



University of
Bedfordshire

What's going on

to Safeguard Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation?

How local partnerships respond to child
sexual exploitation

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This research has been funded by Comic Relief. For over ten years Comic Relief has been providing support to tackle the problem of sexual exploitation, funding support services for young people and also work to train the police, teachers and others likely to be in a position to spot the signs of sexual exploitation. Most recently Comic Relief worked with its funded projects to advise the BBC on a child sexual exploitation storyline for *EastEnders* which began to air to coincide with Red Nose Day 2011. Comic Relief has been a major source of support for both local and national initiatives in this area.

The research was carried out by the International Centre for the Study of Sexually Exploited and Trafficked Young People, based in the Institute of Applied Social Research at the University of Bedfordshire. Details of the project team are set out in annex B. A particular strength of the International Centre is its partnership approach. It has strong links and shared projects with major children's charities, including Barnardo's and NSPCC; with the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England; with organisations leading practice in this field, including the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP); and with key policy makers in government.



A central objective of the International Centre is to encourage strong links between research and practice. A key partner in this research has been the National Working Group for sexually exploited children and young people (the NWG). The research team worked closely with the NWG to ensure an exchange of information with its UK-wide network of practitioners, policy makers and researchers. The NWG will also play a key role in disseminating the results of this research project.

The research has benefited from the advice and guidance of a Project Advisory Group (PAG), comprising key policy and practice leads in this area. Grateful thanks go to all members for their support and, in particular, to Professor Susanne MacGregor for chairing the PAG. Thanks also go to Paula Skidmore and Professor John Coleman for acting as 'critical friends' to the project.

The research team is also indebted to the generosity of many practitioners who have given freely of their time and expertise. Working with sexually exploited young people, although highly rewarding, can also be challenging in the extreme. Listening to their experiences can be emotionally shattering. Taking on the additional work involved with supporting the research demonstrates the commitment of practitioners to the development of this area of work. They have been inspirational and we are very grateful for their support.

Sue Jago

On behalf of the project team

Summary

This research project has explored the extent and nature of the response of LSCBs to the 2009 government guidance on safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation.¹ Where the guidance is followed, there are examples of developing and innovative practice to protect and support young people and their families and to investigate and prosecute their abusers. However, the research has found that the delivery of that dual approach to child sexual exploitation is far from the norm. There are three areas that cause particular concern:

- **only a quarter of LSCBs in England are implementing the guidance**
- **young people, their families and carers receive awareness raising in less than half of the country**
- **the prosecution of abusers is rare and, where criminal proceedings take place, young people's experience of court is intolerable**

These and related findings are set out below together with recommendations on how to ensure that action is taken, locally and nationally, to address this form of child abuse.

Key findings: Coordinating a local response to child sexual exploitation

The findings of the research on how LSCBs implement the guidance in terms of coordinating joint working to develop a child exploitation strategy to meet the needs of the local area are set out in Chapter 4.

1 Child sexual exploitation is a form of child abuse

A conceptual shift is needed to safeguard older children from abuse outside the home. Sexually exploited young people experience sexual abuse, rape, violence, abduction, intimidation, emotionally subtle and violently explicit coercion. It is child abuse. Specialist staff trained in child sexual exploitation are needed in multi-agency teams.

2 LSCBs are failing to safeguard young people from sexual exploitation

Around three quarters of LSCBs are not proactive in implementing the 2009 guidance. Co-located units, where key practitioners from children's services and police work together in a team, were identified as an 'ideal type' for developing the dual strategy. However, only around 10% of 100 LSCB areas that took part in the research have co-located units in place.

3 Isolated pockets of good practice have been developed, usually as a response to a child death or through the commitment of a local 'champion'

Despite there being some examples of excellent practice, this occurs in 'pockets' across the country often where a child's death resulted from sexual exploitation or where an individual 'champions' the cause. Although not fully implementing the guidance, these areas of active practice demonstrate that young people can be protected from child sexual exploitation and abusers can be prosecuted.

¹ DCSF (2009)

4 Awareness raising and training is piecemeal and inadequate

Both the survey and interview data reported poor levels of awareness raising and training on child sexual exploitation, particularly with young people, families and carers. There is an urgent need for LSCBs, through schools and health practitioners, to extend awareness raising to young people, to their families and to communities overall.

Key findings: identifying child sexual exploitation

The research findings on how to identify young people at risk of or experiencing child sexual exploitation are set out in Chapter 5.

5 Child sexual exploitation takes place in many ways

There is no one model of how young people are sexually exploited and no one method of coercion. While exploitation by an older boy/girlfriend was noted most frequently there were significant levels of peer on peer exploitation reported. Also, while grooming was the main method of coercion identified, there were significant numbers of reports of pressure from a peer who is also sexually exploited, or pressure from other young people in gang-affected neighbourhoods. Technology was widely recorded as a method of coercion, often involving social networking.

6 A high proportion of sexually exploited young people 'go missing' while some are purposefully moved within the UK for sexual exploitation usually without intelligence sharing between professionals in different areas

'Going missing' was frequently reported and a significant number of young people reported to be moved between areas in the UK for sexual exploitation. Questions were raised about effective information sharing between LSCBs and police to identify and track young people who had gone missing, including those abducted and forcibly moved within the UK.

7 Research is needed to identify the needs of sexually exploited boys and young men, and of young people from BME communities

The 'snapshot' data identified the average age of young people identified as at risk or experiencing sexual exploitation to be 15, with the majority of the cases relating to White British girls. The qualitative data raised questions about the local accessibility of services to victims from different Black and Minority Ethnic communities; the nature and understanding of exploitation within different communities; and the need for better awareness of how to assess risk and intervene to support boys and young men.

Key findings: Protecting and supporting young people and families

The findings of the research on how to support and protect young people at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation, and how to support and involve their parents and carers, are set out in Chapter 6.

8 Current thresholds for intervention through child protection procedures are too high

Practitioners' acceptance of young people's apparent consent to abuse must be challenged. While useful, the Common Assessment Framework used to assess for child protection interventions does not address thresholds needed to protect young people from exploitation. This is particularly relevant in cases of child sexual exploitation when the young person is over 16 years of age and in cases of boys and young men when false assumptions of experimental sexual activity may conceal abuse, exploitation and violence.

9 A disproportionate number of sexually exploited young people are looked after by the local authority, and a disproportionate number are placed in residential care: unsafe accommodation increases vulnerability to sexual exploitation

The research findings raise concerns about the high number of young people vulnerable to sexual exploitation who are accommodated in residential care. Qualitative evidence and previous research shows that, unless specifically trained and managed to prevent child sexual exploitation, residential units can increase a young person's vulnerability to abuse. It is also concerning that a number – albeit a small number – of young people vulnerable to sexual exploitation are accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation, despite guidance specifying that this type of accommodation is unsuitable for those at risk.

10 Sexually exploited young people, including those living with their families, had a number of associated problems

The 'snapshot' data showed that many young people identified as at risk of or experiencing child sexual exploitation also experienced a range of other problems. These problems may have increased the vulnerability of the young people to this form of abuse, or may have occurred as part of that abuse. Difficulties reported included mental health problems, disabilities, disengagement from school, substance misuse and experiences of domestic violence. A significant number of young people were 'looked after' and those living with their families were often subject to child protection procedures or known to other practitioners. If professionals addressing these other issues were trained to recognise sexual exploitation, cost effective interventions with the most vulnerable young people could be developed.

11 Criminality may be an indicator of child sexual abuse; sexual exploitation of young people in gang-affected neighborhoods may not be recognised and child protection and community safety strategies are rarely 'joined up'

Offending behaviour was found to be a factor for a significant number of young people at risk or experiencing sexual exploitation. There was also evidence of gang-associated child sexual exploitation. There is a need for further exploration into the relationship between criminality, peer on peer exploitation and sexual exploitation. This should address the divide between policy targeted to work with alleged offenders, with child sexual exploitation and with community safety in gang-affected neighbourhoods.

Key findings: Disrupting and prosecuting abusers

The findings relating to the identification, disruption, investigation and prosecution of abusers are set out in Chapter 7.

12 Despite the police taking a lead in a small number of areas, LSCBs are not proactive in disrupting and prosecuting offenders

Less than a quarter of LSCBs demonstrated strategies for both protecting young people from sexual exploitation and prosecuting abusers. In areas that were proactively focusing on offenders, serious questions were raised about covert surveillance and the need for joint work between agencies to ensure that appropriate child protection procedures were maintained. Reviews of prosecutions note that when abuse is identified, the need for intelligence does not override the need to intervene to prevent exploitation and abuse.

13 Few cases come to court and victims' experiences of the court processes are negative

The most striking statistic was the low number of cases with convictions, reflecting the rarity of sexual exploitation cases reaching court. Support for the young person during the court process was also noted as lacking. Young people who came forward with previous experience of attending court noted that the process can feel like repeat abuse. The pre-, during and post-court experience was intrusive and they had little confidence that the alleged abuser would be convicted, or prevented from re-abusing them post-sentencing.

Key findings: collecting and managing data

14 Data is not being collected on the nature and prevalence of child sexual exploitation, despite data collection being intricately linked to awareness raising

Only one LSCB collected and shared data at both agency and LSCB level. Over half of the LSCBs surveyed reported that they were not recording any data on child sexual exploitation. The low level of responses from LSCBs to the 'snapshot' data collection reflected the experience of CEOP's (2011) thematic assessment: *Out of Mind; Out of Sight*. Collecting data and scoping the extent and nature of the problem in the local area is one way for an LSCB to begin to identify where and how child sexual exploitation takes place and provides intelligence to inform strategic (rather than individually led random) preventative interventions. Chapter 5 outlines methods that can be used to scope the nature and scale of the problem and the report also provides briefing on training (annex G).

Recommendations

These recommendations are made in the context of the overriding need for a conceptual shift in child protection that recognises child sexual exploitation as a form of child abuse. This means extending the remit of child protection beyond the safeguarding of younger children in the home so that the safeguarding needs of older children with multiple vulnerabilities are also addressed.

1 **There is an urgent need to review how the court process impacts on young people who are victims of child sexual exploitation, learning from the experiences of recent prosecutions**

The review needs to assess how reforms designed to achieve child-friendly justice have been implemented, particularly in respect to supporting victims of abuse through the court process. The review should consider young people's experiences as victims and witnesses in recent cases where alleged offenders of child sexual exploitation have been taken to court, and assess the extent of training received by the Crown Prosecution Service, the judiciary, barristers and senior court officials in understanding the dynamics and nature of child sexual exploitation.

(lead implementation: Ministry of Justice)

2 **All pre- and post-qualifying training for professionals working with young people should include child sexual exploitation**

It should be a statutory requirement for child sexual exploitation to be on the curriculum for trainee social workers, youth workers, youth offending team practitioners, health workers (primary and secondary care workers); CPS staff and education practitioners including head teachers, teachers, teaching support staff and education social workers. The quantity and quality of input on curriculum for these staff should be inspected, monitored and reviewed.

(lead implementation: providers of professional pre- and post-qualifying training; progress to be reviewed and assessed through the Department for Education)

3 **All LSCB Chairs and Directors of Children's Services should receive training on child sexual exploitation**

This should include awareness raising of the prevalence and nature of child sexual exploitation, of thresholds of abuse and child protection strategies and of their duty to deliver a dual approach to safeguarding children from sexual exploitation: protecting children and prosecuting abusers.

(lead implementation: Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Department for Education)

4 **Inspections of LSCBs should include progress on the dual aim of a child sexual exploitation strategy**

When inspections of Children's Trusts and LSCBs are carried out, activities to safeguard young people from child sexual exploitation should be included, addressing multi-agency work between representatives in children's services, police, education and health.

(lead implementation: OFSTED with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary)

5 **The Department for Education should lead an assessment of the availability and appropriateness of specific forms of accommodation provided by local authorities in response to the needs of looked after children who have experienced sexual exploitation**

(lead implementation: Department for Education)

6 **A national database providing information on the nature and prevalence of sexual exploitation should be maintained and monitored**

CEOP to be supported to manage the collection and analysis of annual data on the nature and prevalence of child sexual exploitation.

(lead implementation: CEOP, with support from the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England (OCC), regarding data on young people in gang-affected neighbourhoods, and the Department for Education)

7 **Each LSCB should use the 2009 guidance to develop a multi-agency strategy with a coordinator, a sub group with lead professionals and a service for children and young people**

8 **Each LSCB should use the self assessment tool developed through this research and report on progress for annual audits and inspections**

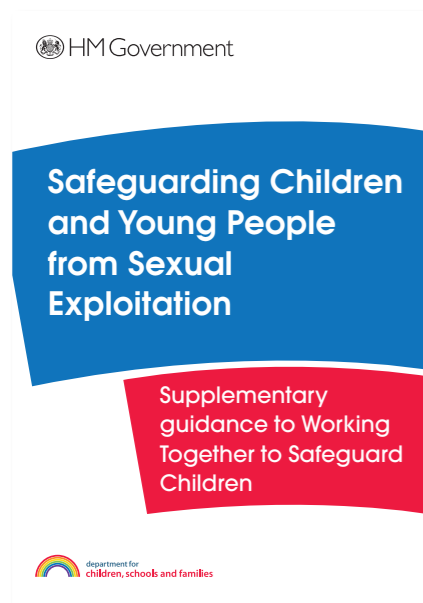
9 **Each LSCB should work with local partners to develop and implement an awareness raising and training strategy programme that reaches practitioners and, importantly, young people, their families and communities**

10 **Each LSCB should scope child sexual exploitation in their area to identify its nature and prevalence and use the monitoring tool developed through this research to provide an annual return of data to CEOP**

11 **Each LSCB should work towards having a co-located team**

All recommendations should be considered by and, where appropriate, built into the forthcoming national action plan for safeguarding sexually exploited children and young people.

Further detail on these recommendations, including supporting data, is included in a separate Research Briefing, available as a pdf or in hard copy from **cara.senouni@beds.ac.uk**



1.1 In June 2009 the government published guidance on *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation*.¹ This was an opportunity for Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to review their approach, consider their policies and develop their procedures. It was also a signal to the many areas yet to address child sexual exploitation that they should begin to do so. However, there was no action plan attached, no plans to monitor or evaluate the implementation of the guidance, and no mechanism to share developing practice.

1.2 The report is the result of a major review of the work of LSCBs since 2009 to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation, exploring the ways in which LSCBs and partner agencies are implementing the 2009 guidance. It does not replicate or replace the guidance. It is a commentary on the level of response and it also aims to be a practical document which will raise awareness of the issue of child sexual exploitation in all its complexities. It highlights the key principles involved in safeguarding young people from sexual exploitation and provides practical information on ways that may help to develop an effective strategy, drawn from interviews with practitioners.

1.3 The over-arching aim of the project has been to ensure the maximum impact of the government guidance by raising awareness of the need for LSCBs to take action, and by facilitating the sharing of information about the way in which LSCBs and partner agencies respond to the 2009 guidance. The research acknowledges the challenges faced in many areas but also focuses on the many examples of practice deemed to be effective, showing how LSCBs and their statutory and voluntary partners can respond to child sexual exploitation.

The case for this research

1.4 Child sexual exploitation seems to exist in all communities – but it is yet to be recognised or addressed in many parts of the UK. Previous research² has shown that:

- **developed practice is patchy**
Some excellent practice has been developed but it is far from widespread. Many areas are blind to the existence of child sexual exploitation or else reluctant to 'lift the stone', lacking confidence in the capacity, locally, to respond to the issues that may emerge. There are only a limited number of effective multi-agency responses to safeguarding children and young people and to disrupting and prosecuting their abusers. **There has been no other assessment of the impact of the guidance on local partnerships, or the nature or extent of activity to address child sexual exploitation**
- **there is no established system for identifying, collecting and recording reliable data on the prevalence of sexual exploitation**
Very few areas are collecting data on a multi-agency basis. Yet information on how many young people are affected, their characteristics and the characteristics of their abusers, and the way in which exploitation takes place, is crucial to the development of effective local and national strategies. Very little data is collated by LSCBs and – until CEOP's recent thematic assessment³ – no attempt had been made to produce a national picture

¹ DCSF (2009)

² Jago and Pearce (2008)

³ CEOP (2011)

of the nature and prevalence of the sexual exploitation of young people. **The development of a data monitoring tool, and an assessment of the nature and extent of child sexual exploitation nationally, have been key objectives for this research**

- **there is a piecemeal approach to training staff to raise awareness and improve practice**

Much is dependent on the willingness and commitment of specialist workers, often in voluntary sector projects – and these have yet to be established in many areas. Training and awareness raising is crucial to ensure that it is recognised by those caring for and working with young people. It is also important because child sexual exploitation presents significant difficulties for practitioners and for all those affected by it:

- the coercive nature of exploitative relationships may hide or confuse the picture for practitioners and young people alike
- the exploitative process may lead young people to display aggressive behaviour that masks their vulnerability

These factors mean that they are not always recognised as young people in need of protection and support.⁴ Even when exploitation is recognised there are difficult 'contradictions' to be negotiated between the perception of young people as victims and their desire, particularly in the case of older adolescents, to take some control over their lives.

