have been sexually exploited is extraordinarily difficult and disturbing work. The Inquiry saw first-hand the huge emotional and psychological toll on those on the frontline who are driven to act by a passionate determination to stop sexual exploitation. Agencies have a responsibility to care for and support the professionals doing this work. The questions make agencies face their responsibilities to their staff for it is through their staff that they meet their responsibilities to vulnerable children and young people. Without the right training and support, frontline staff cannot act effectively.

These questions, and those in Protecting the child (below), have been compiled with the help of key representatives from the police, social care, the voluntary sector, health, education and academia. Their contribution has been invaluable.

See Me, Hear Me – Voice of the professional	**How to use these questions:** • For planning structures and support at strategic and the individual levels • For managers and practitioners to think about their own needs: feeling, reflecting and acting • For managers to consider how they can support and enable their staff
Getting support and staying strong: ▸ This work is stressful – how do I manage the impact on me? ▸ I need time to reflect – can I get help with this? ▸ Can I ask for support without being seen as weak? ▸ Is there support available for me without me needing to ask? ▸ I cannot face doing this work any longer – how do I stop it affecting my personal life?	For example: • Do practitioners and managers in all agencies have the type of supervision which helps them deal with the impact of this work? • Are managers trained to provide effective case management and reflective supervision?
Trustworthy management ▸ Am I being given the time I need to see and get to know this child? ▸ Is there a strategic vision which supports my work? ▸ What can I expect from my managers to support me? ▸ Will my managers help me to make good decisions? ▸ Will my managers back me when I need to make difficult decisions?	For example: • Is there a framework of policies and structures in place to support and guide staff and do they know about them?
Being curious about the child ▸ Have I noticed everything I need to notice? ▸ Could I have missed anything? ▸ What is this young person's behaviour telling me?	For example think and sound out whether: • You are using all your senses and your gut instinct when you see a child or young person • There may be reasons why they might not tell you what is going on • There are signs that something is very wrong even if they deny this • You can make sense of what is making you uncomfortable and know who to ask for help

Being confident and able to act ▶ Do I know enough? ▶ Who can I work with on this to share expertise? ▶ Do I agree with the decisions being made? ▶ If I disagree with the decisions being made, how can I challenge these? ▶ If I challenge a decision, will I be supported? ▶ Have I done all I can and should do for now to make this child safe?	For example: • Is there enough of the right training in place for all agencies? • Is there a safe and healthy environment in which practitioners can challenge and be helpfully challenged?

Protecting the child

These are the questions agencies need to satisfactorily answer in order to fulfil their responsibilities to keep all children safe. Children and young people who are sexually exploited have suffered significant harm as defined in the Children Act 1989 (section 31). All agencies must follow the statutory guidance detailed in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (DfE, 2013) and the supplementary guidance 'Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation', DCSF 2009. These are some points to link the children's questions to the protection process –they can be used at individual and organisational level and by professionals and managers. These are not a comprehensive list.

See Me, Hear Me – Protecting the child	**How to use these questions:** • These are some questions to ask at individual and organisational level by professionals and those in management. • They link to the voice of the child questions and should be used in conjunction with them.
Don't make assumptions about who I am and what I need	**For assessment of need, risk and harm: (section 17 or section 47 of Children Act 1989)** • Are we really listening to this child? • What is this child telling us about risk, harm and need– through signs and symptoms and not just words? • Are we helping parents, other children and those who the child trusts, to tell us about what is happening? • Have we met the child's language and communication needs? • Is the child fully involved in the process of assessment and protection– and are protective family members too? • Are we sensitive to assumptions which stop us seeing the individual child? • Are their specific equalities issues that we need to be mindful of and address?
Help make me safe and stop it happening	**For immediate protection and child protection planning** • Are the decisions right for this child? • Are we respecting them and working with them on their safety? • Are we working across agencies in assessing need and investigating risk? • Do we have a clear protection plan, including meeting the needs of the child, which they can understand and work with? • How do we make sure someone they trust will go on working with this child? • If this child continues to deny that they are being abused but we are still worried, what action can we take?

It's not just me	**Responding to the others affected** • Are we considering the other children who may be affected or involved? • Have we included the others affected in the strategy discussions or child protection conference? • Was this a 'typical case' for our area-if not should we look for more like this and review our notion of what is typical? • Are we working to increase the protective strength of members of the family?
Punish the right people	**Court processes – family and criminal proceedings** • If the perpetrator is a child, how will we manage this? • Are criminal proceedings being considered? • What do we have in place to support young people through the court process?
Don't think there is a quick fix	**Prevention, long term support and review** • What are we doing about prevention – including possible future risks? • What services are available to respond to all the needs of this child now and in the future? Do we need to develop more? • Are we reviewing work with young people to check whether help has been helpful and whether promises have been kept? • How are we reviewing overall practice against outcomes and the key principles? • Have we put support in place for the family so they can be helped to keep their child safe?

Part C: See Me, Hear Me – functions, processes and structures

The following functions and processes, when fulfilled by local agencies, will assist the safeguarding of children and young people from sexual exploitation. Each of these functions and processes, when brought together, forms a holistic response to sexual exploitation.

This Framework is intended to act as a road map and guide professionals through:

- the coordination of service commissioning, strategic planning and cross-silo working
- the process of problem-profiling, information-sharing, and case identification
- a tiered approach to intervention which includes prevention, pre-emptive policing, targeted early intervention, and the rehabilitation and management of offenders, in addition to support for children and their parents/carers who have been affected by sexual exploitation.

The diagram provides a visual demonstration of the functions and processes and a suggested structure within which the Framework could be implemented. This is in turn broken down and further guidance provided in the proceeding narrative. These functions and processes should be underpinned by the principles in Part A of the **See Me, Hear Me** Framework.

The proposed posts and structures can be fulfilled through pre-existing structures and posts within local areas. The Inquiry recognises that not every local area has all of the structures or posts outlined below but all will have some, particularly those that are statutory requirements. This framework outlines how these can be brought together to best make use of local resources, ensuring that professionals are supported to work across their silos in order to understand the problem they face and tackle it together.

See Me, Hear Me

A Framework for protecting children

Figure 11: Functions, processes and structures

See me, Hear Me – A Framework

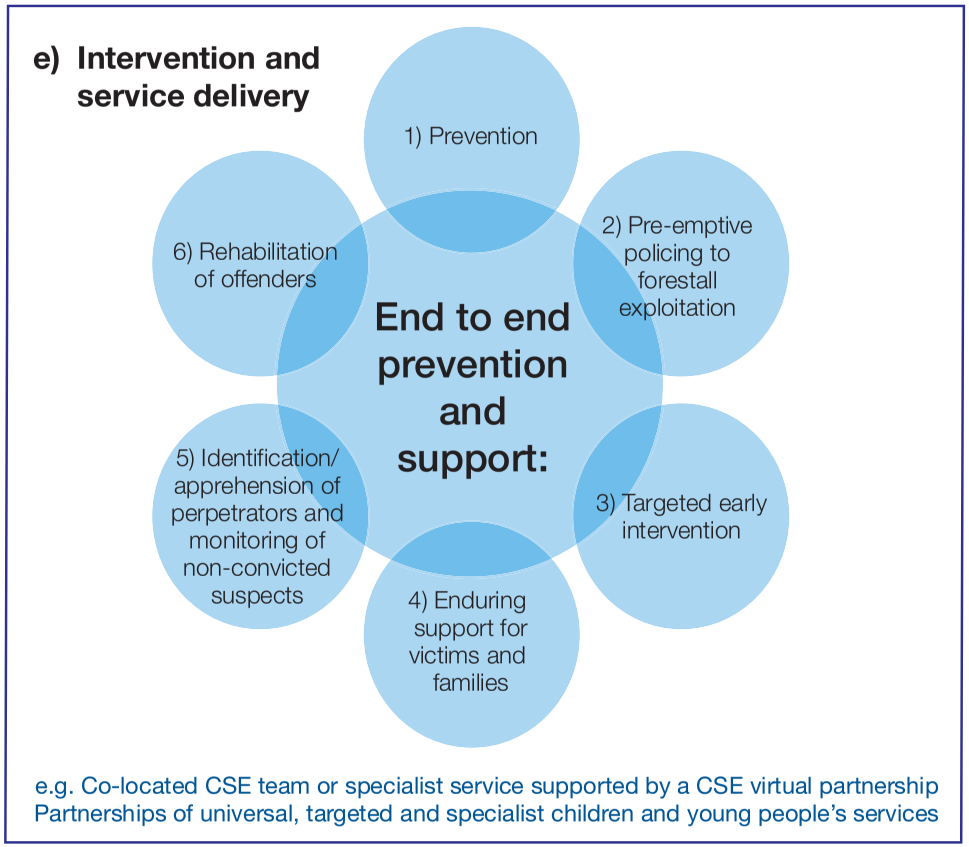
a) Accountability for all safeguarding and strategic coordination

e.g. Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB)
Health and Well Being Board

b) Multi-Agency strategic planning on CSE

e.g. LSCB Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Sub Group

CSE Coordinator



e.g. Co-located CSE team or specialist service supported by a CSE virtual partnership
Partnerships of universal, targeted and specialist children and young people's services

c) Partnership and information-sharing for identification and assessment

e.g. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Vulnerable Adolescents Panel

d) Coordination of multi-agency strategic groups

e.g. LSCB Sub Groups on: Missing/Gangs/VAWG
Coordinators for: Missing/Gangs/Serious Youth violence

a) Accountability for all safeguarding and strategic coordination

No single agency should tackle child sexual exploitation on its own or in isolation from other safeguarding issues. All agencies need to come together and agree their unique and shared roles and functions to ensure the system works effectively and that children and young people are protected.

It is critical that child sexual exploitation is seen as a child protection and safeguarding issue, as stated in the *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DCSF, 2009).

Local authorities and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) have equal and joint duties to prepare Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) and Joint Health and Welfare Strategies through the health and wellbeing board. They should be informed by qualitative and quantitative data (including a problem-profile), and in order to be effective should have the capability of drilling down to district and ward level. Public Health England should assist with this data collection. The JSNA should set out the current and anticipated health and care needs of an area.

Health and wellbeing boards can request relevant information to support JSNAs from organisations represented on the board and when asked, they have a duty to supply the information, if they hold it. Often the JSNA will be led through Public Health England and knowing the needs of a geographical area is an essential component in responding to vulnerability and safeguarding in an integrated way.

LSCBs coordinate the work of the following agencies, all of which are named as required members in the Children Act 2004 and as part of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (DfE, 2013):

- children and young people's services
- police
- education (all schools, including academies, faith schools, and independent sector)
- probation
- youth offending teams
- NHS commissioning board and clinical commissioning groups
- NHS Trusts/Foundation Trusts
- designated doctors and nurses
- CAFCASS
- governor(s)/director(s) of any prison or secure training centres (STCs) which detains children
- lay members.

It may also include:

- representatives from local sexual health, accident and emergency, drug and alcohol misuse, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
- voluntary sector
- CPS
- housing
- UK Border Agency.

Working together at this level, agencies on the LSCB should be responsible for:

- reviewing the scale and nature of sexual exploitation in their area and producing a plan to tackle the issue
- setting down agreed objectives that all professionals can work to in order to implement the plan
- developing/commissioning multi-agency training on child sexual exploitation
- monitoring the effectiveness of the plan
- establishing clear multi-agency intelligence sharing/data collection arrangements
- identifying barriers to implementing the plan and mandating responsible agencies to address them; for example, by monitoring how many schools in their area are providing personal, social and health education (PSHE) and specific awareness-raising on child sexual exploitation.

b) Multi-agency strategic planning on CSE

Based on the evidence collected, the Inquiry concurs with the position set out in the *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DCSF, 2009) – an effective response to child sexual exploitation requires a dedicated sub-group and coordinator to:

- bring together agencies to focus on and review their strategic and operational response to child sexual exploitation
- have lead responsibility for identifying and supporting sexually exploited children and young people
- have oversight of the local CSE offending picture through the commissioning of a problem profile which pulls together the intelligence held across member agencies. This Inquiry was informed of various attempts to problem-profile, it was however not able to identify exemplary practice in this area
- have specialist oversight of the operational response of local agencies, reporting back to the LSCB when barriers get in the way
- provide a purpose-made assessment checklist for CSE cases that all agencies can use
- ensure adherence to information-sharing protocol
- have an overview of commissioned services and gaps that exist.