The 2009 guidance is advocated as sound advice for LSCBs and their partner agencies. However, it was recognised, and endorsed by Comic Relief, that research into what can work to tackle child sexual exploitation was needed to support its implementation. **Practitioners are keen to share ideas and good practice in a way that avoids the need to reinvent the wheel up and down the country. This research has practical outcomes and is intended to do just that.**

Aims and outputs

1.5 The research explored how policy and practice is developing in response to the specific requirements set out in the guidance. It was conducted through contact primarily with LSCBs given their coordinating role on this issue. The key aims of the research were to work with LSCBs and relevant specialist projects to:

- **chart services and interventions**, by LSCB area, to provide an up-to-date record of 'who is doing what, where.' Data has been collected in each phase of the project to build a picture of service delivery and developing practice
Output: the University of Bedfordshire is working with the NWG to develop this into **an online resource for practitioners**

- **explore existing and developing responses to child sexual exploitation.** Developing practice has been identified through the survey of

⁴ Melrose (2010); Pearce (2010); Warrington (2010)

arrangements in place in each LSCB area and discussions with practitioners and LSCB staff

Output: a self assessment tool has been developed on each aspect of a child sexual exploitation strategy so that LSCBs and partner agencies can assess their progress and focus their future activity effectively

- **suggest how training on child sexual exploitation should be delivered.**

This builds on a recent audit of training provision.⁵ The overarching aim is to ensure that available training is fully utilised by all services (including those not directly concerned with child protection as their core work) and to identify gaps and further training needs, with recommendations of how they might be met

Output: information on training is included at annex G

- **assess the prevalence of child sexual exploitation** by creating a method of collating and recording data on sexually exploited young people. There were two key aims here:

- the first aim was to ensure that data can be used in each local area to identify the numbers of those known or suspected to have been sexually exploited, to break down the numbers by age, gender and ethnicity and other characteristics, and to explore how the exploitation is taking place. This will help to develop effective strategies to address the issue locally and will provide evidence to determine local priorities and secure the required resources
- the second aim was to develop a national picture of the young people involved to inform national policy and practice

Output: the legacy of this research is a **tried and tested monitoring mechanism** capable of delivering consistent and robust local and national data into the future

- **influence the development of policy and practice.** A range of media is being used to make research findings available to practitioners, senior managers and policy makers

Output: throughout the project progress has been reported through a regular newsletter, **What's Going On?** This included a Special Edition which reported on the interim findings.⁶ The findings in this report will be presented at a **conference for policy leads and practitioners** and other events, including through the **University of Bedfordshire Making Research Count programme.**⁷ The research findings have also been taken into account in the development of the forthcoming national action plan.⁸

The scope of the research

1.6 The initial intention was that the research should be UK-wide but there were a number of issues that placed practical limitations on the scope of

⁵ CROP (2009)

⁶ available from cara.senouni@beds.ac.uk

⁷ www.beds.ac.uk/research/iasr/mrc

⁸ currently being developed by the Department for Education and expected to be published in November 2011

the project. Primarily, the guidance on which this research is based applies to England only. Additionally:

- **parallel research in Northern Ireland**

Running in parallel with this research was the first local study into the sexual exploitation of children and young people in Northern Ireland.⁹ This was undertaken by Barnardo's Safe Choices with funding from local government. The research gathered information on the nature and extent of child sexual exploitation across Northern Ireland, with a particular focus on the risks facing children in and missing from care (the clientele of the service and a recognised high risk group). The research also gathered information on current responses to the issue, identifying examples of good practice and areas where improvement is required.

There were clear parallels between the two projects. It was agreed at an early stage that it would be confusing and inappropriate to duplicate the work. The two project teams worked closely together to ensure that maximum benefit was derived from the findings of the complementary studies. This included running a joint roundtable discussion with a range of practitioners.

It should perhaps be noted that there is no guidance in Northern Ireland specifically addressing the safeguarding of young people from sexual exploitation.

- **Wales**

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) considered that the aims of the project had already been met in Wales to a significant extent. In 2006 the WAG commissioned a review of the existence, content and implementation of local child sexual exploitation protocols developed in response to the 2000 version of the guidance. That review led to the development of the *All Wales Protocol: Safeguarding and promoting the Welfare of Children and Young People who are at Risk of Abuse through Sexual Exploitation*,¹⁰ part of the All Wales Child Protection procedures. Research, undertaken in relation to the nature and prevalence of child sexual exploitation, identified the need for a risk assessment tool to assist practitioners to identify child sexual exploitation. This led to the development of SERAF (Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework), an intervention framework that is now in place in most LSCB areas in Wales.

During the course of this project the WAG consulted on parallel guidance for Wales. This was published on 12th January 2011.¹¹ The definition in this guidance is taken from the All Wales Protocol¹² and specifically addresses the protection of 16 and 17 year olds and also those over 18 who may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation. In terms of safeguarding young people, the guidance is specifically directed at LSCBs and Social services Departments in Wales and includes advice on the use of SERAF. In terms of disrupting and prosecuting offenders, the guidance replicates the DCSF guidance¹³ as criminal justice matters are not devolved to the WAG.

⁹ Beckett (forthcoming)

¹⁰ Welsh Assembly Government (2008)

¹¹ Welsh Assembly Government (2011)

¹² Welsh Assembly Government (2008)

¹³ DCSF (2009)

All LSCBs and their partners in local agencies should take account of this guidance (p11)

Sexual exploitation is not limited to particular geographical areas and all LSCBs should assume that it is an issue in their area (p11)

Barnardo's Cymru was commissioned to deliver training on the new guidance and a commitment was given to a review of its implementation within six months of its publication.

As with Northern Ireland the views of practitioners were sought through individual interviews with practitioners and one focus group.

- **Scotland**

The project did not cover Scotland owing to the significant legal and organisational differences involved in the delivery of child protection.

Who is this report for?

1.7 As with the 2009 guidance, this report is primarily for LSCBs and those working in multi-agency partnerships coordinated by LSCBs. The 2009 guidance is statutory¹⁴ in respect of LSCBs and social services and was issued as a Home Office circular to the police. It is also intended for all those voluntary and statutory agencies working with children and young people who are in a position to identify child sexual exploitation, to contribute to the support of those young people and to the investigation of their abusers. This report, in line with the 2009 guidance,¹⁵ suggests that this includes a wide range of practitioners.

1.8 It is also worth underlining that this report, like the 2009 guidance, is relevant to **all LSCB areas**. The 2009 guidance is clear that child sexual exploitation is not limited to one part of the country or to a particular type of area. It also points out that all areas, regardless of whether child sexual exploitation has been identified, have a responsibility with regard to prevention.

1.9 This report is not aimed specifically at children and young people, nor to their parents and carers. However the importance of raising awareness with young people and their families – and indeed with the wider community – is highlighted in the report, together with the value of involving them in the development of policy and practice.

The format of the report

1.10 The report sets out the methods of data collection and the ethical considerations addressed in Chapter 2 and the analysis of the data and its limitations in Chapter 3. The research findings are set out thematically, to cover the role of the LSCB in the development of a multi-agency response (chapter 4); the scoping and identification of child sexual exploitation (chapter 5); the engagement and support of young people and their families (chapter 6); and the identification, disruption, investigation and prosecution of abusers (chapter 7). Chapter 8 reports on the research findings with regard to collecting and managing data. The final chapter (9) considers how the implementation of the guidance could be strengthened in the context of the current political and economic climate.

1.11 In each chapter relating to the research findings (chapters 4–8) readers will find:

¹⁴ see s 7 of the Local Authority Social services Act 1970 and s 16 of the Children Act

¹⁵ DCSF (2009) p11

- **key statistical findings**, also presented in one document at annex A
 - **a summary of the findings** for that element of the strategy
 - **an exploration of that element of the strategy**, with reference to discussions with practitioners and all other relevant data
 - **a list of resources** which may be helpful in the development of this element of the strategy
- and
- **a self assessment tool** to enable LSCBs to assess their progress and identify areas for development. The full self assessment tool is also presented as one document, with guidance notes, at annex F and available separately from the NWG.¹⁶

A note on terminology

1.12 Throughout the report some shorthand has been used to improve the flow of the text. To avoid confusion:

- **child sexual exploitation** – is always defined as set out in the 2009 guidance:
sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 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 vulnerability¹⁷
- **the guidance** – refers to the guidance published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2009 on *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation*, unless otherwise specified
- **interview data** – refers to the information from interviews with practitioners and LSCB staff in 24 areas
- **snapshot data** – refers to the information from the records submitted on young people at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation who were being worked with on 6 June 2011
- **survey data** – refers to the information from the initial surveys completed by 100 (70%) LSCBs in England
- **young people** – is used to mean 'children and young people' and always refers to children under 18 as defined in the Children Acts 1989¹⁸ and

¹⁶ www.nationalworkinggroup.org.uk

¹⁷ DCSF (2009) p9

¹⁸ Children Act 1989 s 105

What's going on?

2 How the research was carried out

2004,¹⁹ unless otherwise specified. The term applies to girls and boys as both can be victims of sexual exploitation.

1.13 Direct quotations have been included in the report to illuminate the findings. Quotations from the guidance are shown in **green** while quotations from those interviewed as part of the project, or who contributed to the project's seminars, are shown in **red**. In order to preserve the anonymity of interviewees, a coding system is in place which uses a signifier for each area, plus a signifier for each agency, and a number where more than one participant from that agency has been interviewed. The agency can be identified through the following key:

LSCB personnel	L
statutory children's services	C
voluntary agency (specialist)	V
voluntary agency (other)	O
police	P
CPS	J
Youth Offending Service	Y
health	H
education	E
other	A

Accessing the report

1.14 The full report is available to download only. The Executive Summary is included in the downloadable report and also available in hard copy. Both can be obtained from Cara Senouni at the University of Bedfordshire (cara.senouni@beds.ac.uk).

¹⁹ Children Act 2004 s 65

2.1 The project followed a work plan comprising four interrelated strands:

- working with practitioners
- establishing a Project Advisory Group
- gathering and analysing qualitative and quantitative data
- developing a model data collection system.

Working with practitioners

2.2 It was extremely important to the success of this research to ensure that practitioners were aware that it was taking place and the potential benefits to them of the outputs. This was achieved in a number of ways:

- **partnership with the NWG**

The partnership between the International Centre and the NWG was a crucial element of the project. It enabled the project team to benefit from the expertise of practitioners and to learn about the particular challenges of delivering an effective child sexual exploitation strategy. The link with the NWG also helped to promote the value of the project with LSCBs and to secure cooperation in many local areas.

- **practitioner expert group**

The research process began with a practitioner expert group, held in February 2010. It was attended by 21 professionals representing projects and agencies involved in the most leading edge work in relation to the sexual exploitation of children and young people. The aim of the day was to inform practitioners about the research and to enable the research team to develop a good understanding of the challenges and successes encountered in developing this work.

- **seminar on police operations**

During the course of the project a number of major police operations took place. In July 2010 a seminar was held with the police and other agencies directly involved in those operations to discuss the building blocks that need to be in place and to distil developing investigative practice.

- **What's Going On? newsletter**

To extend the reach of the seminars and other events and to keep practitioners in touch with developments, **What's Going On?** was published quarterly. The aim was to publish a newsletter rather than just a project update. It has become a platform for practitioners to share news and views, reports on other research in the field, and provides information on new policy and practice initiatives. It also incorporates a useful diary of events. An extensive email circulation list has been developed, including all LSCBs, NWG members and many other interested professionals.

Following the end of the project the newsletter will be continued through joint work between the University of Bedfordshire and the NWG.

- **'proofing' the recommendations**

Towards the end of the research project (July 2011) small practitioner groups were set up to 'proof' the findings and the practice examples from the perspectives of both social care and the police.



- **presentations**

The project team also made presentations at seminars, conferences and LSCB meetings throughout the course of the project to raise awareness and to promote the use of the guidance.

Establishing a Project Advisory Group

2.3 One of the first tasks for the project was the establishment of a multi-agency group comprising key partners from government, statutory and voluntary agencies. The aim of the Project Advisory Group (PAG) was to provide a forum for the governance, monitoring and accountability of the research. It also aimed to ensure that the project team was kept up to date with policy and practice developments and any parallel research relevant to the project. It was independently chaired by Professor Susanne MacGregor, a senior research manager with wide experience of project management at University Executive level. The members of the PAG are listed at annex C.

Gathering qualitative and quantitative data

The initial survey

2.4 The first stage of the project was to conduct a brief survey to gain basic knowledge of activity in each LSCB area. A questionnaire was developed and circulated to the Chairs of each of the (then) 144 LSCBs in England. This requested information about how LSCBs discharge their roles and responsibilities with regard to child sexual exploitation, and covered all aspects of the guidance. The survey form is attached at annex D.

2.5 A key consideration was to ensure that the survey would be quick to complete in order to minimise the burden on LSCB staff and to ensure a greater return. However this needed to be balanced with the requirement for a sufficiently comprehensive set of data to provide a useful assessment of the level of activity across the country. To ensure that balance a tick box response was requested on a checklist of issues reflecting the key elements of the guidance with respect to LSCB and partner agency roles. The form also included space to enable LSCBs to provide further qualitative information if they wished to do so.

2.6 The survey forms were first circulated in January 2010 by post with an accompanying letter and stamped addressed envelope to all the LSCB Chairs (there were 144 at the time). An initial deadline of 6 February was set for return of the questionnaire. It was also e-mailed to Chairs (where an e-mail address was available) and copied to LSCB Business Managers (where there was such a post holder and where contact details were known.) E-mail reminders were sent to LSCBs who had not responded to the initial deadline in February and again in March. DCSF officials wrote to LSCB Chairs to encourage their cooperation and NWG members, other local contacts and Government Office Safeguarding leads were all asked to encourage LSCBs in their areas to return the completed survey forms. A reminder was also included in the project newsletter, **What's Going On?** In April all LSCBs who were still to return completed forms were contacted by telephone by a member of the project team. A final request was e-mailed in April, setting a final cut-off date of 14th May 2010. The result of this intensive approach

was that a response from 70% of LSCBs (100/144) was achieved.

The practitioner interviews

2.7 The second stage of the project was to identify LSCB areas in which to conduct an extensive interview with key practitioners to develop a more detailed understanding of where and how the guidance is implemented. The data from the LSCB survey was used to identify suitable sample areas. The sample was selected to give a mix of areas, including those that appeared to have a well-established strategy; those that appeared to be well developed in a particular element of a child sexual exploitation strategy; and those that appeared to be actively developing a new child sexual exploitation strategy. Of the 30 LSCBs requested to take part in this part of the project, 24 agreed to do so.

2.8 A schedule of questions was developed to elicit quantitative data and also to provide a structure for qualitative interviews. This included tick box answers to questions about the different areas of responsibility for LSCBs and local partners to deliver a child sexual exploitation strategy, and about the different elements of the strategy itself. Interviews were recorded where prior consent was given (consent was withheld in only one case). In a minority of cases (four interviews) it was not possible to schedule the interview during the visit to the area, and so it was conducted by telephone. For each interview a completed questionnaire was produced together with a record of the discussion. The questionnaire is attached at annex E.

Developing a model data collection system

2.9 An important objective for the project was to develop a simple data collection tool which would enable LSCBs to understand the nature and prevalence of child sexual exploitation in their area. It was also important that this tool should be capable of providing comparable data from across the country so that it could be fed into a national picture of the nature and prevalence of child sexual exploitation. Just as local data is crucial to the development of local strategies, national data is needed to influence the development of policy.