The CSE sub-group can report impediments and gaps in the system to its LSCB. Given the breadth of work required of the sub-group, it is unrealistic to expect these tasks to be fulfilled without the support of a dedicated CSE coordinator.

c) Partnership and information-sharing for identification and assessment

Supporting the LSCB and related sub-groups are multi-agency bodies charged with identifying and handling individual cases, and planning the response to each of them.

This part of the **See Me, Hear Me** Framework links strategy for handling child sexual exploitation to operational response. Coherent information-sharing should be a standard expectation as it offers a full picture of the individual child or young person, enabling agencies to work together effectively.

Effective information-sharing is underpinned by clear strategic direction and information sharing agreements which places the safeguarding of children and young people at its core. This should be incorporated into training and awareness-raising across professionals that sets out how and when information-sharing can take place. This activity should also include information on what should be shared and specifically the warning signs/risk indicators for CSE involving gangs and groups, highlighted in Appendix 3.

Working in partnership, both within and between agencies is imperative; for example, cooperation between police units that work on gangs and those that work on sexual violence, in addition to joint-work involving the police and children's services.

A number of examples of effective multi-agency working (see Chapter 1, Part B) were gathered by the Inquiry.

- **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):** Pulls together multi-agency information based on an initial referral in order to identify and assess a child's vulnerability and make relevant onward referrals to appropriate agencies.
- **Vulnerable Adolescents** or **Children and Young People's Panels** provide strategic oversight of cases. They cross-reference victims who are known to several agencies for different reasons, for example a young person who is known as both a gang member and as being sexually exploited, and discuss how to best address these cases.

d) Coordination of multi-agency strategic groups

The **See Me, Hear Me** Framework sets out the importance of involving other multi-agency networks and panels in a local area, and the individuals who coordinate them in order to develop a coherent coordinated response.

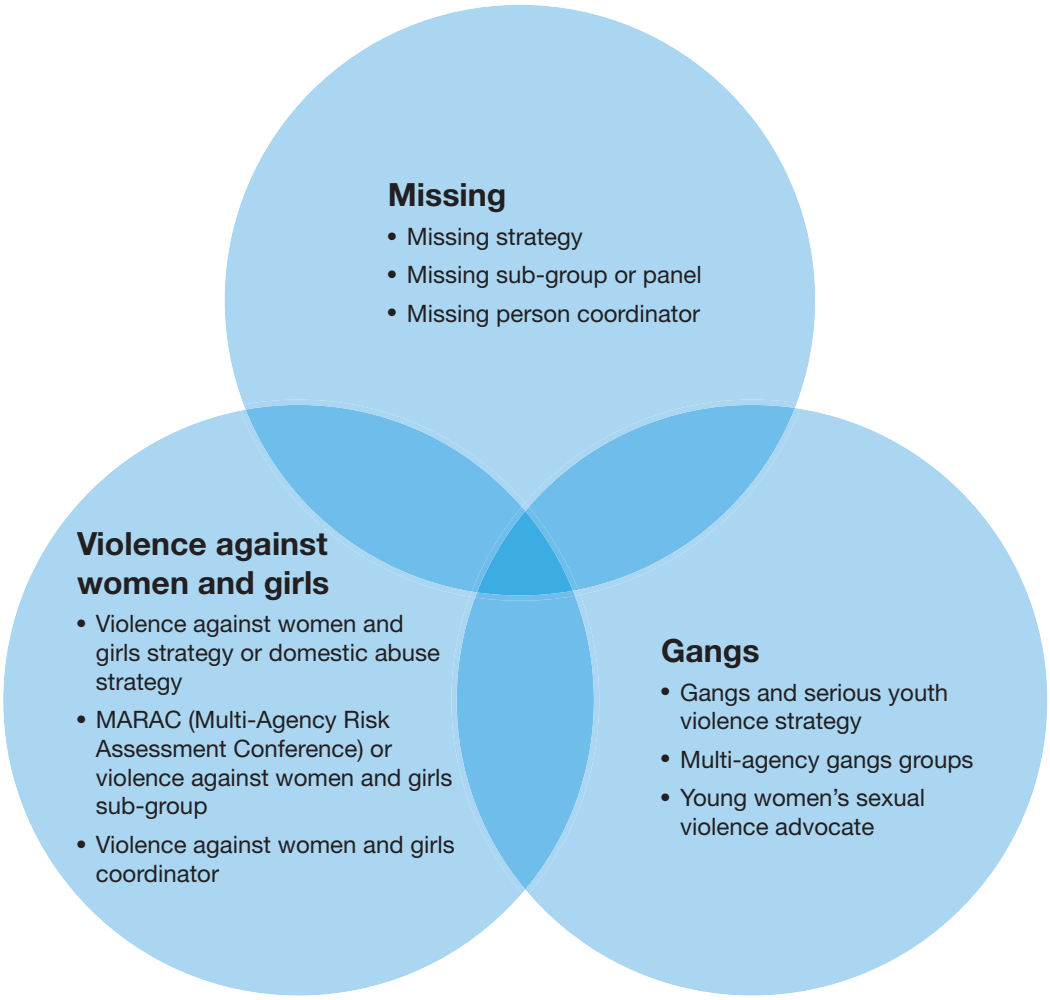
Local agencies are developing responses to many of the risks faced by children and young people. These include cases of: young people going missing or running away; gangs and other youths inflicting serious violence upon young people; violence against women and girls.

Each response may include:

- strategies
- sub-groups
- coordinators.

An effective operating model links strategies, sub-groups, and coordinators, rather than relying on a single individual to join all the dots on their own, as Figure 12 below demonstrates.

Figure 12: Example of operating model linking strategies and sub-groups



e) Interventions and service delivery

At ground level there should be end-to-end services focused on preventing and eliminating the sexual exploitation of children and young people and supporting victims. The components of end to end support include:

1. Prevention
2. Pre-emptive policing to forestall exploitation
3. Targeted early intervention
4. Enduring support for victims and families
5. Identification/apprehension of perpetrators and monitoring of non-convicted suspects
6. Rehabilitation of offenders

We strongly emphasise that it is not possible for one single agency to deliver such a service. The first step, therefore, is for local agencies to build a partnership.

End to end prevention and support: Components

1. Prevention

The sexual exploitation of children in gangs and groups is a serious societal problem. Prejudiced, negative or ill-informed attitudes concerning women, children, gender stereotyping, power and control, consent and victim-blaming (e.g. '*they had it coming to them'*) all combine to encourage sexual exploitation.

To prevent this happening to children and young people in the first place, a three-pronged approach is required:

- whole-school approaches (see Figure 6)
- awareness-raising for parents/carers, communities and local businesses
- training for professionals.

The Inquiry witnessed the impact of taking a whole-school approach to safeguarding, gender inequality and tackling related issues. We observed young people at Flixton Girls' School (see Figure 6) who understand and are aware of risks they might face. They feel able to talk to a member of staff if they are concerned. Staff are also able to identify and address risk. The essential components of a whole-school approach are:

- universal, high-quality PSHE and sex education provided for every year group
- training for all staff and school governors on the importance of taking a whole-school approach and on the warning signs of abuse
- targeted early intervention with, and arranging safe activities for, young people who are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse
- speedy responses to dealing with harmful attitudes, sexual bullying and harassment at the school
- partnerships with external agencies and agreed referral procedures when children are at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation
- awareness of any local initiatives, including any police investigations and monitoring of local CSE patterns.

The Inquiry can see the benefit of using external providers to deliver aspects of the PSHE curriculum, and has been informed of a number of programmes offered to schools by outside agencies.

These programmes seek to raise children and young people's awareness of dangers and risks, such as power and control, abusive and controlling behaviour, gender stereotyping and consent. Approaches that help foster respectful relationships between young people, including within friendship groups, seem to be most effective in trying to prevent sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse.

> *'I needed to be taken out of the situation and shown what was happening.'*

However, the Inquiry is also aware that when external agencies provide PSHE at a school that is not taking a 'whole-school approach' its impact is limited. Children and young people need to see that the values discussed during PSHE are part of the school ethos. This is particularly so when it comes

to how the school responds to cases of sexual bullying and harassment and how it safeguards children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

The Inquiry has seen at first-hand that it is possible to deliver a whole-school approach. It all depends, however, on school governors and the head teacher taking a strong lead on dealing with the problem – alerting students to the danger and training all staff in how to deal with it. The result is that any child or young person will be equipped to spot the danger signals should they be a target for abuse and will feel confident about telling a member of staff or another professional that they are worried.

In addition to preventive education, an effective model will include a programme to raise the awareness of parents/carers, businesses and professionals about child sexual exploitation.

Training in handling sexual exploitation might range from a half-day session to a week-long course. Some training courses are broad-based, while others also cover specific types of abuse. The Office of the Children's Commissioner and the Inquiry are not in a position to recommend a specific training course, however, based on the evidence collected, we would recommend that training is:

- in-depth
- updated regularly, with professionals attending periodic refresher training
- covers child sexual exploitation in general, but also specific patterns such as gangs and/or groups
- places sexual exploitation within the broader context of child sexual abuse, gender-based violence and safeguarding.

One such approach is that of the Home Office-commissioned training on sexual exploitation in gangs, delivered by the Against Violence & Abuse project (AVA) and the WGN. This training is unique in that it focuses on exploitation by street gangs, a form of CSE that is rarely included in training.

In 2012, **AVA** and **WGN** were funded by the Home Office to develop and deliver a new five day accredited training programme to up-skill a range of professionals to address sexual and domestic violence amongst gang-affected young people.

The course covers a wide range of topics, including prevalence and the types of violence experienced by gang-affected young women, the impact of domestic and sexual violence on young people's physical and emotional wellbeing, young people's help-seeking processes, risk and needs assessment, and implementing a holistic model of support.

The course takes a trauma-informed approach, whereby domestic and sexual violence are considered to be traumatic events, and young people's behaviours are understood as common responses to trauma. Furthermore, in supporting gang-affected young people, equal focus is given to supporting the young people to protect themselves from potential abusers as well as promoting safety in terms of their psychological wellbeing and internal functioning.

As an accredited course, the training includes seven assignments, most of which are to be completed outside of the classroom. The course is equivalent to an A level. It has received positive feedback from professionals in terms of its usefulness and the applicability of what they learned.

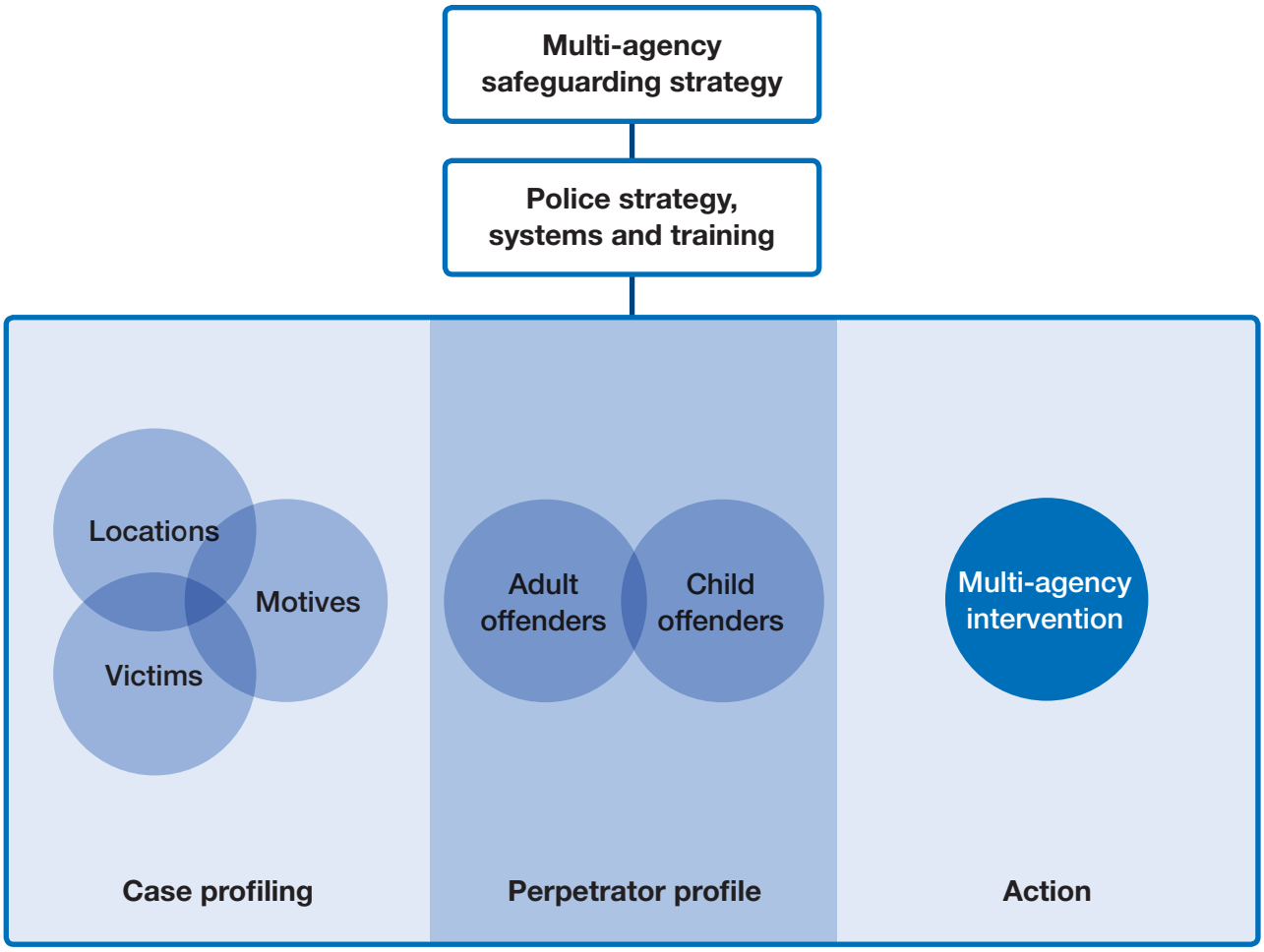
2. Pre-emptive policing to forestall exploitation

Phase 1 of the Inquiry recorded the many ways in which groups and street gangs perpetrate sexual exploitation and the fact that perpetrators are mostly male and vary in age (12 upwards), ethnicity and motive. This complexity must be met with coordination, led by police in partnership with others. The forestalling of child sexual exploitation requires all involved to do the following.

- Build a problem-profile of local cases, using the warning signs and intelligence from local CSE services and other victim's organisations, to identify: victims; the locations of the abuse; and the abusers' motives (financial profit, sexual gratification, intra or inter-gang punishment etc.).
- Map the connections between all gang-associated females (those who have a family or close relationship with gangs) and individual gang members, as a means of identification.
- Work across teams that specialise in trafficking, sexual offences, child abuse, urban street gangs and organised crime when profiling and investigating offences. 38% of police forces report having specialist teams to investigate all forms of child sexual exploitation. In some areas this is yielding positive results in identifying perpetrators. While not every force reported having identified perpetrators in gangs or groups, the fact that many have is encouraging and demonstrates the potential for large-scale policing to thwart offending. There were 112 groups/networks and 16 street gangs suspected of involvement in CSE reported to the Inquiry data set by 53% and 11% of forces respectively.
- Invest in a missing person coordinator to collect information on: children missing from home and care; children persistently absent from school; children recorded by youth offending services as absconding or breaching a court order (for example, an ASBO).
- Train all staff in the warning signs of sexual exploitation, with further training on its different types for those who will be involved in investigations. Our evidence indicates that all but four forces (87%) had provided some level of training, and the rest said they had training planned.
- Use abduction notices to prevent offending when it is deemed safe to do so.

Drawing upon evidence submitted to the Inquiry by police forces, the following model illustrates how to keep track of perpetrators and prevent them sexually exploiting children and young people.

Figure 13: Model illustrating how to keep track of perpetrators and prevent CSE



The key features of this approach are:

- cases are identified through the recognition of victims, their locations, a group's/gang's motive(s) for abusing them
- a distinct approach to monitoring child offenders
- multi-agency action to impede and apprehend perpetrators
- all activity has strategic direction, delivered by staff who are trained to understand the nature of child sexual exploitation.

Ultimately, pre-emptive policing builds the confidence of children and young people, and professionals in the criminal justice process. It transfers the burden of proof from victims to those safeguarding them. This approach serves to strengthen the testimony of victims where it is available. It also makes it easier to move in and stop child sexual exploitation where victims are unable to make a formal complaint themselves.

3. Targeted early intervention

As well as direct work with a victim and their family, an effective response to child sexual exploitation sets out to stop the same thing happening to others. Any child or young person can be sexually exploited. Universal prevention activity is required to address this. However, during Phase 1, the Inquiry became aware of vulnerabilities that perpetrators can exploit to abuse some children and

young people more easily than others outlined in the patterns of abuse model (see Figure 16 in Appendix 2).

Effective early intervention involves local agencies being aware of vulnerable children and young people in their area and using targeted youth services and statutory child protection procedures where required, in addition to awareness-raising work. The aim is to put all agencies and children themselves on alert, so as to spot child sexual exploitation when this is attempted and then forestall or avoid it.

The Inquiry was told about a **youth club in Rochdale** that had identified a girl who was being sexually exploited. As well as supporting her, the youth club set up a girls' group for her peers. It offered activities (sporting, social etc.) aimed at keeping them out of harm's way. There were also awareness-raising sessions. As a result, the girls became savvy in how to be on the lookout for child sexual exploitation, thereby preventing them becoming victims as well.

The police and a school stepped in early in another similar case.

A local police force worked with partner agencies to notify parents when they identified victims of child sexual exploitation at a school. This enabled the police to identify other victims and put measures in place to forewarn children who had not been exploited so that they knew how to avoid it happening to them.

Evidence gathered during Phase 1 site visit

As these case studies show, the proposed Framework **See Me, Hear Me** is intended to result in agencies intervening early with children and young people who become vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. It draws in universal, targeted and statutory provision and prompts the following.

- Identification of schools and children's homes, where children have already been targeted, to ensure the pupils and children and young people are made fully aware of the risks of child sexual exploitation. As at the youth centre mentioned above, activities are laid on for the children and young people that help place them out of the reach of perpetrators.
- Setting up of awareness-raising sessions on child sexual exploitation for children and young people who are bereaved, have learning difficulties, are young carers, are living in homes where there is domestic abuse or are at risk of forced marriage and/or honour-based violence.
- Provision of training on child sexual exploitation for professionals already working with the potential victims. This will ensure that they are aware of the link between vulnerabilities and a child's susceptibility to exploitation.

Evidence gathered during Phase 1 of the Inquiry established that children and young people, who had been sexually abused in early childhood and not received support, were particularly vulnerable to being exploited in adolescence.

Inadequate recognition of child sexual abuse around the country remains a concern for the Inquiry. Effective early intervention to prevent child sexual exploitation demands quarterly reviews of the circumstances of all children in need, and of those on child protection plans, to establish whether:

- although being known to services for neglect, emotional or physical abuse, they might also be suffering sexual abuse

- having been identified as highly vulnerable (through neglect, physical abuse) they are at greater risk of being targeted for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

During the Inquiry workshop we were informed of a local authority that had reviewed their approach to child sexual abuse and increased the recording of it as a result.

Ealing Local Authority took the initiative to look more closely at the vulnerability of adolescents and sought to improve practice in managing sexual abuse. As a result of this investigation, they have instigated the following.

- Child Protection Advisers (CPAs) will be consulted on all sexual abuse (including sexual exploitation) cases. This is to assist teams in building confidence and competence around sexual abuse and provide objectivity and challenge.
- Wherever possible a CPA will chair the strategy meeting (or MAP meetings), to bring in the objectivity and experience of risk management.
- Child protection conferences are used to consider the needs of children who have been sexually exploited. They currently have 18 children on Child Protection Plans for sexual abuse which is an increase compared to the previous year when there were six.

Sexually exploited children and young people are discussed at the Vulnerable Adolescents Panel (VAP). They review all young people including care leavers who may be at high risk. The purpose of VAP is to support frontline managers and social workers in managing the risk and have the input and accountability at a senior manager level. The focus is not CSE alone but also young people at risk of suicide, serious youth violence and mental health issues.

4. Enduring support for victims and families

'They stuck to us. They spent time even like after everything they still ask "you are you ok?" They are genuinely caring and that was nice.'

Having identified a sexually exploited child or young person, professionals need to work together. This means harnessing their skills and expertise at every stage – from the moment a vulnerable child is identified until he or she is safe from danger or harm.

Furthermore, the relationship between the child/young person and any professional helping them is absolutely crucial. The child or young person needs to have trust and confidence in those supporting them. He or she will want to feel that the professional will be by their side for as long as it takes to make them safe – and beyond.

A professional should be assisted in establishing such a relationship through proper training and effective supervision. Children and young people will have different needs at different times. Some will require intensive therapeutic support. For others, accommodation away from the area where they live will be a priority.

Having a long-term and trusting relationship with a professional, who fully understands what a sexually exploited child or young person goes through is of paramount importance for the victim.

The child also needs to feel that the professionals involved are taking account of his or her specific needs and are urging support services to meet these needs on an individual not a one-size-fits-all basis.

Some areas offer support for victim's families, alongside that for the child or young person involved. Clearly, the family may have a vital role to play in helping a child or young person confront, and recover from, what has happened to them. Offering support to family members who are able to protect and care for the child or young person, distinct from that offered directly to the child or young person, is the best way to ensure that the family can be there for them when he or she most needs them.

The Inquiry notes the work of Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE) in this regard. They have been commissioned by some police forces and local authorities to work directly with the parents of sexually exploited children and young people.

PACE offers advice, information, someone to talk to and advocacy services to parents through telephone, face-to-face, peer support and volunteer befriending activities. This support enables parents to play an active role in safeguarding their children from sexual exploitation. It ensures that parents/carers receive support in addition to that provided for their children. PACE also works with local police forces, alongside parents, to:

- encourage the sharing of information and intelligence by families via interviews, statements and intelligence sheets
- obtain the contribution of parents to ABE (achieving best evidence) interviews
- call for the issuing of warning notices under the Abduction Act 1989, and involve parents in this process.
- work in partnership with child support workers to provide effective 'wrap-around support' for the family.

Parent support workers empower parents/carers and the family to provide long term support for the victims and engage with the professionals working with them.

It is the responsibility of the CSE partnership, be they co-located or virtual, to step in and protect children and young people in the ways described above. To ensure this happens, the LSCB should oversee what is taking place on the ground.

5. Identification/apprehension of perpetrators and monitoring of non-convicted suspects

Conversations with professionals during site visits and at the Inquiry workshop demonstrated that an effective operational model to tackle child sexual exploitation includes the following.