The trial

2.10 In order to ensure that the data collection tool was fit for purpose and easy to assimilate into local practices, the 100 LSCBs who had responded to the initial survey were invited to take part in a trial. Over a quarter responded positively (see 3.9). The tool was developed in collaboration with a Task Group of representatives from areas that had already developed a successful system and representatives of areas keen to be involved in the trial. The Task Group helped to work through the tensions between achieving a comprehensive picture which would require the collection of a wide range of data, and the need to keep the system manageable. The resulting tool addressed eight themes:

- **personal information on each young person**
- **the type of social care intervention**
- **the nature of exploitation**

- **the living situation of the young person**
- **the education, employment and/or training needs of the young person**
- **any issues related to the young person's health, including sexual and mental health**
- **any issues related to substance misuse and any other risk factors**
- **criminal justice issues**

2.11 It was also important that the tool should be capable of adaptation to work in all areas, regardless of local structures, provided that they were implementing the guidance. The form was provided in two formats (Word and Excel) as the trial areas were at different stages of development and used different methods to record data locally. The tool was accompanied by written guidance and telephone support was also offered in case difficulties were encountered. The tool was made available in March 2011 and trial areas were asked to record any concerns, any local adaptations made to the tool, and any suggestions for future improvements. In the light of these comments the tool was reviewed at a further Task Group meeting.

The national snapshot

2.12 At the same time the trial areas were asked to provide a data return with anonymised details of all young people being worked with on 6th June 2011 to address their risk or experience of sexual exploitation. Through the NWG, agencies in areas not covered by a LSCB trial were also asked to contribute data to the snapshot to get as close as possible to a true picture of the number of young people involved.

Ethical considerations

2.13 Ethical approval was granted by the Institute of Applied Social Research Ethics Committee at the University of Bedfordshire. A confidentiality agreement was drawn up to address the ethical considerations required in respect of the provision of any data and access to any personal/sensitive information. This was consistent with the conditions set out in the Data Protection Act 1998 and with current child protection legislation. Acknowledging the emotional labour involved in researching practice issues related to child abuse, the team ensured that researchers were fully debriefed after interviews.

2.14 The Chairs of all LSCBs in England received information explaining what the research was aiming to achieve, detailing the information the research team would be requesting and confirming that involvement with the project would be on the basis of voluntary consent. LSCB Chairs were also assured that all data would be anonymised. Those who completed the survey and interview participants were informed of the confidentiality policy in advance. This explained a procedure that the researcher would follow in the unlikely possibility of confidentiality having to be broken in order to safeguard young people. No such circumstances arose. Interviews were tape recorded with the participants' prior agreement.

2.15 The focus of the research was on the activity of LSCBs and partner agencies to implement the guidance. It was decided that it would not be appropriate to include service users in the area interviews but it was considered important to take the views of young people (aged 18 and over) on the findings of the research and the recommendations with regard to services for young people. This was done through the participation project, **What Works For Us**, based at the University of Bedfordshire. A small focus group met to consider how services can best support and protect young people at risk of, or experiencing sexual exploitation. Information on confidentiality was provided and consent obtained for participation in the group and for the proceedings to be tape recorded. The views of young people on disruption and prosecution, obtained through a similar focus group set up for CEOP's thematic assessment, were also shared with the project team.

The initial survey

3.1 Completed survey forms were received from 100 LSCBs in England (100/148) – this 70% return provided a robust picture of the response to child sexual exploitation across the country.

3.2 In the main, the project team had no further contact with the areas that did not return a completed survey form. It was rare for areas to offer a reason for non-completion but two areas – although returning a completed form – replied to say that they considered that the request should have been directed at Children's Trusts in view of their role in the commissioning and delivery of services for children and young people. One of the areas commented that:

*'the Board does not hold and is not party to information necessary to answer the questions and would probably not be unless this [child sexual exploitation] was being looked at as a specific issue.'*²⁰

This worrying lack of recognition of the role and responsibilities of the LSCB, as set out in the guidance, was discussed with the then DCSF and the official advice forwarded to the areas in question.

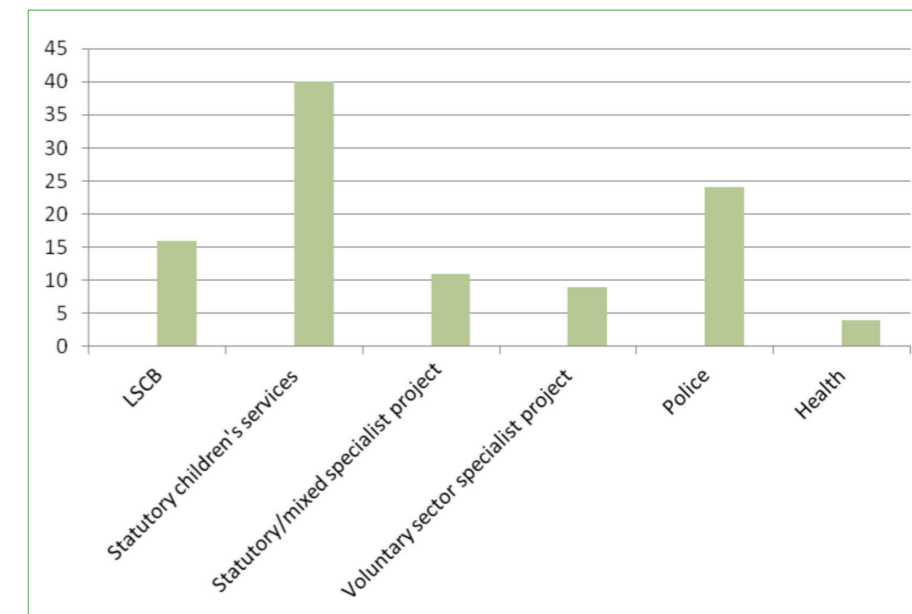
3.3 The data from the completed survey forms was analysed using SPSS. This proved less straightforward than might have been expected but the difficulties are revealing. Responses indicated differences in understanding terminology, and in the way categories of response were interpreted. There was an apparent tendency to 'talk up' or, interestingly, to 'talk down' the local response to child sexual exploitation. This resulted in some internal contradictions within individual survey forms – for example, an area where most aspects of the guidance had been implemented might rate itself as having made 'little' progress. This could sometimes be explained by the amount of knowledge and nature of the role undertaken by the person completing the survey form. However, the issues highlighted in the analysis of the surveys emphasised the need for further, qualitative exploration of the issues.

The practitioner interviews

3.4 The interviews involved 104 practitioners in 24 areas of England. In the main the interviewees were selected by the project's key contact in the LSCB. The majority of the interviews were with practitioners from statutory children's services and the police. A significant number also took place with LSCB staff, principally Business Managers. There were a few interviews with other agencies, including health and education. It is important to emphasise, however, that there was a wide divergence in the types of roles undertaken within each agency. Table 1 below illustrates the balance of interviews from each agency.

²⁰ from the survey data

Table 1 – Number of interviewees by agency



3.5 The interviews generated two sets of data:

- **quantitative information** from a questionnaire completed by the researcher which summarised individual responses during the interview. This ensured fidelity across the research team to the different areas of the interview. This data was analysed using SPSS and provides a broad picture of individual responses across the different areas. The total number of questionnaires analysed was 104
- **qualitative data** which provided a detailed insight into the views of individuals regarding their experience of working in the field of child sexual exploitation in their area. Transcripts were analysed thematically by the research team in order to ensure analysis was informed by the researcher's knowledge of individual areas and experience of the research process there. Transcripts were then subject to open coding using NVIVO software. The total number of interviews subject to qualitative analysis was 89.

3.6 Both sets of data presented certain challenges. The pattern of work undertaken in different areas, and the considerable variation in individual experience, meant that interviewees had more to say on some topics than others. This had implications for the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. In relation to the quantitative data, the result was a large amount of missing data. This can be attributed to understandable differences in levels of knowledge and experience. For example, a practitioner involved in direct work with sexually exploited young people was not necessarily aware of the relationship between different agencies and the LSCB. However, to a certain extent, the level of missing data is a matter of concern in that it may indicate a lack of knowledge where knowledge should exist, a lack of understanding of the local strategy, and a lack of progress in relation to the issues explored in the interview.

3.7 The qualitative data is also challenging in its richness and quantity. It provides an impressive testimony to the intricacy and complexity of the day-to-day experience of practitioners working in this field. The challenge has been to capture and communicate the different perspectives presented within and between areas.

3.8 Each member of the research team carried out interviews and each researcher thematically analysed the data to identify the main emerging themes. These findings were then cross-referenced between the research team and with data from the NVIVO analysis.

The national snapshot

3.9 Data was received from data collection trial areas and from other LSCBs who used the trial documents specifically for this purpose, and also from voluntary sector specialist projects using the trial documents (for a full breakdown see table 3 in Chapter 6). Data was also provided from the Barnardo's central database which collates data from 22 sexual exploitation and missing projects across the UK. In total the snapshot data included records of 1150 young people. Our intention had been to limit the data to England only and only LSCBs in England were approached to provide data. However the return from Barnardo's included their services across the UK. Only data relating to the 1065 cases in England were included in the final count.

3.10 The returns were anonymised, using a personal identifier applied locally, to ensure that the data was protected. This caused some difficulty when returns were completed by individual agencies in the same area. There were few areas where local data had been collated by the LSCB so that, elsewhere, there was a possibility of duplicate records. Significant efforts were made to cross-reference the records submitted by different agencies in the same area. All potential duplicates were excluded from the final count.

3.11 Some of the returns were completed only in respect of basic personal data. This was generally because, without a data monitoring tool in place, it would have been too labour intensive to trawl files for the other information requested. The areas involved had also recently set a good deal of time aside to provide data for the CEOP thematic assessment. In those areas that had attempted to fully complete the return, including the trial areas, not all the data requested was known or available. There were also occasional misunderstandings in interpreting the requests for data.

3.12 The low number of returns and the extent of missing data means that the findings, set out in Chapter 8, need to be treated with some caution. However, the data provides broad indications of the characteristics of young people experiencing sexual exploitation, and the way in which that exploitation takes place. The findings have been strengthened by triangulating the data with the interview data, and with the findings from both the NWG survey²¹ and the CEOP thematic assessment.²²

²¹ available at www.nationalworkinggroup.org.uk

²² CEOP (2011)

Spending cuts

3.13 This project was undertaken at a particularly difficult time in terms of the economic climate. The project team was mindful that the initial survey forms were completed by LSCBs, and interviews undertaken with practitioners, before decisions on spending cuts had been taken. In order to understand how those cuts may impact on the delivery of a child sexual exploitation strategy, the team contacted the 24 areas in which interviews had taken place to ask:

- have there been local authority spending cuts to services directly involved in the delivery of the child sexual exploitation strategy?
- have there been local authority cuts to other services that may have an impact on the delivery of the CSE strategy (for example, cuts to asylum teams or other areas of work that may relate, or cuts to training budgets)?
- what has been/is expected to be the effect on the delivery of the strategy?

The information received has been reflected in Chapter 9.

A coda to this section

3.14 The project team were mindful of the additional burden they were placing on those practitioners willing to give their time and share their expertise through interviews and seminars. However, many of our interviewees and seminar participants commented on how valuable they found the process to be. Many found that it helped to discuss the issue to clarify in their minds where progress had been made and where further action was required.

3.15 Interviewees found the question schedule to be a useful 'checklist' and the interview process to be therapeutic. Those who attended seminars welcomed the opportunity to share their thoughts with colleagues from around the country, and to hear of developments elsewhere. It was clear that this work carries a considerable emotional cost for those working directly with abused young people and that practitioners welcome the opportunity to share their feelings in a safe environment. This report considers the issue of emotional support in Chapter 7.

3.16 The focus of the project means that young people were not themselves a primary source of data for this research. However representatives from the **What Works for Us** group were invited to respond to some of the findings around practice and to share reflections on effective services. In addition the on-going consultation work of the group and comments from the group's newsletters are highlighted throughout this report. It is worth noting that in all such work there is a tension between the sensitivity of the subject matter, young people's needs for protection and the commitment and desire expressed by all participants to be involved in influencing change. Throughout

What's going on?

4 Coordinating a multi-agency response

We should be part of the decision making. We're certainly capable of doing that but I think society tends to think you lose your brains or something when you become [sexually exploited]²³

the work of *What Works for Us*, including contributions to this project, members have fed back on both the difficulties and value associated with discussing these issues. As the words alongside highlight, consultation work with young people on this subject must be purposeful and forward facing. Feedback from young people and practitioners highlights that such initiatives can be experienced positively, providing peer support, opportunities to be actively listened to and developing confidence. However safeguarding and young people's individual needs must always take priority over any group, project or research goals.

'there are current protocols in operation in less than a quarter of LSCBs'²⁴ and 'a third of the country has no plans to deliver a child sexual exploitation strategy'²⁵

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people... depends on effective joint working between different agencies and professionals that work with children and young people (p16)

'it is not enough for one or two agencies to work hard "within their own sphere."²⁷

A shared responsibility, an integrated approach

Key statistics on LSCB coordination of partnerships

- **67%** of (89) interviews considered child sexual exploitation to be a **priority for their LSCB**
- **55% of (100) LSCBs** surveyed reported a **specific protocol** in place
- **38% of (100) LSCBs** surveyed reported a **sub group** in place
- **43% of (100) LSCBs** surveyed had identified **lead professionals**
- **25% of (100) LSCBs** surveyed reported that a **coordinator** was in place
- **less than 10% of areas have co-located units in place, or planned**
- **24%** of (89) interviews reported that **young people had been involved** in the development of the strategy

There were no plans:

- in **13%** of (100) LSCBs surveyed for a **specific protocol** to be developed
- in **43%** of (100) LSCBs surveyed to **review their protocol** in the light of the 2009 guidance
- in **33%** of (100) LSCBs surveyed for a specific **sub group to be set up**
- in **21%** of (100) LSCBs surveyed for **lead professionals** to be identified
- in **64%** of (100) LSCBs surveyed to appoint a **coordinator**

Summary of findings

4.1 Key principles in the guidance include 'an integrated approach' and 'a shared responsibility'. Joint working is needed to deliver a strategy that tackles prevention, protection and prosecution. The guidance suggests that joint working needs to be underpinned by:

- **a strong commitment from leaders and senior managers**
- **a shared understanding of the problem of sexual exploitation**
- **effective coordination by the LSCB**²⁶

4.2 The survey findings, reinforced by the interview data, show that LSCB coordination is lacking in many areas. It also shows that this can have a significant impact on securing the commitment of leaders and senior managers and on the development of a shared understanding of the problem of child sexual exploitation. The leadership role of the LSCB is seen as crucial to create a strong and sustainable infrastructure to support the work of partner agencies. This chapter explores local responses to each of

²⁴ from *What's Going On?* An Interim Report available from cara.senouni@beds.ac.uk

²⁵ from *What's Going On?* An Interim Report available from cara.senouni@beds.ac.uk

²⁶ DCSF (2009) p6

²⁷ Derby SCB (2010) p6

²³ Taylor-Browne (2002) p18

the LSCB responsibilities set out in the guidance, and considers the involvement of different agencies and groups in local partnerships.

- 4.3** The survey data showed that LSCBs have not always scoped the presence of voluntary organisations, or have chosen not to work with them. The ‘trick’ to delivering a cohesive response to young people is for a wider safeguarding role to complement more formal child protection procedures so that voluntary and statutory agencies work in partnership, playing to each other’s strengths, to deliver a cohesive response to young people. For all agencies involved in the local partnership, success depends on acknowledging the need for a broader safeguarding approach. This is discussed more fully in Chapter 6. What is explored in this chapter is the leadership role played by the LSCB to harness the strategic commitment of all agencies to make that happen.