- Every LSCB having a CSE strategy which includes the disruption and prosecution of perpetrators.
- Every LSCB to deliver training for professionals on how to gather evidence of CSE.
- Every LSCB knowing the number of children in their area who have displayed sexually harmful behaviour.
- Agencies commissioned to work with children and young people to ensure they are achieving changes in behaviour and attitude on the part of the child or young person.

- Every police force to adopt a pro-active approach to the collection and development of multi-agency intelligence leading to the identification/apprehension of perpetrators.
- Every police force to build a case against perpetrators using: mobile phone technology; car number plates; online communications; underwear seizure; intelligence held by partner agencies such as residential children's homes, school, sexual health services etc.
- Every police force, working as part of a child sexual exploitation co-located team or virtual partnership, having a protocol outlining how they will keep watch on suspects (and their associates) leading up to a trial. They need to have a plan to monitor those deemed to be an on-going risk to children and young people even though they have not been convicted.

In cases of gang and group-associated child sexual exploitation it is rare that all those involved are convicted. Agencies need to ensure that suspects do not begin to offend again once an investigation ends.

In terms of non-convicted suspects, the Inquiry was concerned that limited examples of effective monitoring were identified. The use of behavioural orders is one possible means of monitoring and disruption available to police forces for both non-convicted and convicted offenders. However, the Inquiry received limited evidence of their use from data only provided by 21% of police forces nationally.

Figure 14: Numbers of known behavioural orders in place for penetrators of CSE in gangs and groups across England (Source: Police data set)

	Number in place for CSE involving gangs and groups	Number of individuals arrested for breaching	Number of individual receiving custodial sentence
Child Abduction Warning notice/Harbourers Warning	42	2	1
Risk of Sexual Harm Order (ROSHO)	1	0	0
Sexual Offences Prevention Order	15	1	2
Gang injunction	0	0	0
Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO)	0	0	0
Other (please specify)	1 (travel order) 2 (closure orders)	0	0

6. Rehabilitation of offenders

The Inquiry looked for examples of perpetrators being successfully rehabilitated after committing offences and being convicted. A workshop was held to discuss the most effective ways of achieving rehabilitation.

It is clear that an effective response to sexual exploitation does not stop once a case has been closed and the perpetrators have been convicted. To rehabilitate adult offenders, an effective approach involves agencies identifying the motive(s) for exploitation and then working to address them. Workshop participants pointed to a range of motives on the part of adult men for committing sexual offences against children:

- power and control
- sexual gratification
- desire for affection, belonging
- money
- revenge for rejection or being abused
- jealousy or anger
- under coercion – fear of someone.

Workshop on offenders participants were keen to highlight money as a motive for some perpetrators. For those who were sexually exploiting children or young people for financial gain, and not for other motives, organisations recommended a response similar to that used against those involved in organised crime.

Evidence at the workshop also suggested that, in addition to the motives already outlined, women in particular may offend due to: fear of violence from a partner; fear of losing a partner if they refuse; a desire to please a partner. The Inquiry has not received evidence of these factors applying to adult male offenders.

However evidence was obtained of both male and female perpetrators being driven by more generic fears including the consequences of defying peer pressures to commit an assault.

Based on the evidence shared, the Inquiry considers these are the most effective actions to take:

- therapeutic treatment of the offender that addresses attitudes and behaviours
- identification of particular characteristics, such as sexual preoccupation and harbouring of grievances
- differential approaches and treatment of males and females based on assessment
- weaning a perpetrator off their dependence on, or identification with, the group they belonged to when offending.

Furthermore, evidence gathered at the workshop and during site visits indicated that, in order to be effective, the response to children and young people who sexually exploit their peers should be relevant to their age and development and not mirror the treatment of adult offenders.

Participants said that children and young people, like adults, had several motives for offending and that there was no specific pattern to how often they offended.

Other observations that emerged from the workshop were as follows.

- Some young people are ‘unknowingly’ perpetrating CSE and require awareness-raising work to enable them to understand ‘consent’ and to challenge their own attitudes.

- Others will be 'knowing' and need to be steered towards changing their behaviour and attitudes.
- In a peer-group or street gang, some young people know their behaviour is unacceptable but feel unable to deviate from the group norm.

The AIM2 Child in Need Assessment is currently proposed for children who commit sexual offences. This assessment was originally designed for boys and young men. It has been adapted for application to girls and young women, and also disabled children. Organisations such as the NSPCC have also adapted assessments to use for those under 12 years of age.

Current provision in this area tends to be based within the sexually harmful behaviour services sector and does not consistently extend to work on gangs, serious youth violence or other forms of violent behaviour.

Summary

We have now set out details of the component parts of the strategic and operational framework that needs to be in place.

The Inquiry gathered numerous examples of where the **See Me, Hear Me** Framework is already working – from the prevention of exploitation in the first place, the joined-up thinking and responses required when dealing with it, to the care of victims and the handling of perpetrators when exploitation has happened.

The next section presents the main conclusions drawn from our two year Inquiry.

3. Conclusions, recommendations and next steps

This report has set out the findings of our two year Inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups and emphasises the urgency required in implementing clear strategic and practical steps to ensure that children and young people vulnerable to sexual exploitation are identified, made safe and kept safe.

We know that this will require specific decision making at senior levels as well as adjustments to inter-agency planning and working, right down to the clear and necessary messages to practitioners in all agencies who are working with the individual victims. This is a challenge, but evidence gathering, strategic planning and front-line practice must be strengthened if we are to make an impact on the child sexual exploitation we have evidenced in this report.

Phase 1 of our Inquiry reported that a total of 2,409 children and young people were known to be victims of CSE by gangs and groups. In addition the Inquiry identified 16,500 children and young people as being at risk of CSE. Shocking as these figures are, we know the true figure is greater.

We know that many of the known victims had been badly let down by those agencies and services who should have been protecting them. The reality is that children and young people continue to fall victim to exploitation. Although we have identified heightened efforts to address this problem in some areas of England, it is a simple fact that too many agencies and services are still failing to effectively safeguard children and young people who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Only 6% of LSCBs evidenced they were meeting the requirements set out in the *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DCSF, 2009) and a third were only meeting up to a half of them.

We have seen examples where local services *are* putting children and young people at the centre of everything they do. In this report we disseminate some of this evidence and the factors that made these services effective. In these places there was a consistent, coherent and collaborative response to CSE with complete commitment from the most senior staff to those on the frontline, thus offering greater protection for children and young people threatened by, or experiencing, sexual exploitation. These examples have informed our view of what needs to be done in those places where children and young people are *not* being protected.

In Chapter 1 of this report we looked at the national response to child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups; both what is going wrong and where things are working well. We concluded that while some agencies are working to strategic plans, offering enduring support, and putting the child first, in too many places a lack of joined-up working on the part of agencies and services is allowing vulnerable children and young people to slip through the net to become victims of sexual exploitation. This message is not new. It is one of the primary messages in most major child protection enquiries. But we have found it is also the case for children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

In Chapter 2 we built upon the national picture to propose the **See Me, Hear Me** Framework for responding to child sexual exploitation, examining what needs to be put in place to ensure there is a coherent approach to collaboration, partnership and practice, and enabling the whole system to respond properly.

Our conclusions are therefore based on that evidence which demonstrated the characteristics of systems which work well, and our learnings from those systems that are less effective. We have listed the seven principles which characterise an effective system and the processes which professionals

and agencies must work through in order that the focus remains on keeping children safe and securing their long term wellbeing.

The process described in this report sets out how local agencies can identify the prevalence of child sexual exploitation in their local area, agree strategic and practical steps which will ensure the identification of individual children and young people who might be at risk or who are already victims, and how to work with them.

This section sets out where we are in terms of adopting the seven principles which we know characterise the effective systems which are able to identify, plan and respond to the needs of children at risk of sexual exploitation, and which we propose in the **See Me Hear Me** Framework. We know that the fundamental strength of the Framework is that its individual components are co-dependent. Implementing one, or a number of components, but failing to implement all of them will fail to maximise the opportunities to protect children from sexual exploitation. Implementing all of them, and acknowledging the co-dependencies between them, makes it more likely that children will be protected. Identifying where we currently stand points us in the direction of recommendations: what is required to fully implement this approach across England.

The seven principles which characterise systems capable of protecting children from sexual exploitation: Where we are at and where we need to be

1) The child's best interests must be the top priority

The child must be visible and must be heard. While some individual agencies, particular those in the voluntary sector, could demonstrate how to work in the best interests of children and young people, close to a third (31%) of LSCBs reported not having access to specialist services that work with sexually exploited children and young people. It is clear that in a significant number of areas across England, their best interests cannot be met.

2) Participation of children and young people

Children and young people's views should be at the heart of developing strategic plans to combat child sexual exploitation. This can be achieved through ensuring that they have the opportunity to do the following.

- Make a meaningful and lasting contribution to developing national and local strategies for tackling child sexual exploitation.
- Have a say in how they are being protected and cared for.
- Are offered regular opportunities to provide feedback on their experience of services, so that other young people will benefit from any lessons learned.
- Take part in programmes unrelated to sexual exploitation which will build their resilience and confidence so that they can put their experiences of abuse behind them and start to rebuild their lives.

While the Inquiry identified examples of individual services adopting participatory approaches outlined above, less than half (47%) of LSCBs involved children and young people in planning meetings about their own care and protection.

3) Enduring relationships and support

Children and young people say that enduring relationships and accessible support makes a qualitative difference to their lives. National and local service providers must ensure the following.

- Children who are victims of CSE have a consistent named professional who will provide on-going support and stick with them through challenging times.
- Families/carers who can safeguard and support a sexually exploited child or young person are offered support.
- Support is also considered for friends of children or young people who have been exploited.
- Support is delivered through a partnership approach and those partnerships can be 'co-located' or 'virtual'. No single agency on its own can provide an effective response to child sexual exploitation. Neither should it.
- Specialist youth and universal services should be commissioned specifically for children and young people who have been sexually exploited for as long as they are needed – not just on a short-term basis.
- A range of interventions are available for managing, and where possible rehabilitating, those who have sexually exploited children and young people.

There are clearly agencies around England who are offering this level of support. Indeed, the provision of interventions for victims is the service area where we have seen the most investment during site visits. However, 50% of police forces and 32% LSCBs who responded to the call for evidence identified a lack of resource as a barrier to offering support, and over two-thirds (68%) of LSCBs nationally did not have specialist provision in place for young people once they turn 16.

4) Comprehensive 'problem-profiling'

Central government and every local area must be able to interrogate and interpret the facts, the extent and the impact of child sexual exploitation by doing the following.

- Constructing local problem profiles that include knowing how many children and young people have been sexually exploited; knowing those children and young people who are suspected of exploiting their peers; intelligence on businesses and schools that are of concern; intelligence on local street gangs and other networks, groups and individuals who present a risk to children and young people.
- Government producing an annual national overview of CSE covering prevalence, enforcement, convictions and progress on preventative and protection action.
- The collation of local street gang profiles that identify gang-associated women and girls, and are routinely linked to the local strategic child sexual exploitation strategy.

Across England, problem-profiles have not been produced at the same rates as strategies to tackle sexual exploitation, limiting the extent to which this principle is currently being realised. Only 35% of LSCBs reported having analysed or developed a detailed picture of their local problem and were therefore seeking to tackle a problem that they didn't fully understand. And yet, understanding the local picture is essential for informing the commissioning of services, training of staff, and prioritising activity for a local strategy.

5) Effective information-sharing within and between agencies

This can be achieved through the following.