The coordinating role of the LSCB

- 4.4** The guidance is clear that a key role for the LSCB is to develop an effective partnership to deliver a child sexual exploitation strategy for the local area. The interview participants gave a number of reasons as to why this leadership role was so important:

- **neutrality**

It was suggested that the ‘neutral’ lead of the LSCB could ensure a genuine partnership approach. Without it:

*‘one group leads and if you’re not careful it skews the work. It needs to be everyone coming to the table with an equal contribution’*²⁸

The leadership of the LSCB can also be important to ‘manage’ the relationship between the voluntary and statutory sectors because, as one interviewee put it:

*‘no-one means to make life difficult, it’s just the nature of it – it’s the difference between voluntary and statutory’*²⁹

- **commitment**

The leadership of the LSCB was also considered important to ensure commitment from senior staff to the delivery of the strategy. Without that strategic lead:

*‘it ends up as buy-in and commitment just at a practitioner level’*³⁰

but

*‘if it was under the Safeguarding Board you’d have access to senior managers in the services and there will be more awareness about it’*³¹

- **developing a strong and sustainable infrastructure**

Ensuring strategic commitment enables an appropriate infrastructure to be developed to support an effective and sustainable response to child sexual exploitation. In some areas a situation was described in which a strategy was being developed by one or more agencies independently of the LSCB.

²⁸ interview A5/V1

²⁹ interview A7/V1

³⁰ interview A8/P1

³¹ interview A6/O1

It was reported that it was not uncommon for such action, however limited, to provide an ‘excuse’ for LSCBs to avoid their responsibilities because:

*‘the LSCB feels it’s taken care of quite well so they don’t need to worry about it’*³²

Interview participants – including those practitioners driving forward this work as local ‘champions’ – felt the involvement and leadership of the LSCB to be crucial otherwise the work is led by:

*‘a number of committed individuals who are allowed to follow their initiative rather than owned both within and across agencies.’*³³

This issue had already been recognised.³⁴ A common pattern had been identified in which local ‘champions’, by dint of their passion and enthusiasm, managed to establish a response to child sexual exploitation but without benefit of an LSCB-led infrastructure to ensure that the work was sustainable. Two outcomes have been observed. Either (a) the strategy founders when the ‘champions’ move on or (b) ‘champions’ become overwhelmed as caseloads grow and they are under-resourced to meet the need.

- **raising awareness and positioning the issue as a local priority**

The research showed that these were key factors depending strongly on LSCB leadership because:

*‘what’s important is how the guidance is embedded and how the Safeguarding Board takes responsibility. It’s about keeping it on the agenda against competing demand.’*³⁵

A high number of interview participants (67%) considered that this was a priority for their LSCB. This should be expected from areas selected because they had a good or developing track record in this area. However, there was only one area where all interviewees agreed that it was a priority. This means either that the LSCB priority is not as strong as at first appeared, or poorly communicated to local practitioners.

- 4.5** The research found that the leadership of the LSCB was considered to be extremely important. It was not seen as just a bureaucratic arrangement but essential to bring together key agencies in a way that supports effective joint working.

Developing a specific protocol

- 4.6** The guidance sets out the need for LSCBs to coordinate the development of specific protocols to address the challenges of responding to child sexual exploitation. Although over half of the LSCBs surveyed had a specific protocol in place, half of them are likely to be out of date as they had not been reviewed since the guidance was published in 2009. On that basis we can only be confident that just over a quarter of LSCBs in England are working with up-to-date protocols.

³² interview C9/C3

³³ interview A9/O1

³⁴ Jago and Pearce (2008)

³⁵ interview C8/A2

4.7 The survey data suggests that the existence of a protocol is an important indicator of activity to address child sexual exploitation. It shows an association between having a protocol and also having:

- **identified lead professionals**
- **appointed a coordinator**
- **a specialist team in place**

There were worrying discrepancies between interviewees in the same areas with respect to the existence of a protocol. For example in one area an interview participant told us that:

*'there is a strategy around children and young people who go missing but there isn't a protocol, as far as I'm aware, around CSE'*³⁶

while a colleague in the same area advised that:

*'it's being revised currently but I'll get a copy for you.'*³⁷

As was observed in a recent Serious Case Review, there is not only a need for policies and procedures to be in place but:

*'they also need to be known and implemented... staff were not always aware of them, and/or did not use them in a timely way.'*³⁸

4.8 The development of an up-to-date protocol specifically addressing child sexual exploitation was seen as only the start to addressing the problem. The challenge of getting the strategy 'off the page' was acknowledged by many interviewees. Without 'flesh on the bones' the procedures simply:

're-state what the guidance states but won't say how it's going to happen or who's going to do that'

because the danger is that:

*'[it] doesn't necessarily help to keep young people safe.... as long as it's following a procedure then we're fine, we've ticked the box, we've had a strategy meeting, but if you walk away from that strategy meeting and nothing's been put in place then it's a tick box exercise... there's a long way to go.'*³⁹

The role of the sub group

4.9 It is a dedicated sub group that can get the strategy 'off the page.' The role of an LSCB sub group is as a 'driver,' bringing together all the key agencies to develop the protocol into an active strategy that meets the demands of sexually exploited young people. The data showed that areas with sub groups were more likely to have identified lead professionals and also to have a specialist team in place. Certainly where sub groups had been set up interview participants reported that they were much valued:

*'I felt very supported by those people because [...] I didn't feel I was carrying the flag of the campaign on my own.'*⁴⁰

³⁶ interview B10/V1

³⁷ interview B10/L1

³⁸ Derby SCB (2010)

³⁹ interview B2/V3

⁴⁰ interview C6/P1

4.10 Nevertheless interviewees also cautioned that the mere existence of a sub group is not enough. Analysis of the data suggests some 'essential criteria' for success:

- **representation from all relevant agencies**

The research found that the right agencies were not always represented, or not on a consistent basis:

*'so there's a group there but is it the right group, is it doing the right thing, is it going to have any impact?'*⁴¹

Key partners are considered in 4.16 – 4.24.

- **full commitment from each of the agencies represented**

*'We have the right people round the table, lead professionals from all the key agencies. But that doesn't necessarily mean full commitment.'*⁴²

Without that commitment, it was said to become

*'like a watchdog without teeth.'*⁴³

- **a focused remit**

The remit of the sub groups varied greatly. While there were a number of sub groups dedicated solely to sexual exploitation a common model linked it with work on missing children:

*'there is a strand around young people who go missing, young people who are sexually exploited and young people who are at risk of gang activity, and some of those overlap, there's a common core... there is a sense that perhaps [there should be] a more generic work stream around vulnerable people because there's some duplication in processes.'*⁴⁴

In other areas, sexual exploitation was considered at sub groups with a far broader remit. The research found that child sexual exploitation could be lost from the focus if the remit is too broad, particularly if this meant that experts on sexual exploitation were not attending, or were in the minority. As a result at least one area is moving back to a specific missing and child sexual exploitation brief.

- **open-ended**

The sub groups included fixed term task groups and open-ended groups. The findings suggest that a short-term commitment by LSCBs may not be adequate:

*'it was almost like, you've got your procedures now, you don't need to do any more work now – but it's just one tiny part of it. It's getting all the rest of the systems in place to make the procedures work.'*⁴⁵

- **LSCB coordination**

In other areas the issue of child sexual exploitation was considered to be adequately covered by a multi-agency group sitting outside the LSCB. In some cases this was a sub group originally set up by the LSCB but later 'floated off.' For example:

⁴¹ interview B2/V3

⁴² interview B9/C3

⁴³ interview A5/R2

⁴⁴ interview C1/L1

⁴⁵ interview A9/H1

*'there used to be a steering group linked to the LSCB. Then there was a review of the structure. It was considered that, to streamline the business, it should be devolved to operational managers – it's more or less devolved to [the specialist project] now.'*⁴⁶

This was considered by interview participants in the same area to be *'a retrograde step.'* The research findings suggest that it is crucial for the LSCB to continue to lead the subgroup for the reasons considered above (para 4.3). In one area strenuous efforts were made to ensure just that:

*'it was important that the local authority should chair the sub group – we made sure of that. They need to take responsibility for it.'*⁴⁷

Identifying lead professionals

4.11 The LSCB survey found that lead professionals for specific agencies tended to be those who attended the sub group. This works well with a strong, appropriately focused and well-attended sub group. However where sub groups were non-existent lead professionals had yet to be identified:

*'there is a practitioners' forum but it's attended in a very ad hoc way with no lead representatives from the different agencies.'*⁴⁸

The identification of lead professionals did not always mean full commitment. The findings suggest that it is frequently an additional role placed on top of an existing workload and rarely adequately resourced:

*'there are leads in all agencies but sometimes it's just another job on top of other jobs.'*⁴⁹

4.12 In most areas lead professionals had been identified from the police and children's social care but less commonly from education, health and other agencies. This chapter will go on to consider the range of agencies that need to be involved, and the challenges involved in bringing them to the table (paragraph 4.16). What is particularly concerning is that, more than ten years on from the publication of the original guidance, even children's social care can be 'missing' from the table:

*'the area where a lead professional has not been identified is in social care... this has been because every social worker works on individual case loads and works in area groups...it's a great massive loophole.'*⁵⁰

The role of the coordinator

4.13 The guidance does not currently require a coordinator to be appointed but does make clear that local arrangements require coordination. Previous research found that where a coordinator had been identified it proved to be a turning point, in particular for the gathering of information.⁵¹ This research found that, disappointingly given the potential value of the role, coordinators were in place in only a quarter of the LSCBs surveyed. A number of reasons

⁴⁶ interview A7/L1

⁴⁷ interview C2/O1

⁴⁸ interview B2/V2

⁴⁹ interview B9/P1

⁵⁰ interview A5/E1

⁵¹ Jago and Pearce (2008) p20

[LSCBs] should... put in place appropriate arrangements for ensuring its work with children and young people who have been or may be likely to be sexually exploited is undertaken in a coordinated way (p26)

'multi agency working is not working – there's a long way to go here.'⁵⁴

were given for not appointing or identifying a coordinator. Two areas cited a lack of resources, including the following interview participant:

*'there is no way we are going to do that – we can't even recruit social workers. It's not very high up in priority.'*⁵²

One LSCB survey response simply commented that:

'it is not a requirement.'

A further two areas had previously appointed a coordinator on a fixed-term basis and had no plans to extend that role. The interview discussions suggested that this had had disastrous consequences:

*'[two areas] had their dedicated coordinator and they no longer exist and I think that what I am picking up is because they no longer exist, it's all just gone completely.'*⁵³

4.14 It emerged from the interviews that, where a coordinator post existed, it was rare for it to be a dedicated post. The role had often been assumed by LSCB officers, or sub group or panel chairs, on top of existing responsibilities. As with many lead professionals (para 4.10), it was an add-on to their existing post. Where the LSCB does not take overall responsibility, the coordination of child sexual exploitation often sits, by default, with a specialist project. Again, this can be problematic because resources are rarely provided to support the role. In areas with no coordinator and no specialist project, there is no apparent focus for this area of work.

Managing and sustaining effective partnerships

4.15 The research findings show that forming a functioning multi-agency partnership that genuinely supports joint working is a challenge – but a challenge that must be met if local areas are to be capable of effectively safeguarding young people from sexual exploitation and bringing their abusers to justice. This chapter has considered the importance of strategic commitment to the strength of a partnership, and the need to manage the relationship between voluntary and statutory sectors, and between statutory agencies that have a different ethos and culture. There were also other factors impacting on the coordination and development of a successful partnership that emerged from the interview data:

- **the size of the area**

This can make it difficult to 'manage' the issue:

*'it's a big county with a big Safeguarding Board. There is a general issue about understanding performance issues and what's going on in services. Probably common to all but the smaller unitaries'*⁵⁵

- **rural areas**

The difficulties of size were exacerbated in rural areas where distance affects both resources and professional relationships. The sparse population also impinges on the availability of services:

⁵² interview C2/C1

⁵³ interview A6/O1

⁵⁴ interview B2/V1

⁵⁵ interview C8/C3

All agencies with responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people should be involved in drawing up [...] procedures, including local and national voluntary children and family support agencies and national voluntary child care organisations which have a local presence (p24)

*'its pretty hard to service an area this size...if you're taking a day to go and visit a young person and come back, that's significant, whereas in an inner city things are either at hand or better resourced and very often agencies are near each other in a way that doesn't happen [here]'*⁵⁶

• resource availability

Resources were also often cited as an issue, with frustration that all too often services were tailored to resources rather than to need:

*'are we just managing a problem or are we looking upon those young people as valued members of the community? It's a sad situation when you have to look at resources. It's equally important to safeguard a child as it is to prosecute a perpetrator. You take a risk by not properly resourcing your multi-agency team'*⁵⁷

By contrast, in one area where a strong partnership was in place the message was very different:

*'we will match priorities with resources. There is a partnership commitment to it.'*⁵⁸

Key partners

4.16 The research shows that police and children's social care are the two agencies most likely to be involved in joint working. However, this was not invariably the case and there were some significant factors relating to the recognition and awareness of child sexual exploitation, reinforced by organisational factors, which both agencies struggle with in some areas.

The police

4.17 In the case of the police it was recognised that a conceptual shift needs to be made as child sexual exploitation requires a very different way of working to traditional policing:

*'it takes a certain type of person from a police point of view. You've got to have a certain mind, got to be victim led. That takes some getting your head round it.'*⁵⁹

Safeguarding those at risk of sexual exploitation is rarely a matter of responding to a formal complaint. For this reason a number of police interviewees suggested that it does not fit comfortably within a child abuse investigation unit (CAIU) which is traditionally reactive in style. Indeed child sexual exploitation has rarely been included within the remit of CAIUs which focus on familial abuse. 'Child prostitution' may have been addressed in old-style vice units but the current broader understanding of sexual exploitation means that it has no natural 'home' in police organisational terms. This has caused considerable frustration for other agencies who have struggled to identify police officers willing to take on this work. The relatively recent introduction of public protection units (PPUs) has provided a way forward which has a clear advantage in terms of linking the issue with work

⁵⁶ interview C6/O1&V1

⁵⁷ interview A7/L1

⁵⁸ interview B9/C1

⁵⁹ interview A7/P1

on missing people, domestic abuse and other issues affecting vulnerable people. The interviews suggested that this is already working well in some areas. This is explored more fully in Chapter 7.

4.18 As with all agencies there were issues for the police about commitment at a strategic level. The interview data suggests that proactive interventions often rely on the commitment of individual staff:

*'we have some very dedicated police officers but because they are not given this as a priority target it relies on their good will and their personal qualities.'*⁶⁰

Real frustration was expressed by some of those dedicated police officers:

*'I've tried to push it and explain how serious it is but its "mmmm, yeah, thanks... but we'll leave it at that."'*⁶¹

The role that the police can play has been supported nationally by a strong ACPO lead. From 2004 when ACPO guidance first promoted 'a proactive approach'⁶² there has been strategic leadership shown. The autonomous nature of police forces means that it is far from straightforward to deliver a consistent response across England but messages are clear and unambiguous from the current ACPO leadership. This strategic leadership has not been in evidence in other agencies.

Statutory children's social care

4.19 For statutory children's social care, the barriers and challenges are similar to those experienced by the police. There was a lack of awareness and recognition of child sexual exploitation, coupled with procedures that are traditionally based on familial abuse:

*'they've been sexually exploited, it's not by somebody in the family so it's nothing to do with social care.'*⁶³

A child protection approach has been described as:

*'mechanistic... It can't deliver that intensive and long-term support.'*⁶⁴

Interventions designed to protect young children from neglect and abuse in the home are based on time limits, thresholds for intervention and an inherent assumption that one or more of the parents and carers are failing or complicit. Interview data suggested that current child protection procedures do not support the proactive and long-term approach needed to work with young people at risk of, or experiencing sexual exploitation. The situation is made worse by the fact that social workers already hold excessive caseloads and inevitably feel cautious about taking on more work where there are no quick outcomes and not always a clear progression. This is a real issue because:

'you often need to be involved with people longer than that, you need to have seen them more than that before you get any form of disclosure'

⁶⁰ interview B2/V2

⁶¹ interview A6/P1

⁶² ACPO (2004)

⁶³ interview A2/V1

⁶⁴ interview C8/C2

‘I didn’t want to tell the truth when Streetreach staff first helped me because even though I knew I was in a harmful situation I still thought the men cared about me and wasn’t ready to leave them. But the staff didn’t give up on me and Streetreach was a place I could go to any time of day. I did lots of activities...’⁶⁶

about what’s going on... they’re not actually providing the platform for young people to be able to talk about what’s been happening to them’⁶⁵

Voluntary sector specialist workers

4.20 While statutory children’s social care has been constrained by procedures, priorities and a resource crisis, the role of the voluntary sector has been of great significance in many of the areas delivering an effective child sexual exploitation strategy. The interview data suggests several reasons why the voluntary sector has been well suited to taking on this task:

- **flexibility**

Voluntary sector specialist projects are more able to adopt the flexible therapeutic model to which this group of young people is most likely to respond well (explored in Chapter 6). This is contrary to the short-term nature of many social care interventions:

‘you always feel people think “is that all?” – they’re waiting for something more and actually its quite a lot to even start to develop a relationship with young people who are so damaged and so disaffected.’⁶⁷

They are also more likely to be able to provide support at an early stage, from the point of initial identification of risk, to disclosure (if this takes place), and throughout any judicial process and beyond to safeguard young people from re-victimisation.⁶⁸ Given the length of time it may require to support young people with a multiplicity of needs, and the slow progress of criminal investigations, this often means continuing to work with young people after they have turned 18. This is a further challenge for generic services. Offering support to young adults can be easier for the voluntary sector:

‘the cut off point for them [statutory services] could cause us some difficulties and that’s why we go up to 25 so that we can pick up those older young people who are equally as vulnerable but by virtue of their age can’t necessarily access a service and one of the things we do is to link into key adult services to alert them to our existence.’⁶⁹

However it is worth noting that funding restrictions and constitutional constraints can mean that not all voluntary agencies can support young people beyond the age of 18, leaving many cases of victims of child sexual exploitation unsupported in the transition to adulthood.