- The appointment of a local child sexual exploitation coordinator by LSCBs.
- The development by LSCBS of a child sexual exploitation strategy which influences local responses so that there is effective joined-up working within and between agencies and which is co-ordinated so that all information comes into a central hub.
- Ensuring there are strategic and operational links between child sexual exploitation coordinators, missing person coordinators and women, girls and gangs coordinators (in gang-affected neighbourhoods).
- LSCBs being responsible for the co-ordination of routine data collection on children and young people demonstrating indicators of child sexual exploitation. This should improve the likelihood of professionals recognising potential and actual sexual exploitation without placing the primary burden of telling on the child or young person.
- Every area producing a clear and unambiguous information-sharing protocol in relation to child sexual exploitation, to which chief officers of all agencies on LSCBs are signatories and for which they are all accountable.

The Inquiry received evidence on individual and multi-agency approaches to information-sharing, enabling professionals to identify victims and apprehend perpetrators. However, in most parts of the country people are working in isolation, with only 6% of LSCBs having embedded child sexual exploitation in their approach to tackling gang and serious youth violence. Evidence was also offered of the role of child sexual exploitation coordinators in orchestrating and managing the flow of information. And yet, close to a third of LSCBs do not have a plan in place to appoint such a coordinator.

6) Supervision, support and training for staff

Staff supervision, support and professional development is essential to ensuring quality practice and compliance with national and local policies.

- All staff dealing with child sexual exploitation should be offered regular supervision or consultation from an experienced supervisor who should support and advise on the potentially traumatic impact of the work on the emotions, judgement and resilience of individual professionals.
- All staff who work, or who might come into contact with sexually exploited children and young people should be provided with comprehensive and regular training which covers:
  - preventing child sexual exploitation
  - identifying all models of child sexual exploitation
  - investigating child sexual exploitation, compiling a case, and supporting children through the process
  - the importance of specialist supervision in this work, and how to use it.

Across England, LSCBs in general, and police forces specifically, are investing in training. Awareness-raising activities with professionals had been delivered by 78% of LSCBs. However, in order for the principle to be realised, this activity needs to be built upon, to ensure that CSE is included in all

safeguarding training for professionals who work with children and young people, including teachers, social workers and health professionals.

7) Evaluation and review

While many voluntary sector organisations are required to evaluate and review the work they undertake with sexually exploited children and young people, the Inquiry can conclude that this is yet to be replicated by statutory services. In order for this principle to be realised, a means for professionals to review the approaches that they are taking, both strategically and operationally, is required.

Leadership – the key to effective practice

Child sexual exploitation is tackled effectively – from prevention through protection, enforcement, securing justice and long-term recovery – where there is clear and committed leadership that provides unambiguous messages of the importance of doing this work.

Our conclusion is that dynamic and consistent leadership in every part of the system is critical for success. National and local leaders need to ensure a golden thread of consistency and exemplary practice in order to develop and sustain systems that enable child sexual exploitation to be recognised, that build local systems that are capable of managing the consequences of that exploitation, and that scaffold the practice of front line practitioners by ensuring that processes and structures are responsive to the needs of children and young people and the staff working with them.

There is no doubt that substantial progress has been made since we began this Inquiry. The task now is to build on the momentum and to sustain the drive to systematically tackle child sexual exploitation. There is still a long way to go. Applying the seven principles as a foundation for good practice will help drive and maintain progress.

We have already noted that the exercises to learn lessons from Serious Case Reviews are meaningless if the learning is not followed through. A refreshing exception to this is the recent review undertaken by Derby LSCB following the conclusion of Operation Kern in which 11 offenders were convicted for sexually exploiting children and young people (see page 64).

We have been informed by a number of agencies that competing demands on their reducing budgets are presenting significant challenges in fulfilling their obligations to protect children and young people. We have been concerned at reports of the loss of some voluntary sector services for sexually exploited children and young people because of grants being withdrawn. At the same time, our evidence shows that, where there is commitment and leadership, agencies find the resources to do this work and do it well. We saw these examples in the police, in children's social care, in LSCBs, in health services ranging from an A&E department to sexual health clinics, in schools, in youth offending teams, in joint agency initiatives such as MASHs and across a wide range of voluntary sector services both big and small.

See Me, Hear Me and the evidence in this report shows how to provide effective services that deliver the desired outcomes for children. It is essential to be evidence-based and apply rigorous evaluation in order make sure resources are deployed effectively.

Recommendations

1. The Department for Education should review and where necessary, revise the *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DCSF, 2009). This should include a review of the definition of CSE.

2. Every Local Safeguarding Children Board should take all necessary steps to ensure they are fully compliant with the current *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DCSF, 2009).

3. Every Local Safeguarding Children Board should review their strategic and operational plans and procedures against the seven principles, nine foundations and **See Me, Hear Me** Framework in this report, ensuring they are meeting their obligations to children and young people and the professionals who work with them. Gaps should be identified and plans developed for delivering effective practice in accordance with the evidence. The effectiveness of plans, procedures and practice should be subject to an on-going evaluation and review cycle.

4. There need to be nationally and locally agreed information-sharing protocols that specify every agencies' and professional's responsibilities and duties for sharing information about children who are or may be in need of protection. At the national level, this should be lead and coordinated by the Home Office through the Sexual Violence Against Children and Vulnerable People National Group. At the local level, this must be led by LSCBs. All member agencies at both levels must be signatories and compliance rigorously monitored.

5. Problem-profiling of victims, offenders, gangs, gang-associated girls, high risk businesses and neighbourhoods and other relevant factors must take place at both national and local levels. The Home Office, through the Sexual Violence Against Children and Vulnerable People National Group, should lead and coordinate the development of a national profile. Local Safeguarding Children Boards should do the equivalent at the local level.

6. Every local authority must ensure that its Joint Strategic Needs Assessment includes evidence about the prevalence of CSE, identification and needs of high risk groups, local gangs, their membership and associated females. This should determine commissioning decisions and priorities.

7. Relationships and sex education must be provided by trained practitioners in every educational setting for all children. This must be part of a holistic/whole-school approach to child protection that includes internet safety and all forms of bullying and harassment and the getting and giving of consent.

8. Through the Sexual Violence against Children and Vulnerable People National Group, the Government should undertake a review of the various initiatives being funded by the Home Office, Department for Education, Department of Health and any others as relevant, in order to ensure services are not duplicated and that programmes are complementary, coordinated and adequately funded. All initiatives should be cross-checked to ensure that they are effectively linked into child protection procedures and local safeguarding arrangements.

Next steps

The Office of the Children's Commissioner's work on child sexual exploitation and all its ramifications does not end with the conclusion of this Inquiry. We will continue to provide leadership, challenge, expertise and acknowledgement of effective practice so that momentum is not lost.

Most of all, our determination is that the victims should be seen, heard, protected and supported to recover.

Over the coming year we will do the following.

- Establish a small number of pilot sites to test out the efficacy of **See Me, Hear Me** and will report on the findings.
- We will produce a series of briefing papers on the substantial body of evidence that we have not yet published.
- All recommendations from every report produced during the course of the Inquiry will be vigorously followed up and monitored. Implementation of the recommendations is essential for the effective tackling of this appalling form of child sexual abuse.
- Commence an investigation into the prevalence of child sexual abuse that takes place in intra-familial settings or those that are within the family context. So many young people told us during the Inquiry of their early histories of being sexually abused within the family home and of their experiences never being acknowledged. As a consequence they were neither protected nor supported. Currently only 5.5% of the approximately 60,000 children in England with child protection plans have a plan under the category of sexual abuse. We suspect that this is a significant undercounting. These children are still invisible and we aim to find out the truth.

'Everything gets better in the end, and if it's not better, it's not the end'

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Appendix 1: How evidence was gathered

Phase 2 of the Inquiry set itself two objectives as it embarked upon collecting evidence on child sexual exploitation.

- To learn where and how child sexual exploitation is already being tackled successfully.
- To understand what's getting in the way – the 'barriers' – where the problem is not being dealt with effectively.

The following table outlines the methods adopted by the Inquiry in acquiring the evidence that would shed light on the above two areas.

The following abbreviations may be helpful.

GUM – Genito-Urinary Medicine

CAMHS – *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services*

Figure 15: Evidence collected during Phase 2 of the Inquiry

	Method	Objective	Responses/activity
1	Call for evidence	Open call to collect examples of a) practice that agencies and/or professionals consider to be effective and b) barriers to implementing it	**96** submissions received involving **180** agencies • Voluntary organisations (33) • police (22) • schools and colleges (9) • local safeguarding children's boards (7) • multi-agencies (7) • government agencies (6) • health (6) • children and young people services (5) and • trainers (1)
2	LSCB dataset request	Uniform request to collect data on strategic and operational activity from every LSCB in England	**100%** LSCBs responded (Total – **148**)
3	Police force dataset request	Uniform request to collect data on strategic and operational activity from every police force in England	**100%** police forces responded (Total – **39**)
4	GUM clinic dataset request	Uniform request to every GUM clinic across England to collect information on training, information-sharing and awareness	**37** responses[6]

6 In addition, 50 responses were received from sexual health services (see 'limitations of evidence' for further details).

	Method	Objective	Responses/activity
5	Drug and alcohol misuse service dataset request	Uniform request to every drug and alcohol service in England to collect information on training, information-sharing and awareness	**81** responses
6	CAMHS service dataset request	Uniform request to every CAMHS service in England to collect information on training, information-sharing and awareness.	**69** responses
7	Collection of evaluations	Observe how agencies are measuring effectiveness when evaluating CSE interventions.	**121** evaluations analysed
8	Site visits	Further understand and explore practice identified as 'effective' – in meetings with professionals and visits to services	**11** sites visited **62** agencies consulted
9	Academic seminar	Gather existing evidence related to child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups to place Phase 2 findings into context	**10** academics and **5** guests involved
10	Recommendations workshop	Work alongside professionals to draw up recommendations based on evidence and current good practice	Attended by **41** professionals
11	Commissioned research – sexual violence in gang-affected neighbourhoods	Gain an insight into CSE and sexual violence by hearing the experiences of young people living in gang-affected neighbourhoods	**150** young people interviewed at six sites **30** young people in focus groups **70** professionals in focus groups report submitted
12	Commissioned research – children and young people's understanding of consent	Learn how children and young people understand the meaning of 'consent' in sexual relationships.	**497** young people surveyed **87** young people focus groups **23** young people interviewed report submitted

	Method	Objective	Responses/activity
13	Commissioned research – impact of pornography on children and young people	Analyse research on whether pornography has an impact on children and young people's attitudes, expectations and behaviour.	**41,000** articles identified **2,304** screened **276** detailed analysis **15** professionals in workshop **17** young people in workshop report submitted
14	Policy Review	On-going analysis of national policy of relevance to the CSEGG Inquiry as it formulates its recommendations	Review of **20** individual policy Areas covering seven government departments and four national associations

In addition, information on the Phase 1 methodology can be accessed in Appendix B of the CSEGG Inquiry's Interim Report.

Limitations of the evidence

The evidence and data collected to inform the findings of this report is the most thorough and comprehensive collection of information on interventions and practice targeting child sexual exploitation by gangs and groups collected to date in England. At the same time, there are some limitations and challenges that were encountered in collecting this data which are outlined below.

Gaps in evidence/data submitted to the Inquiry

- There were some inconsistencies in the submissions to the call for evidence. Whereas some submissions chose to only fill out the multiple choice questions, others chose to submit information in prose or did both. Some submissions did not follow the pre-set questions.
- Not all submissions to the call for evidence fully completed the form.
- A singular LSCB data set response was received from Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea due to tri-borough arrangements in place across local authorities. It was acknowledged that not all activity outlined was consistently in place across all local authorities but this was not broken down and could therefore only be counted as one submission.
- Whilst all police forces responded to the datasets all the percentages in the report are calculated based on their being 38 forces nationally (excluding City of London Police). This is due to the relatively small comparative size of this force and its resident population size.
- The health dataset responses were specifically directed at Substance Misuse, CAMHS and GUM clinics in place nationally. In the absence of accurate distribution lists to directly approach these services approaches to these agencies were made through a number of avenues. In some instances this led to the dataset request being disseminated to agencies that were not part of the original plan, particularly broader sexual health services. It was decided to make use of this data

and analyse it alongside the other submissions. The representativeness of this aspect of the data is therefore uncertain and findings treated with caution.