- **time and other resources**

Voluntary sector specialist projects do not have the same caseloads as statutory social workers and often have the time and the staff (and ideally the consistency of staff) to engage intensively with young people in a key worker role. This time commitment is crucial – one dedicated service reported 600–800 direct contacts with one young person over a period of 14 months.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ interview A2/C1

⁶⁶ extract from Youth Advisors’ Presentation to Council of Europe, Rome, November 2010

⁶⁷ interview B8/V1

⁶⁸ Jago and Pearce (2008)

⁶⁹ interview C2/O1

⁷⁰ Sheila Taylor, Director of NWG, at launch of CEOP thematic assessment (29th June 2011)

LSCBs can... be a key link between voluntary and statutory agencies (p26)

- **expertise**

It requires expertise to address the complex needs of sexually exploited young people. The voluntary sector has led the way in developing practice to address child sexual exploitation and many workers are trained to use a range of creative approaches to identify and engage with young people. Those interviewed talked about the ‘pull’ of the abuser and the need to explore different ‘hooks’ that might go some way to replacing that ‘pull,’ encouraging young people to engage with their service:

‘...sometimes to have the space to go and do a bit of artwork or some baking or something without anybody talking about any of the stuff is really good. And they might want to do that for six months before talking, and that’s fine...It has to be led by the young person...it’s what works for them really and who they want to talk to.’⁷¹

Current resource restrictions on statutory services, and the procedural issues already considered in this chapter, mean that it is not usually possible for social workers to engage with young people through these ‘youth work’ approaches. However, it should be noted that the voluntary sector is also facing cuts in the current climate and has always struggled for consistent funding.

- **accessibility**

Voluntary sector specialist projects are often located in premises that are more attractive and accessible to young people. Arrangements will often include a drop-in centre. Young people can make contact without the need for a formal appointment and will generally be welcomed into a friendly environment

- **trust**

The most important advantage is that young people are more likely to trust someone from a voluntary sector project than a police officer or a social worker who they may fear or resent. This does not necessarily mean that all contact needs to be through the voluntary sector – they can be a useful conduit:

‘the voluntary sector are pivotal really...if they have a negative experience, and quite often they have, the statutory agencies are not always welcome. The voluntary sector come along, introduce themselves, and explain they do work along with the police and social workers. And obviously our names are dropped in. It can come to a point where there is a level of rapport, confidence and they’ll say “look I really feel you need to speak to our colleague” and that barrier has been broken down. Jeans and T-shirts too. The voluntary sector don’t wear suits and ties.’⁷²

4.21 The overwhelming message from those interviewed was that it did not matter who delivered direct work with young people so long as they are properly trained and skilled; they have the time and space to deliver the work; and their role is recognised by the LSCB and supported by the local authority. However, the reality of the current challenges faced by statutory social workers led many interviewees to believe that the direct face-to-face work

⁷¹ interview A4/C1

⁷² interview A7/P1

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people ...depends on effective joint working between different agencies and professionals that work with children and young people, including education, health services, youth services, Connexions and children's social care, together with criminal justice agencies and voluntary sector services supporting children and families (p16)

with the young person needs to be taken on outside their caseload:

*'the mainstream is inundated with cases of young children – that's the reality – our approach is that we can do this on your behalf, and we understand the risks.'*⁷³

Health and education

4.22 The interview data suggests that an effective response to child sexual exploitation relies on a wide multi-agency partnership. Both health (primary health care, sexual health and CAMHS) and education (schools in particular, but also those working on truancy and exclusions, and on anti-bullying) have crucial roles to play. However the research has found that it is sometimes difficult to get them to the table. This is often an awareness raising issue. In areas where the dynamics of sexual exploitation are well understood within those agencies, and a broad safeguarding approach is coordinated by the LSCB, health and education practitioners are more likely to recognise the relevance and importance of their contribution to the partnership.

Other key partners

4.23 Other agencies that can – and do in some areas – make an important contribution include:

- **CPS**

The guidance states that *'whilst the CPS is not a statutory member of LSCBs, they should be invited to contribute to the development of procedures.'*⁷⁴ There was no evidence that this had actually taken place although many areas would welcome greater involvement from the CPS

- **housing**

This is an area that is often forgotten as it is assumed that children in care are accommodated, and assumed that children in parental homes are safe. However, for older teenagers housing can be a key concern both as a risk factor and in terms of ensuring safety and enabling them to move on from dependency on an abuser. It is crucial that housing agencies should be involved in the development of the strategy so that the partnership understands the contribution that they can make.

- **youth justice**

A number of young people may be involved in criminality, and this may be linked to their vulnerability to sexual exploitation, or may be involved in criminality as a result of the process of exploitation. A recent UCL study⁷⁵ found that almost 40% of victims of child sexual exploitation identified over a 10-year period in Derby were involved in offending behaviour. It is important that the link should be made with those working in youth offending teams to ensure that young people at risk are identified and also to ensure that those who are both victims who are also offenders are not denied appropriate support.

⁷³ from transcript of research seminar (20 July 2011)

⁷⁴ DCSF (2009) p32

⁷⁵ UCL (2011)

Parents, carers and other family members who are willing to be involved with developing the procedures should also be involved as appropriate (p24)

Any direct involvement of young people in developing local procedures should be carefully managed (p24)

Some areas have put in place co-located dedicated units which bring together expertise from a range of agencies (p26–27)

- **youth services**

Having a potentially crucial role to play in the direct support of vulnerable young people, it is vital that youth services contribute to the development of the strategy to ensure that they are involved appropriately, particularly as they are also most likely to be suffering from spending cuts.

4.24 Other important contributions to help develop procedures and practice within local partnerships can be made by young people themselves, and by their families. Working with young people, and working with parents and carers, is explored in detail in Chapter 6.

The value of co-location

4.25 The interview data has shown that the most successful organisational model is where specialist staff from a range of agencies work together in a dedicated multi-agency unit. This not only provides a referral point for all those professionals with concerns about young people but ensures that those concerns are dealt with by staff with an understanding of child sexual exploitation. In some areas this is achieved through a 'virtual team'; elsewhere the teams share premises.

4.26 Co-location is a model in which specialist staff from key agencies, both voluntary and statutory, share premises and also share the aim of providing a service that responds to the safeguarding and practical needs of young people at risk of, or experiencing, child sexual exploitation. At the same time they proactively investigate those suspected to be abusers. This way of working directly responds to the 'dual approach' set out in the guidance. This model is not specifically required in the guidance and so there were no questions about it in the survey or in the interviews. It also means that it has not been seriously considered as an option in many areas. However, in discussion, interview participants frequently put forward this model as a major contributory factor to the success of their partnership. The data revealed a significant difference between the achievements of agencies working together in co-located multi-disciplinary teams and those where partnership working is yet to develop 'off the page' of the local strategy.

4.27 Interviewees in co-located units recalled how difficult life used to be:

*'whilst you have got professionals working in silos, in different buildings with different IT structures and systems, you're always going to have a bit of a hill to climb in terms of getting proper timely exchange of relevant information.'*⁷⁶

Those still struggling expressed their aspirations:

'we all work very well together...but to be able to be in one location where we are able to be effective and immediate – a one stop shop would be on my wish list...'

because

*'... a lot of what the young people bring, its immediate.'*⁷⁷

⁷⁶ interview A8/L1&L2

⁷⁷ interview A9/C1

And in another area:

*'I want to keep reminding people that that's the vision.'*⁷⁸

4.28 Co-located units are known to be in place, or planned, in less than 10% of areas. This echoed the findings of previous research.⁷⁹ A key factor for success is that the close working relationships engendered between co-located agencies enable practitioners to develop a valuable understanding of the capabilities, capacity and working practices of their partners. For example, it increases the ability of police officers to adopt a 'softer' approach to their interactions with young people and helps those in welfare agencies to develop a more robust approach to gathering evidence:

*'on any multi-agency team the individual organisations have got their own priorities – but we are all enthusiastic and committed and we have the same goals. The police aren't like police but more like social workers. There might not be an investigation but we are all still thinking "what can we do?" We do work well together.'*⁸⁰

The value of co-location was certainly recognised in practical terms:

*'we're all in one location so information and intelligence is shared on an hourly, daily basis.'*⁸¹

and:

*'the only way you get that leap is through these specialist teams, when you're sitting in one another's seats all day'*⁸²

Crucially, its value was also expressed in terms of what co-located units have been able to achieve:

*'to only lose two cases that have gone to court I think really is testament to the work, the value of the work, the value of co-location, the value of the work that goes on with social care and health and education and the police working together to try to protect victims, because you only have to look at the overall conviction rate for rape in this country, it's ludicrous.'*⁸³

Resources

Sample child sexual exploitation protocols, information sharing protocols and other key partnership documents are available from the NWG website: www.nationalworkinggroup.org.uk

⁷⁸ interview A4/C1
⁷⁹ Jago and Pearce (2008)
⁸⁰ interview A7/C1
⁸¹ interview A1/C1
⁸² interview B2/N3
⁸³ interview A2/C1

Self assessment checklist to coordinate joint working and develop a child sexual exploitation strategy

- The LSCB has fully signed up to the 5 principles underpinning a CSE strategy
 - a shared responsibility
 - an integrated approach
 - a proactive approach
 - a child-centred approach and support for parents and carers
 - recognising criminality
- The LSCB supports a sub group to drive forward work to tackle child sexual exploitation
- All key agencies are represented at the sub group, lead professionals are identified and the expectations of each agency clearly understood
- Child sexual exploitation is championed at the highest level in partner agencies
- An up-to-date and specific child sexual exploitation protocol has been agreed and disseminated, focussing on identification, engagement, disruption and prosecution
- The child sexual exploitation protocol is aligned with other relevant strategies
- There is a coordinator in post whose function is recognised in the local area so that referral routes for concerns are widely understood
- Local partners have agreed to share all relevant information and there is a process for safeguarding children and young people at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation

A proactive approach

Key statistics on identifying child sexual exploitation

- **72%** of (89) interviews reported that **training was available on the identification of child sexual exploitation** but
- **16%** of (100) LSCB areas surveyed had **no plans to provide specific advice on child sexual exploitation** to professionals, young people or parents and carers
- **60%** of (89) interviews reported that awareness raising was under taken with **practitioners**
- **44%** of (89) interviews reported that awareness raising was under taken with **young people**
- **38%** of (89) interviews reported that awareness raising was under taken with **parents/carers**
- **73%** of (89) interviews **identified local issues** that placed young people at risk of sexual exploitation
- **young people going missing and looked after children were most likely to be targeted by strategies to address child sexual exploitation :**

Risk group	% interviews reporting some targeted work (n=89)
'children regularly absent from education'	43% (a further 23% reported that none was done)
'children who regularly go missing'	53% (a further 14% reported that none was done)
'children affected by gang activity'	14% (a further 51% reported that none was done)
'children with mental health issues'	24% (a further 43% reported that none was done)
'children abusing drugs or alcohol'	39% (a further 28% reported that none was done)
'children with disabilities or special needs'	24% (a further 41% reported that none was done)
'looked after children'	51% (a further 17% reported that none was done)

- **76%** of (89) interviews recognised **grooming by adults** in their area
- **73%** of (89) interviews recognised **peer recruitment** in their area
- **69%** of (89) interviews recognised the **use of the internet** in sexual exploitation in their area

'all professionals who work with children and young people should be alert to signs of possible abuse or neglect including sexual exploitation' (p7)

- **52%** of (89) interviews recognised **the movement of sexually exploited young people from place to place in the UK**
- **42%** of (89) interview participants recognised **sexual exploitation associated with gangs** in their area
- **37%** of (89) interviews recognised cases of **trafficking from abroad** for child sexual exploitation in their area
- **66%** of (89) interviews considered that **referral routes were clear**
- **44%** of (89) interviews reported that the 'identification' element of the local strategy was **under review**

Summary of findings

- 5.1** A key principle of the guidance is '*a proactive approach*.' This includes taking action to identify those who may be at risk; identifying 'hotspots' to minimise the opportunity for exploitation; and disrupting the activities of potential abusers. This chapter looks specifically at the importance of identification:
- **raising awareness with a whole range of agencies and groups, including young people and their families and carers, so that sexual exploitation is understood and signs will be recognised**
- and
- **scoping the issue to understand how and where exploitation is likely to take place locally.**
- 5.2** This chapter also addresses the issue of consent. Sexually exploited young people are often described as 'hidden.' Their predicament can be misunderstood, particularly in the case of older teenagers. The need to consider consent to sexual activity within the context of coercion and manipulation is crucial if exploited young people are to be identified. It must be an essential element of any awareness raising and training programmes. It underpins not only whether exploitation is properly identified but also whether (and how) support and protection is provided (addressed in Chapter 6) and whether criminality is recognised (addressed in Chapter 7).
- 5.3** There may be a natural tendency to view younger children as vulnerable, with a limited ability to protect themselves from harm, and so most deserving of our protection. However there is a need to ensure that agencies do not choose which age group to protect and which to abandon. This chapter considers how LSCBs can exercise their duty to ensure that all young people under 18 are safeguarded.

‘when I was at school, they didn’t have a clue, not one person asked me what was wrong’⁸⁷

Training

5.4 LSCBs have a responsibility to ensure that agencies are provided with training on how to safeguard young people.⁸⁴ The guidance also requires that *LSCBs should ensure that local safeguarding training includes information about how to identify the warning signs of and vulnerabilities to sexual exploitation*⁸⁵ as well as all aspects of a child sexual exploitation strategy, including supporting young people, delivering disruption plans and gathering evidence about perpetrators of sexual exploitation. Training for practitioners needs to include information on how to identify those at risk, or experiencing child sexual exploitation. Even in the 24 areas selected for interview training on the identification of those at risk, or experiencing child sexual exploitation was not a ‘given.’ A number of interviewees, when asked what further tools they would like to have to support this area of work, talked about a need for training on identification as well as information on trigger factors and on the capacity of a young person to consent. The experience of sexually exploited young people⁸⁶ was that many agencies working with them were unaware of the way in which exploitation takes place. This not only means that signs are overlooked and the opportunities for early intervention are missed but it also affects the way that generic services are delivered.

5.5 Teachers were frequently identified as among the most likely to spot early signs – but it was also recognised that they need help to understand the issues:

‘the identification of early concerns does come from schools, or should come from schools, but it is about making sure schools are on board and have had training and support [in] recognising those early signs.’⁸⁸

One interview area had begun to address this to great effect:

‘we now hold briefing sessions three times a year for every designated teacher and every head in [the city]...we’ve actually got head teachers ringing up saying “when are they, we want to get them in the diary.”’⁸⁹

Neighbourhood police officers are also in a good position to observe what is happening on the street and to identify ‘hotspots’ and those frequenting them. However it was reported that:

‘routine police officers often miss information because they don’t have access to training.’⁹⁰

5.6 Awareness raising may not necessarily require a formal training setting. One innovative practice that emerged from the interviews involved schools intervention officers who:

‘come to the child protection team in the summer holidays so we can help them to identify those at risk.’⁹¹

⁸⁴ HMG (2006)

⁸⁵ DCSF (2009) p 24

⁸⁶ from transcript of the What Works For Us meeting

⁸⁷ from transcript of the What Works For Us meeting

⁸⁸ interview A9/P1

⁸⁹ interview A5/L1

⁹⁰ interview A10/L1

⁹¹ interview C3/P1

Other areas have made available Emma Jackson’s personal account of the way in which she was sexually exploited as an easily accessible and impactful insight into sexual exploitation.⁹² However it is delivered, raising awareness with those working with young people is the bedrock of a child sexual exploitation strategy. No awareness, no identification. One interviewee explained the priority to be attached to this element of their work:

‘we felt that identification through training and work with the police and professionals and young people would be more effective because we are embedding the identification of sexual exploitation. We could case work with people for three years and still no one would really have changed their practice. There is no guarantee that we will get further funding but that would be a lasting change. It will have put CSE on other people’s agendas and they will be better equipped to deal with it.’⁹³

5.7 The guidance includes a list of indicators of possible sexual exploitation.⁹⁴ Also included in the guidance is a diagram of three stages of risk (characterised as sexualised risk taking behaviour; ‘swapping sex’ and involvement in an exploitative relationship⁹⁵) and the indicators associated with each level of risk.⁹⁶ Raising awareness of these levels of risk, and the indicators at each stage, enables practitioners to intervene from the earliest stage. Early intervention can be a sound investment if it can prevent a young person from moving from the stage of sexualised risk taking to involvement in an exploitative relationship. Where early intervention techniques are in place it is widely believed to have resulted in a drop in the numbers of young people becoming heavily involved in sexual exploitation.

Conducting a scoping study

5.8 The guidance includes the premise that child sexual exploitation can take place anywhere. This was confirmed by the interview data where participants noted that scoping the issue had led to its identification locally. However, although recognising that it could take place in any area, interview participants also identified specific local conditions that influenced the nature and extent of child sexual exploitation. These included:

- **geographic factors**

Links to transport routes/hubs and the geographic position – central or coastal – were mentioned

- **demographic factors**

The nature of the youth population, the numbers of young people in care or looked after and histories of migration and immigration were put forward as factors

- **socio-economic factors**

This included levels of deprivation and the nature of housing provision, including the numbers of B&Bs used to accommodate young people, and resource allocation to education and youth service providers.

⁹² Jackson (2010)

⁹³ interview C3/O1

⁹⁴ DCSF (2009) p43

⁹⁵ Pearce et al (2002)

⁹⁶ DCSF (2009) p79

Practitioners should ensure that they have an up-to-date understanding of the pattern of sexual exploitation in their area (p17)

5.9 A first task for LSCBs is to scope the issue. The research found that a scoping study is important for establishing where sexual exploitation is taking place, and the extent of the problem. Although almost half of interview participants had reported that some kind of exercise had taken place, in some cases that work was as yet incomplete and, in others, practitioners felt that the work was already outdated. And, as the data indicates, scoping has yet to be undertaken in many areas.

5.10 A number of ways of scoping the issue were reported:

• Barnardo’s methodology

Drawing on previous research and the identification of risk factors for sexual exploitation, Barnardo’s has developed a set of proxy indicators.⁹⁷ These are used to develop a profile of the area, examining key factors relating to sexual exploitation. Together with the socio-economic situation in the area, the proxy indicators are used to develop a profile of the area. Typically such reports will provide an overview of:

- the groups of young people likely to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation
- the range of sexual exploitation ‘models’ in that area
- the risk indicators that relate to that particular locality
- the level of awareness among those working with young people and service responses.

• pooling information

In some areas, where there was a willingness to work in partnership on this issue, information was simply brought to the table so that all parts of the jigsaw were in place to enable relevant agencies to understand how and when child sexual exploitation was likely to be taking place in the local area. One interviewee reported that:

‘we had a multi-agency meeting – everybody brought what they knew and we just drew it ... we literally cleared a wall and put names, known associates, known places where they go and we mapped it all out looking specifically at where the links are.’⁹⁸

• case analysis

In another area historic cases files were examined:

‘we looked at the social care records over 9 months and found around 250 names [of coercive adults]. The police are now cleansing that data and the police analyst has been asked to look at the links. The greatest number of adults associated with one child is 12, and the greatest number of children associated with one adult is 11.’⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Harper and Scott (2005)

⁹⁸ interview B9/C2

⁹⁹ interview C8/C1

• use of police analyst

Whatever methodology is used to scope child sexual exploitation, it can result in a wealth of data which can be difficult to interpret. A number of interviewees reported that they found the use of a police analyst to be invaluable:

‘We have identified hotspots using the police analyst.’¹⁰⁰

ACPO guidance promotes the use of police analysis to determine gaps in knowledge and the use of a target profile to identify particular individuals and groups who are suspected or identified as a threat to young people. ‘Intelligence, when used properly, should enable resources to be targeted at identified offenders (both individuals and linked groups) and locations eg a school or children’s home, to prevent child abuse or drive effective investigations of child abuse.’¹⁰¹

5.11 A scoping study can identify groups of young people particularly at risk of sexual exploitation. This does not mean that it is only those deemed to be ‘at risk’ should be targeted as it is important to avoid ‘labelling’ and to prevent practitioners and policy makers from being alive to new and emerging risks. The research has found that the ways in which exploitation takes place are changing (see paragraph 5.21 and Chapter 8) and this may affect different groups of young people. It is also easy to overlook the fact that all young people can feel vulnerable at times and, however resilient, may find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. Nevertheless, it makes sense to focus some preventative work on those groups that face known risk factors and who have the least resilience if and when they find themselves to be ‘at risk.’

Targeting risky groups

5.12 All those interviewed were asked whether the local strategy focussed specifically on targeting certain ‘at risk’ groups for early preventative work.¹⁰³ Overall the research found only limited evidence of targeted early intervention. Around a third of interview participants offered no information indicating that there was little focus locally on these groups. The ‘at risk’ groups recognised in the guidance (and the questionnaire) were:

• ‘children regularly absent from education’

As with many of the factors listed here, this can be a cause or an effect of child sexual exploitation. A young person absent from school may be vulnerable because they are spending time away from anyone who is looking out for their wellbeing. In other cases, the impact of the exploitation may cause a young person who may not previously have been absent from education to begin to truant, or to lose interest in school work. Previous research¹⁰⁴ found that many ‘at risk’ young people are absent from school.

¹⁰⁰ interview A7/C1

¹⁰¹ ACPO/NPIA (2009) p57

¹⁰² interview A9/C1

¹⁰³ Pearce (2007)

¹⁰⁴ Jago and Pearce (2008)

Prevention strategies should...be regarded as a key part of agencies’ approaches to sexual exploitation (p13)

‘we are reactive at the moment, rather than proactive.’¹⁰²

‘the usual ages have been 13 and 14 but we are increasingly supporting children aged 11 and 12 years old. We are also working with a greater number of boys.’¹⁰⁵

The snapshot data showed that, although half the records related to young people still attending school or college full time, a significant number currently being worked with were described as truanting, temporarily excluded or attending a Pupil Referral Unit (108 from a total of 461). Yet a quarter of interviewees (23%) stated categorically that no targeted work was taking place, and a further third (32%) had no knowledge of any such activity.

- **‘children who regularly go missing’**

One hundred thousand young people run away from home every year. The Children’s Society has reported that its services are increasingly helping pre-teens who have run away.¹⁰⁶ Again, this can be a ‘symptom’ of sexual exploitation as well as a situation that puts young people at risk. The snapshot data showed that well over half the young people currently being worked with were known to have gone missing (278 from a total of 427) and, of those, over half had gone missing more than ten times.

The introduction of a national indicator for missing young people led to it becoming an LSCB priority in a number of areas and the links to child sexual exploitation are beginning to be recognised more widely. This was the group that strategies were most likely to target as at risk.

During the course of the research project the government announced the transfer of responsibility for national missing children policing services from the NPIA to CEOP. The Home Office Minister announcing the change said that ‘these incidents are opportunities to intervene and protect these vulnerable children and we need to ensure these cases are considered as part of the wider child safeguarding context.’¹⁰⁷

- **‘children affected by gang activity’**

This group was least frequently included in child sexual exploitation strategies. This is perhaps unsurprising as exploitation associated with gangs was not recognised at all in eleven of the 24 interview areas, and identified by only a small number of interviewees in a further six of the 24 areas. Despite this, 42% of interviewees noted concern about the sexual exploitation of young people in gang-affected neighbourhoods. Exploitation may not be recognised as gang violence is perceived to be between rather than within gangs and to be gender specific with boy on boy violence dominating the public view. Research carried out by Race on the Agenda (ROTA)¹⁰⁸ clearly demonstrates a high level of sexualised violence and peer on peer abuse within gang-affected neighbourhoods. A literature search¹⁰⁹ shows a disjuncture between interventions targeted at preventing child sexual exploitation (invariably led through child protection strategies) and those preventing violence in gang-affected neighbourhoods (invariably led through community safety strategies). In organisational terms this means that there is a barrier to effective action in that the local authority teams working on gangs are not part of safeguarding. However action is being taken in some areas to bring the two strands of work together:

¹⁰⁵The Children’s Society (2011)

¹⁰⁶The Children’s Society (2011)

¹⁰⁷James Brokenshire’s speech to mark International Missing Children’s Day, (25th May 2011)

¹⁰⁸ROTA (2010); ROTA (2011)

¹⁰⁹Pearce and Pitts (2011)

‘we do have a team that looks specifically at gang activity and we do have strong links with them. They will attend our sexual exploitation meetings if we think there is a gang element and we’ve also got a fast-track referral into them.’¹¹⁰

To explore the prevalence and nature of gang and group related sexual exploitation the Office of the Children’s Commissioner for England is launching a two-year inquiry in October 2011.

- **‘children with mental health issues’**

Although the research data found that there was some targeted work going on with this group of young people, it is a largely unresearched area. The snapshot data found that mental health issues were represented (among other health difficulties) in 32 cases (from a group of 675 where data was provided)

- **‘children abusing drugs or alcohol’**

Developing addictions may be the first indication that a young person is in difficulty. Although young people may not previously have had a problem with abusing drink and/or drug use, this can be part of the process of coercion. Interview data suggested that alcohol was the main issue, together with ‘soft’ drugs among the younger victims. Heroin and ‘crack’ were said to be associated only with older victims.

- **‘children with disabilities or special needs’**

As set out above the prevalence of the impact of disability on vulnerability to sexual exploitation was explored through the snapshot data. While learning difficulties were most commonly encountered other behavioural/emotional difficulties and some physical difficulties were reported. However there is little evidence of work with this particular group. It is a seriously under-developed area in terms of both research and practice.

- **‘looked after children’**

The snapshot data explored the living situation of young people currently worked with and found 145 cases of children looked after or in the care of the local authority (from a total of 684). The majority were living in residential care homes. This is an area in which some targeted work is taking place as it has long been recognised that looked after children may be a focus for abusers:

‘I think there are definitely concerns about children’s homes, young people in care, that’s across the board a growing concern in local authorities and safeguarding...I think there are more incidents of vulnerable young women in care, guys turning up in cars, taxis, it’s obvious that they are a group of very vulnerable young people and they are going to be targeted.’¹¹¹

While this is undoubtedly the case it should also be recognised that the majority of young people included in the snapshot are living in the family home.

¹¹⁰interview A9/L1

¹¹¹interview B8/V2

‘It’s crucial that at every level there is a good understanding that they are unwilling victims. That guides everything.’¹¹⁵

5.13 The interview data suggested that, in addition to the ‘at risk’ groups identified in the questionnaire, practitioners were also particularly concerned about:

- **homeless young people, and those living in unsafe situations**

The snapshot data found that a number of young people described as ‘looked after’ were living in bed and breakfast accommodation (3 from a total of 156). Concern was expressed by a number of interview participants about the use of bed and breakfast accommodation:

‘we have jumped up and down about B&Bs – the young people are so vulnerable and adults know where to find them.’¹¹²

- **victims of child abuse and those experiencing or witnessing domestic violence at home**

Recent research found that young people with experience of family violence were more likely to have had a relationship, and at an earlier age. Girls with a history of family violence were found to have an increased likelihood of an older partner. An older partner, especially a much older partner (at least two years older) was found to be a significant risk factor for sexual exploitation. Young people found it difficult to distinguish between caring concern and coercive control.¹¹³ The snapshot data found that 206 young people currently being worked with (from a total of 1065) were known to have witnessed or experienced (or both) domestic violence.

5.14 It should perhaps be noted that interview participants did not often allude to the need for early intervention to address exploitative behaviour from the perspective of the potential abuser. A recent ROTA report noted that *‘men and boys require support to understand the consequences of their attitudes and behaviours towards violence against women and girls.’¹¹⁴*

Still hidden?

5.15 It is the exploiter’s influence that can result in young people going missing from home or care, truanting from school, and becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and sometimes serious criminality. The irony is that the same risky behaviours that leave young people vulnerable to sexual exploitation also lead them to be described as *‘“sassy”, streetwise and fiercely independent.’¹¹⁶* Exploiters are often sophisticated in targeting young people, increasing young people’s disassociation from service providers, family or carers, and friends. Although it may seem counter-intuitive, it makes young people reluctant to leave a relationship that seems to provide something that is lacking in their lives:

‘I found that every time I tried to get away he made it so that I had nowhere to turn, I’d gone distant from my family, I never went out with my friends anymore, so after I went away from him I had nothing else...no one to turn to, nothing else to do, nothing to fill my days, and so it was like he made it so that my life was empty without him, do you know what I mean?...I would go back because I felt lonely. I felt like I had no one and

¹¹² interview C8/A1
¹¹³ Barter et al (2009)
¹¹⁴ ROTA (2011)
¹¹⁵ interview B9/C1
¹¹⁶ Wellard (1999)

‘if you could create a toolkit around how you explore the capacity of a child and what you can use alongside their capacity to make judgements about risk, a toolkit for practitioners to sit down and challenge their own thinking about “what do I need to see and understand about this child’s life?” That would be really useful.’¹¹⁸

‘I didn’t want to believe it was all about sex for him. I wanted to believe he cared and I needed acceptance. I think that’s why a lot of young people end up where I was.’¹²²

that was what he’d told me so therefore I felt like he knew.’¹¹⁷

Exploitation also frequently involves violence or threats of violence against young people and their families. The impact on the young person can result in ‘challenging behaviour’ which all too often is addressed as anti-social behaviour. The victim, rather than the perpetrator, is penalised. This can further obscure the reality of the exploitative relationship from both the young person and from practitioners.

The capacity to consent

5.16 The interview data suggested a widespread misunderstanding of the capacity to consent. For those under 16 the inability to consent is absolute – yet even in these circumstances there is evidence that practitioners are failing to identify exploitation:

‘we see “consensual sexual activity” written in reports about 13-year-olds.’¹¹⁹

Misunderstandings were found to be even more widespread in respect of those over 16 who can consent in law –

‘all of a sudden you can consent to everything’¹²⁰

– unless there is evidence of exploitation. The research found that the perception of capacity – and indeed blame for a morally unacceptable and harmful situation – increases with the age of young people to the extent that 16 and 17-year-olds are rarely recognised as deserving of protection. Of course the corollary to this is that action will not be taken against those who abuse them. The process of exploitation is difficult to spot unless practitioners – including those not directly involved in safeguarding but working closely with young people – have access to training or awareness raising programmes to help them to understand the ways in which young people can be coerced and manipulated, and the impact this can have on their actions and ‘choices’. As one interviewee put it:

‘how do we recognise that this young person who is being a nuisance in the community, picked up for petty offending, is actually a human being having difficulty coping with the circumstances they find themselves in. The older they get the more complex issues become and the judgement about capacity as they head towards being an adult, society generally discards it as an issue. They chose to get in the car, it’s their fault.’¹²¹

5.17 The guidance states that professionals should be aware that children and young people do not always acknowledge what may be an exploitative and abusive situation but that this should not be taken as a reason to deny what is happening, to turn away or to close the case. An interviewee explained that:

‘17-year-olds are a grey area for a lot of practitioners which is a big problem. Just because you pass 16 doesn’t mean you don’t need any help. I’ve had a few cases where the local authority thinks “they are 17 now and choosing

¹¹⁷ extract from transcript of What Works For Us meeting
¹¹⁸ interview A5/L1
¹¹⁹ interview A10/L1
¹²⁰ interview A8/V1
¹²¹ interview A4/C1
¹²² Taking Stock/Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service (2009) p7

*to do that so let's just wait until they get to 18 and then we'll close the case."*¹²³

The perception of young people as troublesome rather than troubled is reinforced by the fact that they rarely seek help, and indeed can be fiercely resistant to offers of support. Rejecting help is all the more likely if young people feel that they have been let down in the past by those who should have been protecting them.¹²⁴ It is vital that, after such horrendous experiences, they should not be let down yet again.