- The comparison of the LSCB dataset against the 2009 DCSF Working together has enabled a comparison against the practice in place against what the guidance says should be. However, this is only to be used as a guide/partial illustration as there were a number of areas detailed in the guidance which were not possible to compare against the dataset. Also some of the data collected from LSCBs during the Inquiry enabled more accurate comparison against the guidance than others.
- The comparison of the LSCB dataset against the data collected from LSCBs by Bedfordshire in their What's going on? data collection (Jago et al, 2011) was not possible in all LSCBs. 75% of LSCBs responded to the Bedfordshire data collection and in the intervening time some changes in geographical responsibilities/make-up of LSCBs has taken place. Therefore the comparison was possible in 97 LSCBs currently operating nationally (66%).
- The Inquiry began its evidence capture for this report in September 2012 with the majority of submissions coming in during April/May 2013 (the last submission received in September 2013). It is therefore possible that the current practice in place has changed slightly to that outlined in this report.

Appendix 2: Patterns of group and gang-associated child sexual exploitation

Over recent years, international research into 'multiple-perpetrator' (more than one person involved) rape, and other forms of group-based sexual offending has increased. This points to the importance of understanding the impact of the group both on the behaviour of offenders and the experience of the victim. When several perpetrators are involved, the violence inflicted upon the victim can be brutal. Should a victim go to the police, it's harder to protect him or her from a number of perpetrators than it is from one.

Compared with 'single-perpetrator' sexual violence, group-based sexual offending:

- is committed more frequently by offenders in their teens and early twenties, as opposed to those who offend alone
- involves 'leaders' and 'followers' based either on seniority, with older perpetrators ordering younger ones to offend or on some group members instigating abuse in which the rest of the group then take part
- involves greater levels of physical violence than that perpetrated by smaller groups.

All of the above has been reflected in the findings of the CSEGG Inquiry, which recognises that street gangs are one type of group. The Interim Report noted that there were both similarities and differences between gang-associated child sexual exploitation and other forms of group-associated abuse. (Ref)

Figure 16: Patterns of child sexual exploitation in gangs and other groups

Across these various forms of abuse, the Inquiry identified 13 patterns of child sexual exploitation in gangs and other groups.

Group-associated child sexual exploitation

Group-associated child sexual exploitation involves a group or network of individuals who, for a range of reasons, come together to sexually exploit children.

The individuals in this network may never meet. They are likely to be connected through the victims that they abuse, the taxi firms or bus shelters they use, the take-away shops they frequent in order to find vulnerable children and young people, or the organised 'parties' they go to where they pay to abuse children and young people.

However, they might also be peer-groups, or known through families, neighbourhood or other connections. Some groups are highly organised while others are ad hoc and opportunistic. Some groups are making commercial and financial profit from the exploitation of children and young people while others make no obvious financial gain.

In all cases, they are identified as a 'group' in the context of CSE, but might not be identified as a group for any other reason.

Agencies reported that of the 2409[7] victims they reported to Phase 1 of the Inquiry, 1,325 involved group-associated sexual exploitation. Within this category of child sexual exploitation, the Inquiry learned of several different types of abuse.

Sole-perpetrator linked to a network of individuals

A man groomed a child. He then brought the child to the homes of 'friends', or invited his 'friends' to his own property, for the purposes of sexual exploitation. In many of these cases the different 'friends' would not meet or even know each other. Instead, the child would be taken from house to house. It was often unclear as to whether these cases involved financial profit. In some instances, victims said they witnessed financial exchanges, but these were often small and ad hoc.

Networks of individuals using transport hubs

The Inquiry was told of bus and coach stations being used by perpetrators to spot and recruit children and young people for sexual exploitation. This was particularly the case where they were running away from home and living on the street as a result. Perpetrators know such children and young people need a room. They are picked up at stations and offered accommodation for the night, in exchange for sex. In a number of cases, the same child or young person would return to the bus station each evening and different men would make the same offer. In cases like these, individuals involved were connected through the one victim, and their use of bus shelters, rather than their own network, to find vulnerable children and young people. Similarly, we were told of bus or taxi drivers offering lifts, in exchange for sex, to children and young people who were homeless and standing at bus shelters.

Online sole-perpetrator linked to wider group/network

The Inquiry heard of individuals who would find and groom children and young people using social networking sites, meet them in person, and then circulate them among their friends who would exploit them. In one case, a sole perpetrator homed in on a group of girls from the same school, groomed them online, met them in person and then used the girls to recruit their peers. This individual then passed the children and young people around his wider friendship group. This method of working – i.e. the merging of online and face-to-face recruitment – was identified around the country.

7 19 cases were identified as both gang and group associated and in the cases of 632 victims agencies would not confirm whether the group involved was a street gang or another form of group.

Linked to abuse within families

The Inquiry was repeatedly informed of occasions when the primary groomer, or connection to a wider network of perpetrators, belonged, or was connected to, a victim's family. In these cases, the relative or family friend would often sexually abuse the victim themselves, before passing him or her around their wider friendship networks. Sometimes the primary groomer would make a financial profit, but not always. This behaviour was sometimes associated with domestic abuse or 'honour'-based violence within the immediate and extended family.

Linked to adult prostitution

The Inquiry reviewed cases in which adults, who were organising the prostitution of adult women, also sexually exploited the children and young people connected to those women. The Inquiry interviewed the children and young people involved. Sometimes, this was uncovered at hostel accommodation. Adult women living in hostels would be coerced by their pimps to recruit 16 and 17 year-olds living in the same accommodation. On other occasions, the children of women who were involved in prostitution would either be abused by the men who were paying for sex with their mother or would be exploited by the pimps.

Organised crime groups and networks

Example 1: A group of men in their twenties are responsible for grooming girls, mostly 12–15 years old, living in residential children's homes and vulnerable as a result. These girls are taken to private properties and hotels within a city. Men of different ages visit the properties and pay to rape the girls. Girls can be locked in the properties for days at a time and are sometimes given alcohol or drugs to subdue them. They are expected to take part in several sexual practices, including some that cause them physical injury or are particularly humiliating. Some girls are also trafficked and sold to men in other parts of the country. The exploitation is linked to businesses and private accommodation. There is an organisational structure and hierarchy to the crime group, who make a profit from the exploitation they inflict on the girls.

Example 2: Boys aged 14–15 are groomed by men in their early twenties to recruit and abuse girls in their school. The men buy the boys trainers and phones, and regularly collect the boys from school. Different methods are used to control the boys. Sometimes, young women with a history of sexual exploitation would also be used to recruit victims. Victims would be abused by the men in their early twenties and would then be passed on to older men in the network through a 'party' model. These men would then arrange 'parties' locally or in other parts of the country for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Children and young people (generally girls, although the Inquiry was told boys were also victims) would be given alcohol and/or drugs and trafficked in cars (sometimes taxis) to private homes or warehouses. Adult men would attend parties and pay organisers to rape them. The men who paid to abuse them are rarely identified and there is no information to confirm whether these are the same men at different parties or different groups of men on each occasion.

Peer-on-peer CSE

The types of exploitation outlined above were either committed by adult perpetrators or organised by adults.

However, the Inquiry also received evidence of peer-on-peer exploitation: 29% of perpetrators, reported to the Inquiry during **Phase 1**, were under the age of 19, and the youngest was 12.

In a group context, this was seen in a number of ways.

School-based CSE
The Inquiry received evidence of numerous cases of CSE within schools. On occasions, professionals referred to this as 'sexual bullying'. In some instances, this form of exploitation involved several groups sexually assaulting and harassing a victim routinely over an extended period. Sometimes this was because the victim had been involved in a relationship with a boy, or had been videoed or photographed in a sexual act. This image had then been circulated. Other boys would then demand sexual activity or assault the victim. On other occasions a peer group would be involved in the sexual exploitation of pupils at their school. In one case, the Inquiry learned of girl A, who had recruited boy B to sexually assault another female pupil. The victim was told she had to take part in sexual activity with boy B in order to get back a possession that girl A had taken from her. In all of these cases there was little or no evidence of a connection to organised or commercial sexual exploitation involving adult perpetrators.

Neighbourhood-based CSE
The Inquiry was informed of peer-on-peer exploitation in neighbourhoods rather than in schools. Peer-groups were routinely involved in sexually assaulting girls who lived near them, often in public places such as stairwells and alleyways, as well as in their own homes. In some cases, boys would use text messages or the Internet to invite their friends to join them. On other occasions this type of group-based activity took place in parks and involved the use of alcohol.

Gang-associated child sexual exploitation

Gang-associated child sexual exploitation is committed by street gangs who have come together for purposes other than sexual exploitation.

Their reasons for forming a gang include: to protect their territory; to sell drugs; to commit robbery; to carry out other crimes.

However, sexual violence might occur within or between street gangs.

Gang members, their associates and the professionals who work with them very often fail to regard or classify such violence as sexual exploitation.

Research commissioned for the Inquiry showed that while gang-associated sexual exploitation has much in common with sexual violence outside of gangs, it has several characteristics of its own (Beckett et al, 2012: 8). For example, rape is used as a weapon within gang conflict or as a punishment. Young girls will offer sex, particularly to a gang leader, to achieve some kind of status within the gang, to gain protection against sexual violence by other gang members or as an act of initiation into the gang. Sexual relationships might be used to 'set-up' rival members or associates to be attacked.

Within street gangs, therefore, sexual violence and exploitation plays a specific role, directly linked to gang-associated violence and conflict.

Of the 2,409[8] victims identified in Phase 1 of the Inquiry, agencies cited 433 cases of gang-associated child sexual exploitation. This was not easily identified by professionals, compared with group-associated abuse. In addition, the research conducted by the University of Bedfordshire (Coy et al, 2013) shows that, compared with group-associated CSE, the majority of gang-associated cases are peer-on-peer, as opposed to adult-on-child.

Commissioned research and evidence to the Inquiry resulted in the following types of gang-based sexual exploitation being categorised.

Inter-gang exploitation – punishment/retribution/threat

Evidence to the Inquiry and research findings identified sexual violence being used against gang-associated females as a means of threatening or punishing a member of a rival gang to whom they are linked (siblings, girlfriends, friends of gang members). This often involves the targeting of female siblings when their brothers are in custody. These assaults are unique in that they are directed at someone who is simply connected, however loosely, to the rival gang member. The victim might have no other connection than that to a gang or to serious youth violence, but they are still targeted.

Intra-Gang exploitation – ad hoc and opportunistic

A significant number of cases submitted to the Inquiry, and captured through the research, involved the seemingly 'casual' exploitation of young women who were associated with street gangs through 'friendships' or 'relationships'. This behaviour was part of the hyper-masculine and violent nature of the group. Often, it was a means by which young women could gain acceptance to the gang, giving them a sense of belonging. Some of these young women will also be expected to commit offences alongside their male peers. They might offend in a violent or aggressive way in order to come across as being tough and masculine, thereby hoping to avoid becoming the sexual target of male gang members. In these situations, neither consent nor coercion entered the minds of the perpetrator or the victim. This was particularly so in cases of young women who had been involved in some form of sexual relationship with a gang member. Once this ended she would then be expected to take part in sexual activity with other members. Furthermore, if a young woman was perceived as sexually available (based on previous sexual behaviour) her right to give or not give consent to sexual activity never came into question. It was totally disregarded.