Boys and young men

5.18 The difficulties of identification appear to be magnified in the case of boys and young men. The snapshot data showed that the vast majority of young people currently worked with are girls. Only 92 (from a total of 1064) cases of boys were reported. This can be an extension of the consent issue, and how society views the power and agency of men and women:

*'some people have a view that a 14-year-old boy and a 48-year-old woman, they don't necessarily see that as exploitative. If that was a girl it would be very different. Professionals see it very differently with young boys and that's why we aren't getting the referrals.'*¹²⁵

Other suggested that the 'signs' may be misinterpreted in boys:

*'if you look at a boy and he's got more bling, he's using drugs or selling drugs – the fact that there's some sort of exploitation going on can often be missed.'*¹²⁶

Research has also found that there are different routes into exploitation for boys. They can include homophobic bullying and rejection by peers and families which leaves them vulnerable to exploiters.¹²⁷

BME communities

5.19 The snapshot data showed that, where ethnicity was recorded, the vast majority of young victims were white (819/1040). The majority of the cases (98%) were also identified as British. This is largely consistent with the national population – although may show that some communities are under- or over-represented in some areas.

The urban myth?

5.20 There were also perceptions that exploitation only takes place in city centres. The snapshot data showed that the majority of the cases were reported as taking place in towns (254) and cities (223). Only seven cases were reported in rural areas (from a total of 484). One interviewee explained that:

'it's a lot easier to meet people in a larger, more complex urban environment than it might be in a local community. The child in a relatively small town

¹²³interview A7/V1

¹²⁴Chase and Statham (2005)

¹²⁵interview A7/C1

¹²⁶interview C6/V1&O1

¹²⁷interview B2/V1; see resources box for useful references

*would be well known to the community at large. It would be easier to meet up with a stranger in Piccadilly than it would be in a park in a small town.'*¹²⁸

But other interviewees suggested that it may be that recognition is related to knowledge and the knowledge of urban communities outstrips that of rural situations because that is where projects tend to be based:

*'we've got a dedicated service in the city that uncovers understanding around what happens.'*¹²⁹

The changing nature of sexual exploitation

5.21 The interview data showed that there was widespread recognition of the grooming model. The snapshot data also showed that grooming was the most commonly reported method of coercion (211 from a total of 478). There were indications that, once one model of exploitation had been identified in the area, practitioners do not always recognise others:

*'the first sort of model that was identified, you still see that older boyfriend/younger girl which is often the only model that is seen a lot of the time by professionals, which sort of then the other issues are missed.'*¹³⁰

The guidance recognises that the ways in which young people are exploited is constantly evolving. Policy makers and practitioners need to be alert to the emergence of new models. An important finding from this research has been the changing patterns of child sexual exploitation. The model of a young person, typically a young girl groomed by a male adult, or group of male adults, has long been understood. This model can easily be understood within traditional notions of power and gender imbalance. The concept is easy to accept although difficult to recognise without disclosure from the young person involved. The way in which this model plays out is evolving but it is still the most recognised (by over three quarters of the interview participants):

*'Barnardo's have had this sort of older boyfriend model for a while and I think over the years it seems to have changed into a kind of an older male would become friendly with a younger female and then kind of pass her around his friends [...] and it's seen as we're all friends or that kind of thing rather than it being the locked in a flat kind of scenario that might have been something that was in the past.'*¹³¹

5.22 The increased use of the internet is also recognised and accepted as part of this 'grooming' process. The **involvement of the internet** emerged strongly from the interview data. The snapshot data found 82 cases related to social networking and a further 36 cases related to use of the internet in other ways (from a total of 478). The development of new technologies and new ways of social networking present new opportunities for young people – but they also present new risks. While some interview participants did not appear to be aware of the use of social networking sites at all, others considered it to be the single most important factor at present:

¹²⁸interview A4/V1

¹²⁹interview A4/V1

¹³⁰interview C6/V1&O1

¹³¹interview A6/O2

The ways in which children and young people are exploited is constantly evolving (p17)

Local areas should continually assess how young people are being groomed for sexual exploitation and make enquiries about other routes into sexual exploitation taking place in their area (p24)

*'The biggest problem is the internet. It's not just about grooming, it's a major communication tool. It's used to get to know girls, to make links with more girls, to start contact with them, and also to pass on information and to interfere with witnesses.'*¹³²

Another explained how those 'links' are made so easily:

*'they may add that person to their friends' list on Facebook and then their relationship develops from there. Their friends will add them as friends and before they know it they've got umpteen friends on Facebook they don't really know.'*¹³³

5.23 However there are other areas of sexual exploitation that are more difficult to reconcile with the traditional view of grooming, and of our understanding of the power dynamics that allow it to take place:

- **exploitation linked to poverty and social exclusion**

There may be no grooming involved but the opportunistic abuse of a young person in need of help. An example of this would be offering accommodation to a runaway or homeless young person in return for sex.

- **exploitation involving peers**

The responses from interviewees suggest that coercion by peers may be just as common as the 'older boyfriend' pattern. This 'model' was identified in 21 areas (21/24) and was also the second most common model of coercion identified in the snapshot data. In some cases the 'peer' will also be a victim:

*'you have a victim and then they will introduce a lot of other victims so there always seems to be a constant chain.'*¹³⁴

- **partying lifestyle**

A partying lifestyle featured in only four cases in the snapshot data (from a total of 478).

*'a lot of the young people are now talking about it much more in [terms of] going to a house with a group of lads where there's an exchange of sex that is kind of presumed, so not the traditional picture although that's still there.'*¹³⁵

Some practitioners believe there to be a danger that, in certain circumstances, underage sex is becoming normalised. For example,

*'social workers [...] were worried that the crimes of Ormerod and his friends had normalised the idea of underage sex among youngsters in Torbay, even for those who did not know the men.'*¹³⁶

As a result of Operation Mansfield, which led to the prosecution of Ormerod, Torbay has launched a 'Challenging Social Norms' project aimed 'at giving young people the tools to tackle their peers on subjects such as sex.'

¹³² interview B9/P1

¹³³ interview A9/P01

¹³⁴ interview A4/P1

¹³⁵ interview B2/V3

¹³⁶ Guardian, 8th July 2011

- **exploitation associated with gangs**

The 'boyfriend' model can also be associated with gang activity (see 5.12)

- **exploitation involving boys and young men**

The difficulties of identifying boys and young men are considered in 5.18

- **exploitation involving female perpetrators**

This was rarely mentioned although cases have been identified.

5.24 Moving young people from location to location in the UK was recorded as a feature in 47 cases captured by the snapshot data (from a total of 482). However only one case of trafficking from abroad was included in the snapshot data:

*'we are not very good at recognising migrant trafficking – we just can't find where it is because it's very intrinsic to the community. You've got to have a handle on it somehow or another...anecdotally we know it's here because we hear things.'*¹³⁷

Raising awareness with young people and with families

5.25 Information available to professionals to help them to identify child sexual exploitation has been considered in 5.4. The interview data also addresses awareness raising with parents and carers and with young people:

- **parents/carers**

Parents and carers are most likely to be the first to be aware of a change in a young person which may give cause for concern. However, the availability of guidance specifically directed at parents was far from widespread, and was even less evident for foster carers:

*'I would guess the 120 odd foster carers that we've got don't know that it exists'*¹³⁸

Guidance available nationally, from CROP and other organisations, is listed in the Resources section at the end of this chapter.

- **young people**

The research found some very good initiatives taking place to raise awareness with young people in schools and other settings:

*'we've tried to extend the work so that there is a preventative element to it – within schools, children's homes, that kind of thing. It's important in equipping young people with some kind of tools to think about when they're out there and they're facing the situation – so that basically their awareness is higher.'*¹⁴⁰

This activity was seen as crucial to raise awareness and to increase resilience and also to ensure that young people already at risk or experiencing sexual exploitation would know where to turn for help:

'we have had young people come forward because of the education

¹³⁷ interview A4/V1

¹³⁸ interview C7/C1

¹³⁹ interview B5/V2

¹⁴⁰ interview A2/C1

'Forget the nitty gritty about STIs and contraception. It's the whole area of negotiating relationships and looking at what relationships mean, especially for young women. And being assertive and knowing what your rights are. It's just not there.'¹³⁹

Guidance for the local community on sexual exploitation should include...public awareness campaigns (p25)

Guidance for the local community on sexual exploitation should include...how and where to report concerns about victims and offenders (p25)

*programmes.*¹⁴¹

However work in schools is still an area that many partnerships struggle with:

*'one of the things that is sadly lacking is education at school'*¹⁴²

sometimes because:

*'a lot of our schools weren't comfortable with the kids being taught about the risk of CSE.'*¹⁴³

In some areas this related back to a lack of awareness raising and support for teachers and other staff:

*'I think schools are quite reluctant because if a child discloses a lot of the teachers aren't competent on what to do.'*¹⁴⁴

Raising awareness in the community

5.26 The research questionnaire asked about awareness in the community. It is crucial for everyone, including the wider community, to understand the way that exploitation works. Unless LSCBs invest in some awareness raising in local communities the view of young people apparently 'choosing' to spend time with their abusers will continue to evoke the description of those 'persistently and voluntarily' returning to selling sex and still liable to be arrested for loitering and soliciting.¹⁴⁵ There is already anecdotal evidence that prosecutors, the judiciary and juries are responding to young people who display this counter-intuitive behaviour as 'unreliable witnesses.' If blame is placed on the young person, it not only further damages that young person but effectively shifts the blame away from the abuser. Justice cannot be served unless the dynamics of the entrapment of the young person is widely understood.

5.27 The only responses to awareness raising beyond professionals, schools, young people and their families and carers, related to use of the media. There were examples of the use of local radio as well as local print media to provide an insight into child sexual exploitation and the initiatives locally to address the problem.

Referral routes

5.28 The research questionnaire asked whether referral routes were clearly signposted. There was a high level of confidence from the interview participants even when other aspects of the strategy were not in place.

5.29 During the course of the research project the websites of all LSCBs were checked. There were few direct references to child sexual exploitation and, although specific procedures were generally available to professionals through the website, very few offered information to young people, parents and carers and the general public on the risks of child sexual exploitation and how to seek help or report concerns.

¹⁴¹ interview A8/N1

¹⁴² interview A9/P1

¹⁴³ interview A9/H1

¹⁴⁴ interview A9/H1

¹⁴⁵ Home Office (2006)

Resources

On awareness raising:

- The **NWG** has examples of leaflets that have been used to raise awareness with a wide variety of audiences, available from **www.nationalworkinggroup.org.uk**
- **Barnardo's** have produced guides for parents, young people and professionals who work with children to help them to be more aware of the signs of child sexual exploitation. The guides are available to download at **www.barnardos.org.uk/spotthesigns**
- **NSPCC** produced *Protecting self and keeping safe* in 2006, an education pack for use in schools and youth settings for 11–16 year olds covering sexual exploitation. This includes a DVD and stand-alone resources to highlight sexual exploitation issues
- **Friend or Foe** (2009) was developed by Taking Stock in Sheffield. It is an education pack for use in schools, exploring positive and negative relationships, peer pressure and sexual exploitation. It includes exercises on risks associated with new technologies and materials aimed at increasing the knowledge and confidence of staff involved in its delivery
- **My Dangerous Loverboy** is a film produced to raise awareness of internal trafficking of UK national children for sexual exploitation, with an accompanying education pack. Available from **www.mydangerousloverboy.com**

There are also books which provide a very accessible and direct account of child sexual exploitation:

- **The End of My World: The Shocking Story of a Young Girl Forced to Become a Sex Slave** by Emma Jackson (Ebury Press, 2010)

and

- **Fiona's Story** by Irene Ivison (Virago, 1997)

On scoping:

- An example of a scoping exercise is **Tipping the Iceberg: A Pan Sussex Study of Young People at Risk of Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking**, by Harris and Robinson, published by Barnardo's in 2007

On missing young people:

- **ACPO** has published guidance for the police in 2010 on **the management, investigation and recording of missing persons**. There is also a supplementary briefing note, published by the NPIA in 2010, on the investigation of missing persons. Both are available to download from www.npia.police.uk
- **CEOP** has conducted an assessment of missing and abducted children, available to download from www.ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/Missing_scopingreport_2011.pdf
- **The Children's Society** has published a research summary report to accompany their campaign to **Make Runaways Safe**, available from www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/campaign-join/make-runaways-safe/our-research-reports
- Government guidance was published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in 2005: **Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home and care**, London: HM Government

In relation to gangs:

Useful background information is contained in:

- Pitts, J (2007) **Reluctant Gangsters: Youth gangs in Waltham Forest**, Luton: University of Bedfordshire, available to download from www.walthamforest.gov.uk/reluctant-gangsters.pdf
- Pitts, J (2008) **Reluctant Gangster: The Changing Face of Youth Crime**, Devon: Willan Publishing
- ROTA (2010) **The Female Voice in Violence Project**: London: ROTA
This report is based on face-to-face research with 352 women and girls associated with gangs
- ROTA (2011) **The Female Voice in Violence Project. Final report: This is it. This is my life...**, London: ROTA
The final report into the impact of serious youth violence and criminal gangs on women and girls provides useful guidance to local agencies and partnerships in respect of the needs of girls and women who are gang-affected. Both ROTA reports are available to download from www.rota.org.uk/pages/ResearchPublications.aspx
- Pearce J and Pitts J (2011) **Youth Gangs, Sexual Violence and Sexual Exploitation, A Scoping Exercise** for The Office of The Children's Commissioner for England available from www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

In relation to BME communities

Useful background information is contained in:

- Ward, J and Patel, N (2006) **Broadening the discussion on 'sexual exploitation': Ethnicity, sexual exploitation and young people**, Child Abuse Review, vol 15, pp341-350

In relation to boys and young men:

Useful background information is contained in:

- Whowell, M. and Gaffney, J (2009) **Male sex work in the UK: Forms, practice and policy implications** in Phoenix, J (ed.) *Regulating Sex for Sale: Prostitution Policy Reform in the UK*, Bristol: Policy Press
- Drinkwater, S., Greenwood, H. with Melrose, M. (2004) **Young people exploited through prostitution: A literature review** in Melrose, M.(ed.) with Barrett, D *Anchors in Floating Lives: Interventions with Young People Sexually Abused through Prostitution*, Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing
- Dennis, J. (2008) **Women are Victims, Men make Choices: The Invisibility of Men and Boys in the Global Sex Trade**, Gender Issues, No 25, pp 11-25

In relation to violence in teenage relationships:

Useful background information is contained in:

- Barter, C., McCarry, M., Berridge, D. and Evans, K (2009) **Partner Exploitation and Violence in Teenage Intimate Relationships**, London: NSPCC.
Available to download from www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research

Self assessment checklist for identifying child sexual exploitation

- A scoping exercise has been conducted focusing on victims, perpetrators and locations
- Key agencies work with a range of other organisations to reduce the risks of child sexual exploitation, according to local need
- All practitioners working with children and young people have the requisite skills and knowledge to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation
- Through training and awareness raising, all local practitioners working with children and young people are aware of the risk factors, including local factors, for child sexual exploitation
- There is a programme in place to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation with children and young people
- There is a programme in place to raise awareness with parents and carers
- The community is aware of the risks of child sexual exploitation and where to report concerns locally
- In all cases of children and young people going missing, the risk of sexual exploitation is specifically considered
- Children and young people who have been victims of child abuse or witnesses of domestic violence are monitored to minimise the risk of sexual exploitation
- Preventative work is delivered as early as possible with children and young people identified as at particular risk, and with their parents/ carers
- Preventative strategies are delivered in a way that is accessible to young people and their families, regardless of gender and community

A child-centred approach

Key statistics on engaging with young people

- **52%** of (89) interviews reported **training on ways to engage with young people** at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation
- **44%** of (89) interviews reported that **a specific information protocol** was in place
- **76%** of (89) interviews reported that **intervention was discussed at a strategy meeting**
- **53%** of (89) interviews reported that **education interventions** were available
- **56%** of (89) interviews reported that **drug and alcohol interventions** were available
- **42%** of (89) interviews reported that **health interventions** were available
- **46%** of (89) interviews reported that **family support** was available
- **39%** of (89) interviews found that **therapeutic interventions with young people** were available
- **24%** of (89) interviews reported that **young people had been involved** in the development of local strategies
- **43%** of (89) interviews reported that the 'engagement' element of the local strategy was **under review**

Action should be focused on the child's needs, including consideration of children with particular needs or sensitivities' (p5)

Summary of findings

- 6.1 A child-centred approach** is a key principle of the guidance. It is crucial to all aspects of a sexual exploitation strategy but particularly pertinent to the element of the strategy that relates to engagement with young people. Ensuring that the strategy responds to the particular needs of young people means they are more likely to be able to engage effectively with the help and support available to them.
- 6.2** Another important principle in the guidance is the provision of **support for parents and carers**. It is vital that local strategies recognise the key role that parents and carers can play. It is equally important to recognise that sexual exploitation can be very difficult for parents and carers to deal with, and place enormous strains on the family or group home. Parents and carers need help to support their children and to keep them safe.
- 6.3** This section will explore current practice on how local partnerships intervene to support and protect young people. It includes a perspective from young people on how those services should be delivered.