Intra-Gang exploitation – punishment of males

Largely from the commissioned research, and from a case submitted to the Inquiry, we were informed of sexual violence within gangs as a form of punishment of male gang members. Males have been stripped or required to perform humiliating sexual acts by the gang to whom they owe allegiance. This might occur to settle disputes involving: disrespect; a drugs sale, or other criminal activity, going wrong; other behaviour that might displease the gang.

8 19 cases were identified as both gang and group associated and in the cases of 632 victims agencies would not confirm whether the group involved was a street gang or another form of group.

Intra-Gang exploitation – punishment of females

Evidence submitted to the Inquiry and uncovered by commissioned research identified rape as a means of punishing young women who had 'let down' their gang – either by associating with rival gangs/individuals, or by failing to play their part in a criminal offence (for example, messing up a drugs sale or not providing an alibi for someone). Social networking often played a role in these cases if young women were: photographed with rivals; discovered holding online conversations with rivals; spotted visiting a rival gang's territory. Alternatively, punishment might also be inflicted upon young women who try either to leave a gang or to end a relationship with a gang member.

Inter-gang Exploitation – 'set-up' scenarios

The commissioned research produced extensive evidence of girls and young women starting a sexual relationship with a male member of a rival gang in order to set them up for an attack. A girl would be planted and ordered to offer sex to the rival gang member to gain their trust and gather information on them. This information would be passed back to the gang who had arranged the set-up. If these girls were uncovered as plants, they would be subjected to physical and sexual violence by those they were attempting to set up. Sometimes young women were wrongly suspected of being part of a set-up and assaulted.

Intra-gang exploitation – initiation of males

Evidence to the Inquiry and commissioned research showed that professionals were more likely to be alerted to the initiation of young men through the rape of young women. Boys and young men might be required to rape a rival or, more commonly, to take part in group-based sexual activity with a young woman (who might be forced to join in a 'line-up' for example) as a means of demonstrating solidarity with the gang to which they are associated.

Appendix 3: Warning signs and vulnerabilities checklist identified during Phase 1 of the Inquiry

The following are typical **vulnerabilities in children prior to abuse**.

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality)
- History of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of honour-based violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect)
- Recent bereavement or loss.
- Gang-association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships (in cases of gang-associated CSE only).
- Attending school with children and young people who are already sexually exploited.
- Learning disabilities.
- Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families.
- Friends with young people who are sexually exploited.
- Homeless.
- Lacking friends from the same age group.
- Living in a gang neighbourhood.
- Living in residential care.
- Living in hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation or a foyer.
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence.
- Young carer.

The following signs and behaviour are generally seen in children who are **already being sexually exploited**.

- Missing from home or care.
- Physical injuries.
- Drug or alcohol misuse.
- Involvement in offending.
- Repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations.
- Absent from school.
- Change in physical appearance.
- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites.
- Estranged from their family.

- Receipt of gifts from unknown sources.
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations.
- Poor mental health.
- Self-harm.
- Thoughts of or attempts at suicide.

Evidence highlighted in the interim report showed that any child displaying several vulnerabilities from the above lists should be considered to be at high risk of sexual exploitation. Professionals should immediately start an investigation to determine the risk, along with preventative and protective action as required.

However, it is important to note that children and young people without pre-existing vulnerabilities can still be sexually exploited. Therefore, any child or young person showing risk indicators in the second list, but none of the vulnerabilities in the first, should also be considered as a potential victim, with appropriate assessment and action put in place as required.

The following organisations and agencies need to take account of the above list and work together to identify children and young people showing the warning signs of, or who are vulnerable to, child sexual exploitation, and act accordingly.

- Accident and Emergency departments
- CAMHS services
- Children's Social Care (including family support/early intervention teams, child protection/duty and assessment teams, looked-after children teams, leaving care teams)
- Drop-in clinics and community based health services
- Drugs and alcohol misuse services
- Educational institutions (including schools, pupil referral units, academies, private schools, special schools, and extra-curricular provision)
- Fire Service
- Gangs and serious youth violence projects
- GP surgeries
- GUM and family planning clinics
- Housing (including foyers, hostels, refuges, bed and breakfast, and housing associations)
- Midwifery and health visitors
- Police (including neighbourhood policing, missing, safer schools officers, gangs and youth violence, organised crime, trafficking, child abuse investigation teams, sexual offences teams)
- Residential children's homes
- Sexual Assault Referral Centres
- Violence against women agencies (including rape crisis and refuge provision)

- Youth Justice agencies (including youth offending services, secure training centres and youth offending institutions)
- Youth service and specialist agencies working with children and young people (including mentoring services, those working with disabled children, LGBT children, BME children)

In order to identify children who show the above risk indicators, professionals could begin by bringing together data that is already collected, adopting a similar approach to that which has been used by the Inquiry to produce the CSEGG dataset. Data is not routinely collected on all of the risk indicators identified, but to assist with the risk assessment process we are publishing the list of indicators that the Inquiry used for the CSEGG dataset, and the data sources from which they were accessed.

Figure 17: CSEGG indicators, dataset and source

	Indicator	Dataset	Source
1.	Missing from home or care	Children reported missing or Children reported to be 'absconding' or 'breaching'.	Police YOT data via ASSET
2.	Victim of a sexual offence	Children reported as victims of rape	Police
3.	Engagement in offending	Young people known to youth offending services	YOT data via ASSET
4.	Lacking friends from the same age group	Children lacking age appropriate friends	YOT data via ASSET
5.	Repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations or poor mental health	Children putting their health at risk	YOT data via ASSET
6.	Recruiting others into exploitative situations	Children displaying sexually inappropriate behaviour	YOT data via ASSET

	Indicator	Dataset	Source
7.	Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality) or History of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of honour-based violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect or Children in care	Children referred to as 'children in need' or Children 'looked after' under both S31 and S20 orders	Local authority Local authority
8.	Absent from school	Children persistently absent from school	Local authority
9.	Excluded from education	Children permanently excluded from school	Local authority
10.	Self-harm or thoughts of or attempts at suicide	Children who are self-harming or showing suicidal intent	PCT/CAMHS
11.	Drug or alcohol misuse	Children misusing drugs and/or alcohol	PCT/drug and alcohol team

Appendix 4: List of relevant paragraphs/areas compared from *Working together guidance on CSE* (DSCF, 2009) and OCC LSCB data capture

The full guidance can be found at the following location: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-young-people-from-sexual-exploitation-supplementary-guidance

Figure 18: What is required – 2009 DCSF Guidance and Inquiry LSCB Data set question

Para	What is required (DCSF Guidance wording)	Summary	Dataset question
3.17 4.16	LSCBs should put in place systems to monitor prevalence and responses to child sexual exploitation within their area (see paragraph 4.16). They should start from the basis that there is a problem to be addressed in their area – this would include gathering data from Board partners and other local stakeholders. Research suggests that sexual exploitation does indeed take place in most areas across the country[16] In their monitoring and evaluation of case work, LSCBs should put in place systems to track and monitor cases of sexual exploitation that come to the attention of local agencies including schools, colleges and other education organisations, health, the police, social care, housing services and voluntary and community sector organisations. It would clearly be helpful if LSCBs could share key data with one another and with national organisations to improve the evidence base on sexual exploitation and work to address it.	Mechanisms in place to collect prevalence and monitor cases of CSE	Q1– Do you collect data on the number of children/young people who have been identified within your area re at risk or victims of CSE?
4.5	As explained in Chapter 1, every LSCB should assume that sexual exploitation occurs within its area unless there is clear evidence to the contrary. Sexual exploitation should be considered in local needs assessments and, where it is a significant issue, the LSCB should help ensure it is regarded as a priority by the Children's Trust.	Assume that CSE is present and treat it as a priority where believed to be significant issue.	Q2 – Is CSE a strategic priority for your LSCB?

4.6	Local activity should include measures to prevent children and young people becoming exploited (see Chapter 5) as well as measures to help young people who are exploited and to take action against perpetrators.	Local activity should include preventative activity, helping those being exploited and targeting perpetrators	Q3 –Does your strategy include disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators? (partial comparison possible)
4.7	In fulfilling their function of developing policies and procedures, LSCBs should ensure that specific local procedures are in place covering the sexual exploitation of children and young people. These should be developed in line with this guidance (in particular Chapter 6 which addresses the management of individual cases) and set out clearly the respective roles and responsibilities of local agencies and professionals. These procedures should be a subset of the LSCB procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and be consistent with local youth offending protocols. The strong associations that have been identified between different forms of sexual exploitation, running away from home, child trafficking and substance misuse should also be borne in mind.	LSCBs should have specific local procedures to cover CSE (e.g. a strategy)	Q4 – Has your LSCB produced a strategy for tackling CSE

4.8	All agencies with responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people should be involved in drawing up these procedures, including local and national voluntary child and family support agencies and national voluntary child care organisations which have a local presence. It would also be helpful to involve the Crown Prosecution Service as local procedures should include reference to disruption plans and gathering evidence for prosecutions of the perpetrators. Survivors of sexual exploitation and those who have been indirectly affected, such as parents, carers and other family members, who are willing to be involved with developing the procedures, should also be involved as appropriate. However, any direct involvement of young people in developing local procedures should be carefully managed, ensuring that children and young people's potential needs for support and safeguarding throughout this process are adequately met and their contributions appropriately valued.	All agencies with responsibilities for safeguarding should be involved in formation of procedures including survivors (where safe to do so) and those indirectly involved (parents, carers)	Q5 – Were any of the following involved in the development of your CSE strategy: Children/young people or parents/carers
4.9	Local areas should continually assess how young people are being groomed for sexual exploitation and make enquiries about the other routes into sexual exploitation taking place in their area. They should amend their intervention approaches to take account of new knowledge as the models of exploitation change over time.	Areas should assess and identify patterns of exploitation (problem profiling) and amend interventions to reflect picture.	Q6 – Has a scoping exercise/ strategic profile been undertaken in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation which collates/ reviews the multi-agency intelligence picture in your area?

4.12 (including 4.10 & 4.13)	4.12 In their function of ensuring that the training of people who work with children or in services affecting the welfare of children is provided, LSCBs should ensure that local safeguarding training includes information about how to identify the warning signs of and vulnerabilities to sexual exploitation, and covers all the issues outlined at 4.10 above (how to identify signs of sexual exploitation; how professionals can seek help and advice on this issue; how professionals can and should share information about concerns; referral routes, gathering evidence; safeguarding victims, etc) 4.13 Local training should also help to develop an understanding of how to gather evidence which can be used effectively against abusers. Where sexual exploitation is known to exist locally, LSCBs should ensure that specialist training is available for all key professionals.	Training to include how to identify warning signs of CSE, how to report concerns, how to safeguard and how to prevent. Training should also include how to gather evidence/	Q7 – Has your area provided any local training to professionals on: identifying; safeguarding; reporting; preventing CSE Q8 – Has your area provided any local training to professionals on gathering evidence of CSE.
4.15	In relation to their communicating and raising awareness function, LSCBs should identify any issues around sexual exploitation, including those arising from the views and experiences of children and young people in their area. Guidance for the local community on sexual exploitation should include: • awareness-raising activities focused on young people • publicity for sources of help for victims • how and where to report concerns about victims and offenders • public awareness campaigns more generally.	Awareness-raising for young people, where to obtain help, how to report and more general public awareness-raising	Q9 – Has your LSCB provided advice or run awareness campaigns on/to: parents/carers or young people? Q10 – (all) Question as above across but includes professionals and other
4.20	LSCBs should identify a sub-group, reporting to the Board, to lead on the issue of sexual exploitation, drive work forward and ensure effective cooperation between agencies and professionals. This group could be tasked with developing and ensuring the implementation of the procedures referred to above. It should develop close working links with other sub-groups already working on linked topics such as child trafficking, e-safety or missing children.	Sub Group to be identified to lead on CSE, should include close links with other sub groups were in place (e.g. trafficking, missing)	Q11 – Are any of the following multi-agency groups in place within your area: CSE sub-group

4.21	LSCBs should ensure that there is a dedicated lead person in each partner organisation with responsibility for implementing this guidance. They should also put in place appropriate arrangements for ensuring that work with children and young people who have been or may be likely to be sexually exploited is undertaken in a coordinated way. For example, some areas have put in place co-located dedicated units which bring together expertise from a range of agencies, while others have appointed a dedicated coordinator who can ensure a 'virtual' team response.	LSCBs should ensure that lead person in each organisation to implement guidance. Arrangements should also be in place for either a dedicated coordinator or co-located team (bringing expertise together)	Q12 – Have lead professionals been identified/ named in key agencies operating within your LSCB (e.g. police, health Q13 – Have lead professionals been identified/ named in key agencies operating within your LSCB (e.g. police, health)? Are any of the following multi-agency groups in place within your area: Operational CSE team
4.22	LSCBs should put in place arrangements to cooperate with neighbouring areas, and other LA areas where children and young people who have been sexually exploited are believed to have lived or temporarily been present in other areas. These arrangements may be part of more general cooperative arrangements between LSCBs.	Arrangements in place for cross border working across neighbouring LA areas	Q14 – Is your CSE strategy linked to CSE strategies in neighbouring LSCBs
4.23	LSCBs should also consider: Auditing periodically how multi-agency plans for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, support for parents and carers and action on offenders are effectively developed and implemented in line with this guidance and Working Together (see paragraph 3.3).	Periodic audits of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements	Q15 – Has your LSCB developed or implemented practice by utilising any of the following: 2009 guidance/ DFE CSE Step by step guide/Beds CSE 'self-monitoring tool'

Appendix 5: Guidance on child sexual exploitation problem-profiling

A problem profile on CSE should seek to draw together all the known intelligence/relevant data held across different agencies to inform strategic decision making and local practice development. It requires collective ownership across all partners to support its development and a committed/effective analyst to review and identify key findings and intelligence gaps. The following steps/activities are recommended as being followed when undertaking a problem profile in this area.

- **Establish a Terms of Reference** – Sets out aims, objectives, methodology, time frames, required outputs, and resources (e.g. analytical/research capacity) required for completion of the analysis. This should be agreed by the LSCB CSE Sub Group members and signed off by the LSCB independent chair.
- **Outline a Data Collection Plan** – A clear plan which set out the data which is required from across all partner agencies to gather a holistic picture of CSE locally. This should be formulated by the project lead (e.g. analyst) in conjunction with the CSE Sub Group and should detail what is to be collected, why and how as a means to coordinate data collection activity. This process should include planning on how to:
  - Identify all possible agencies which hold details of **known** CSE cases and the datasets which they collect which correspond with the **indicators/warning signs** that children and young people show when being exploited (see **Appendix 3**).
  - Gather all available profiles relating to local street gangs, trafficking, organised criminality which pertains to CSE including those produced in neighbouring localities. This should include the result of the profiling of gang associated females, which all Police forces with a gang affected neighbourhood have been recommended to undertake.
  - Gather details around where the children's homes, gang territories, drug hotspots and prostitution hotspots are located.
  - Obtain local demographic information regarding the profile of children and young people in the area.
- From the data collection plan a specific **information requirement** should be formulated for each agency detailing what is required from them in order to build an overall picture relating to CSE victims, offenders and locations of offending. This should be formulated and disseminated through the relevant local CSE agency leads (e.g. education, children's services, children's homes, health, police, YOT etc). This should include requests for the details of children and young people who hit the risk indicators of CSE detailed in **Appendix 3.** In addition this exercise should include local voluntary sector organisations undertaking work in this area (e.g. gangs, VAWG services).
- The **collation** of data/intelligence and monitoring of progress against the data collection plan and regular reporting of progress/issues to LSCB sub-group for action where necessary.
- The **analysis** of data including the:
  - The abstraction of the key trends relating to the known victim, offender and locational profile of CSE in the area.
  - The collation and matching at an individual level the data relating to the risk indicators of CSE (e.g. missing from home, engaged in offending). Through identifying cross overs and repeats

within data it is possible to gain an idea of prevalence and begin to proactively direct the use of interventions against those displaying the most warning signs and likely to be at greatest risk.[9]

  - The layering of geographical information relating to locations of known offending, drug, gang and red light districts.

  - A comparison of the known profile/scale of exploitation against those at risk (via the indicator data comparison) and the local demographics to identify potential hidden victims/communities and enable specific responses to be developed (e.g. BME victims).

- Key findings to be written into a 'problem profile' and **disseminated** across partner agencies. CSE Sub Group to formulate a multi-agency action plan based on key findings and to address intelligence gaps. This should include clear action holders and set review periods.

9 Additional information on the methods used for matching the individual level risk indicators data can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Children's Commissioner via the contact details on the website.

Appendix 6: Development of methods and data collection and analysis

Call for Evidence

The purpose of the call for evidence was to capture data on the prevalence of services addressing CSE by gangs and groups and what has been effective in tackling this issue. The questions were drawn up by the Inquiry team, with the assistance of the Inquiry Panel. The information requested was as follows: numbers of victims and perpetrators in gang and group-associated contexts; the groups of children they specialise in working with; what individual, strategic and societal issues they specialise in working with; what outcomes and successes they have achieved and what barriers have they faced in delivering their services.

Definitions of children, child sexual exploitation, gang and group were provided, and a time period specified. The call for evidence ran from September 2012 to June 2013 in order to allow as many agencies as possible to contribute. The Inquiry was conscious that the more specific the request, the more restrictive that would be for agencies who were seeking to take part in the process, but was conscious that allowing submissions without a template meant there would be a lack of uniformity in responses. However, it was felt that it also enabled smaller organisations to submit evidence, and for agencies to respond in the way in which they were recording data without having to go through time-consuming reformatting processes. This evidence was assessed and analysed accordingly.

Dataset

Three specific dataset collections were undertaken during Phase 2 of the Inquiry using the statutory powers of the office set out in the Children Act (2004) section 2(9). This reads:

> *Any person exercising functions under any enactment must supply the Children's Commissioner with such information in that person's possession relating to those functions as the Children's Commissioner may reasonably request for the purposes of his function under this section (provided that the information is information which that person may, apart from this subsection, lawfully disclose to him).*

The dataset requests were specifically developed to gather evidence of the extent and nature of practice which has been developed by LSCBs, police forces and specific health services (GUM Clinics, Substance Misuse and CAMHS). These health services were specifically targeted due to the direct correlation between the services they provide and the risk indicators children and young people show when at risk or being exploited (see Appendix 2). The questions across all three data collections were developed in conjunction with the Inquiry panel and relevant experts at both a national and local level. The dataset requests featured predominantly quantitative but some qualitative questions to enable the authors to expand on responses as relevant.

The LSCB questionnaire was also developed to enable a comparison against the evidence collected by the University of Bedfordshire and published in their 'What's going on?' report (Jago et al, 2011). The agreement to obtain this data was made prior to the Inquiry data request being issued and enabled a comparison within a sample of LSCBs to establish how/ if practice has changed across the 18 month time period between data collections. The LSCB questions asked also enabled a comparison against some of the recommended activity contained in the *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DCSF, 2009).

The LSCB and police submissions were issued simultaneously in February 2013 and the health request in May 2013. Initially deadlines of six weeks and one month were provided for all services to respond however a number of areas were unable to make the initial deadlines and extensions were provided were required.

Interviews with children, young people, parents and carers

During Phase 2 of the Inquiry, ten children and young people who were victims of CSE by gangs or groups and 11 parents and carers of victims were interviewed by the Deputy Children's Commissioner, with the assistance of either a member of staff from OCC or a Panel member. The children and young people who were interviewed were receiving support by specialist CSE services and statutory services. The interviews provided detailed accounts of experiences of child sexual exploitation and what helped children, young people and families in addressing the issues that emerged and their recovery.

A pro-forma was developed by the Inquiry staff with the assistance of the OCC Participation team, and the Inquiry panel to guide the interview questions. Interviews were recorded subject to approval. In addition, a tailored answer sheet was developed to assist with recording responses and ensure consistency.

Site visits

Sites recognised for effective practice were identified, and contact was made with agencies including: specialist CSE services working with boys and young men; violence against women and girls agencies; BME services; police forces (missing, CSE, sexual violence, gangs), schools, sexual health services, housing and homelessness services, Young People's Advocates and CSE specialist multi-agency services across ten sites.

Following a consultation with the Inquiry panel pro-forma of questions for site visits was developed. The pro-forma served as a guide to enable panel members and staff to conduct semi-structured interviews. Data was recorded on tailored answer sheets to ensure the recording consistent areas of information.

This evidence from the call for evidence and site visits were drawn together, to ascertain whether any information was gathered during site visits hadn't been submitted through the call for evidence process.

A separate pro-forma was produced for speaking to children and young people on site visits. Site visits in London and the surrounding areas took place over half a day, while site visits outside London took place over one or two days.

Letters of thanks were sent to the professionals and any participating young people, and any specific ethical concerns or safeguarding issues were followed up.

Workshops and academic seminar

Workshops were designed to enable the Chair and Panel to follow up lines of enquiry that had developed during the evidence-gathering process and consult children and young people and professionals on the development of the Framework and the recommendations.

The content of the professional workshops and academic seminar was developed by the Inquiry team with the assistance of the Inquiry panel. A list of agencies that had been identified as having exemplary practice were invited to attend the workshops. A schedule was drafted which included presentations from key professionals or academics on the thematic areas and a list of questions was drafted. In each workshop, participants were divided into small groups for discussion and to answer the set questions. Extensive notes were taken at the workshops by the Inquiry team, and, key points (answering the questions) agreed by the workshop attendees in their small groups were drafted and recorded.

The content of the young people's workshop was developed by the Inquiry team and the OCC Participation team. The Inquiry asked a group of five young people from one CSE specialist service to take part in the workshop. A schedule was drafted which included:

- a vignette of a young person in need of support – the young people were asked what they would advise the young person to do and what they felt would and would not help
- The Framework – the young people were consulted on whether it was asking the right questions and what other questions need to be considered.

Extensive notes were taken and the key points agreed by the group were recorded. The young people were given certificates and thank you vouchers at the end of the session.

Evaluations

In order to assess effectiveness, the Inquiry asked for any evaluations that have been conducted by the agencies who submitted to the call for evidence. As a result, the Inquiry received 19 evaluations of interventions detailed in the call for evidence submissions. In addition, a funding body provided an overview and breakdown of 102 evaluations of interventions targeting sexually exploited and trafficked young people that they have funded.

Logging, coding and analysis

The Inquiry conducted a content analysis of emerging themes in all written responses to the call for evidence and the frequency in which these different issues/themes emerged and in what context were also recorded using Nvivo 10. The frequencies of and relationship between the multiple choice responses to the call for evidence were measured using SPSS and Microsoft Excel 2010.

All correspondence, datasets submissions and data were recorded, collated and analysed using Microsoft Excel 2010 to produce descriptive statistics based on the questions asked. The qualitative questions were analysed manually and in the case of questions asked around barriers, the same coding framework was used across the dataset and the call for evidence to enable key consistencies/variations across the evidence captures to be identified.

The comparison of the LSCB data capture against the Bedfordshire (Jago et al, 2011) and *Working Together guidance on CSE* (DCSF, 2009) was also undertaken on Microsoft Excel. In the case of the Bedfordshire comparison, the responses from the LSCBs which responded were specifically abstracted and then manually matched at an individual level to enable direct comparisons to be made.

The interviews, site visits, evaluations, workshops and seminars were analysed thematically and used to identify trends. The workshops were also used to assist in the development of the Framework and the recommendations of the report.

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