‘I think that’s what needs to be understood – that pretty much your life has fell apart.’¹⁴⁹

What is a child-centred approach?

6.4 Research¹⁴⁶ into what is known and what works to support young people who have experienced sexual exploitation found unanimous agreement that *‘the approaches should be needs led and victim/survivor centred.’* Based on that research and developed in the light of views expressed by the **What Works For Us** project, the features of a child-centred approach have been identified as follows:

- **respect for a young person, and the belief that they can and should have a better life**

Research found that the core of good practice is recognising that a young person needs and deserves help and support to safeguard them from abuse, and to move on from that abuse. Both interview participants and young people spoke of the need to recognise each person as an individual and not as a sexual exploitation ‘case’:

‘even though they may be affected by sexual exploitation, every child is an individual and they all deal with it differently [...] that tick box might not work, it might work for one kid out of 30, and we need to step away from that and just look at kids as individuals, as individuals and what they like’¹⁴⁷

- **providing emotional support, and the time and space for young people to express their feelings**

‘The Barnardo’s people just talked to me – they were the first ones to ever take any real notice, the first ones to care’¹⁴⁸

For young people this means professionals investing in the time required to allow them to work at their own pace. It also means providing a space to work in which they feel both comfortable and safe. Ensuring that services are accessible is particularly important for those groups that, at present, are not widely accessing specialist services including boys and young men, young people from BME communities and young people with disabilities.

- **understanding how coercion is experienced by young people**

Young people told us that it was crucial that those working with them understand sexual exploitation. Opportunities to recognise and respond appropriately to sexual exploitation are often missed by professionals misunderstanding the dynamics of abuse:

‘that’s actually important that people who work in it are trained and they understand it and they get it because if they don’t then it don’t matter whatever you put in place, however good it is, it’s never going to work’¹⁵⁰

- **providing practical support in response to the wider issues faced by young people**

For young people there may be any number of practical issues that need to be addressed if the sexual exploitation is to be tackled. But there is a balance to be struck between addressing their needs and over-burdening young people with services. It is important to assess what is of most concern, what is at the crux of their problems, and to focus on those

¹⁴⁶ Itzin (2008)

¹⁴⁷ from transcript of **What Works For Us** meeting

¹⁴⁸ Barnardo’s (2009)

¹⁴⁹ from transcript of **What Works For Us** meeting

¹⁵⁰ from transcript of **What Works For Us** meeting

issues. This points to the value of one individual to hold the ring and coordinate the response and relates back to the invaluable role of the child sexual exploitation coordinator (Chapter 4):

‘you’ve got so many different people looking at different aspects of it and actually there’s normally just one or two major things that are causing everything else, and they need to be more focused on the root of the problem [...] you might just want one person to help you – you might not want 20 odd people trying to come and help you’¹⁵¹

- **providing easy access to services with flexible appointment times and, where possible, access without appointment**

Young people explained the importance of helping them to get back into a normal routine:

‘when you’re involved in sexual exploitation your life is really chaotic, so even simple things like a doctor’s appointment, it becomes virtually impossible.’¹⁵²

Young people were remarkably realistic about this issue. They saw the issue as the need:

‘for help and support around getting you back into a normal life [...] unless you’ve got a normal routine these things like mental health appointments and education and careers ain’t going to happen.’¹⁵³

The issue of providing easy access is explored in 6.17.

- **encouraging young people to take actions on their own behalf**

Young people were very clear that they did not want to be ‘mollycoddled’:

‘mollycoddling you, as if you can’t do it yourself and like treating you like you can’t, and treating you like maybe you don’t have a future.’¹⁵⁴

At the same time they did not want to be swamped by activities set for them by practitioners.

The best approach was seen as supporting young people to take decisions for themselves on how to move forward:

‘a lot of people who have pushed us into things, have forced us to do things, and made a lot of decisions for us and we don’t need the people who are there to help us to do it as well’¹⁵⁵

- **providing information and support so that young people understand what has happened to them and also so that their parents and carers are able to support them more effectively**

Young people told us that knowledge was power in that it enabled them to move on:

‘when something like this has happened and you’re working your way back up...there’s people out there unfortunately will take the piss out of that...because they see it a mile off, and they can see that person’s vulnerable and then that’s how you get like in a bit of a cycle with it. But if

¹⁵¹ from transcript of **What Works For Us** meeting

¹⁵² from transcript of **What Works For Us** meeting

¹⁵³ from transcript of **What Works For Us** meeting

¹⁵⁴ from transcript of **What Works For Us** meeting

¹⁵⁵ from transcript of **What Works For Us** meeting

‘the earlier that sexual exploitation, or likelihood of it, can be identified, the more opportunities there are to prevent or minimise the harm suffered by a child or young person’¹⁵⁹

you give that person knowledge on the subject that’s where they can sort it out.’¹⁵⁶

It was also important to support parents who are often completely bewildered by the circumstances in which they find themselves and struggling to cope.

- 6.5** The original set of characteristics was influenced by reports from young people of what they particularly valued: accessibility, flexibility, honesty, confidentiality, safety, gendered provision, and meeting others with shared experiences. These were all characteristics that the **What Works For Us** group identified as crucial:

‘the most important things are that when you’ve got a worker that they understand, they don’t judge you, they support you, they believe you...’¹⁵⁷

Some practitioners described young people at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation as ‘hard to reach’. Yet others vehemently dispute that label and are clear that a child-centred approach can work:

‘I feel that sometimes there’s an approach and if that doesn’t work it’s the young person’s fault. If you can’t get through one way, you need to be always looking for things that young people are going to latch onto.’¹⁵⁸

This chapter explores how practitioners engage with young people, from the point at which a concern is expressed through to the delivery of a support plan.

Safeguarding or child protection?

- 6.6** The guidance recognises that *‘early intervention is likely to be far more effective than intervention at a later stage when the impact on the child or young person’s health or development is likely to have escalated.’¹⁶⁰* This suggests that, in many cases, a broader safeguarding approach rather than a child protection response will be most appropriate. Child sexual exploitation can occur anywhere on a continuum from ‘low risk’ through to ‘high risk’ where there are very clear child protection concerns. Many young people, for whom a concern is expressed around the risks of exploitation, will not reach the threshold for a child protection response. However, the risks of sexual exploitation may be very real. Indeed the young person may already be at high risk but as yet unable or unwilling to disclose all that has happened. This should not preclude intervention from taking place. The strategy needs to be sufficiently flexible to enable practitioners to address the needs of young people wherever, initially, they appear to be on that continuum. This sometimes means operating outside traditional child protection procedures:

‘the system has changed from a s 47 approach. It means we are making a lot more progress. It was a very bold step but it has worked. This approach should be looked at nationally to help other LSCBs.’¹⁶¹

This can only happen where the LSCB gives a clear lead that a broader

¹⁵⁶ from transcript of **What Works For Us** meeting

¹⁵⁷ from transcript of **What Works For Us** meeting

¹⁵⁸ interview B8/A2

¹⁵⁹ DCSF (2009) p42

¹⁶⁰ DCSF (2009) p13

¹⁶¹ interview B9/P1

Effective measures to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people cannot be seen in isolation from the wider range of support and services available to meet the needs of children and families (p15)

Local work to address the issue of sexual exploitation should be integrated into wider work (p15)

‘it’s almost like they are ticking a box and then washing their hands.’¹⁶²

safeguarding approach can and should be taken.

Everyone must take responsibility

- 6.7** Interview practitioners widely recognised the role for specialist workers:

‘if you haven’t got the specialism [...] then the issue doesn’t get highlighted.’¹⁶³

However it was also acknowledged that:

‘people can be deskilled and disempowered by experts coming in because they look to you to bring some amazing new tool or a magic wand and they don’t feel they’re doing it right.’¹⁶⁴

It is an issue that must be addressed through training and awareness raising so that it is de-mystified and all practitioners working directly with young people understand the part they can – and must – play to support young people. The research revealed some particular frustrations from specialist workers who, once they had begun working with a young person, found that other agencies considered that this discharged the responsibility of all agencies:

‘effectively the local authority is saying, you’ve got [a specialist project], we’re closing the case, just going to leave it with you. I think it’s their responsibility as well.’¹⁶⁵

This is clearly an important issue with regard to roles and responsibilities. It is also a real issue in terms of capacity:

‘[the project] can be overwhelmed in the absence of other services – cases just pile up’¹⁶⁶

because:

‘we get all the referrals, even if we can’t work with them, we still get all the referrals so we keep them on a waiting list and pick them up as we can.’¹⁶⁷

Interview participants from specialist projects emphasised that they were keen to be involved but as part of a multi-agency partnership:

‘as a voluntary organisation we would be happy to manage the risk in a proper partnership, where the safeguarding issue is identified, and we all work together to do something about it.’¹⁶⁸

The safeguarding approach needs to be linked into child protection procedures when appropriate (Chapter 4) and specialist work needs to be linked into the generic delivery of services to ensure that the response to the needs of young people is holistic, rather than fragmented.

¹⁶² interview A3/A2

¹⁶³ interview B5/V1&V2

¹⁶⁴ interview B5/V2

¹⁶⁵ interview A2/C1

¹⁶⁶ interview A10/L1

¹⁶⁷ interview A4/V1

¹⁶⁸ interview A8/V1

Procedures should specify how professionals can and should share information about concerns appropriately and at the right time, with all relevant agencies in line with the Government's information sharing guidance (p24)

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 (p27)

Sharing information

6.8 A key principle in the guidance is *'sharing information at the earliest possible stage where necessary to enable professionals to consider jointly how to proceed in the best interests of the child and to safeguard and promote the welfare of children more generally'*. The research found that information sharing protocols were reported as in place in less than half (44%) of the interviews:

*'we haven't signed up to an information sharing protocol but all of us round the table know it's all because of child protection.'*¹⁶⁹

Indeed there was evidence of some reluctance to consider a specific protocol because it was felt that formality might hamper current openness. However, in other areas, it was clear that information sharing needed to be improved, particularly with agencies used to offering a confidential service, including GU services:

*'one of the lessons has been about building bridges with what were historically seen as discrete adult services within the health world.'*¹⁷⁰

Most of the discussion taking place with interview participants considered how to increase the level of information shared – there were few concerns about exceeding the boundaries of what needs to be shared. Discussions with young people revealed a different perspective. There was a realism about the need to share information in many circumstances, and indeed a plea to share information among practitioners who were working directly with them so that they need not repeat their stories over and over again:

*'young people have said to me: "I'm sick of telling my story to the YOT worker, the drugs worker, the sexual health worker, the social worker, you, the Connexions."'*¹⁷¹

As one young person put it succinctly:

*'keep your files properly!'*¹⁷²

However, there was also a plea for honesty and clarity about when, with whom and why information would be passed on:

*'people who just say like "Ah we'll just talk – this won't be said, that won't be said" and then they go and say it – that knocks me down a bit.'*¹⁷³

6.9 Given the nature of sexual exploitation, it is important that information can be shared between LSCB areas as well as within them. This is yet to happen in many parts of the country:

*'[developing links with other areas] is something that has been shelved really because there's never enough time.'*¹⁷⁴

Assessing needs and risks

6.10 The interview data shows that, in the majority of cases, assessments are

¹⁶⁹interview A9/P1

¹⁷⁰interview A5/L1

¹⁷¹interview B5/V2

¹⁷²from transcript of What Works For Us meeting

¹⁷³Warrington (2011)

¹⁷⁴interview A9/L1

carried out by statutory services, often in specialist teams where they are in place. This can include voluntary sector specialist projects. The variation in approach tends to reflect the differences between those areas where it was felt that child sexual exploitation could only be addressed through a formal child protection framework and those areas where a more tailored approach was taken to ensure a broader safeguarding response. Once again, the most effective practice seems to take place within dedicated and co-located teams. The key agencies can collate all information about a young person to assess the risks and dangers in their lives. Without this immediate response, specific procedures need to be in place to bring key professionals together to pool information and to carry out an assessment of need. The initial report may relate to a single concern – perhaps truanting – but, through this assessment process, what at first may appear to be low risk can become significantly more serious as the wider circumstances in which that young person is truanting is understood:

*'it's that collective understanding of the incidents in relation to individual children...the police have got 12 incidents, social care have got three incidents and I've got one incident, collectively that pattern is a lot more serious than one agency currently understands.'*¹⁷⁵

6.11 The research found that there are widely varying practices in the way in which this assessment takes place. In some areas the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is seen as important as a way of formalising concerns. However, where practice has developed into a specialism, interview participants were concerned that it has too high a threshold to prompt early intervention and can hinder the gathering of useful information at an early stage – information which may help to form a picture which is later used in evidence against abusers. However the assessment is undertaken, the important features are that:

- it should be undertaken by someone who understands sexual exploitation
- it should include information in relation to specific risk factors for sexual exploitation
- it should include information from a wide range of agencies to provide a full picture of the circumstances of the young person
- it should determine whether the young person should receive a child protection response or, where that threshold has not been reached, a broader safeguarding response

Managing duality

6.12 The issue of whether a child protection response or a broader safeguarding response is appropriate usually depends on the role of parents and carers. Where there are concerns about the care provided by one or more parents or carers, child protection procedures would be followed. Where parents and carers were supportive and clearly not complicit in any abuse, then a child sexual exploitation route would be taken. There were a number of practical differences that emerged from the research. At a child protection

¹⁷⁵interview A5/L1

The wishes and feelings of children and young people as well as the concerns of parents or carers should be sought and taken into account in reaching any decisions about the provision of services which affect them (p13)

meeting those present may not have particular expertise in child sexual exploitation and the issue may 'get lost' alongside other harms and dangers being addressed. Some areas, to avoid this, hold both a sexual exploitation and a child protection meeting. This needs careful handling, as interview participants observed. Of paramount importance is the impact on the young person:

*'it's difficult for young people having two separate systems. It's too much for them. We try to merge the two together if we can. The social worker does the CP stuff and we [voluntary sector specialist workers] do the CSE. But that can cause problems because the CSE might be pushed to the side. And then people get confused if they come off a CSE plan but are still on a CP plan. But if you didn't have a dual process the CSE stuff would get lost in the CP stuff.'*¹⁷⁶

Responding to the needs of young people

Strategy meetings

6.13 The research found that what young people found most difficult (after a lack of understanding from practitioners) was for decisions to be taken about them without their knowledge:

*'all my workers have meetings like once a month or something – and then whatever I tell people they'll discuss it whatever – and they'll just say a load of stuff. And then my mum will come home and tell my sister what's happened, what's been said. She tells my sister and I earwig and that – so I know what's going on because I don't like being kept in the dark – if someone's talking 'bout me I have to know.'*¹⁷⁷

This report has already considered the need to be clear with young people how, why and when information will be shared (see paragraph 6.8). It is equally important to be clear about what is likely to happen. The best practice is to adopt a child-centred approach (6.4) and involve young people in determining the course of action.

6.14 One of the key principles of the guidance is that *'the wishes and feelings of children and young people as well as the concerns of parents or carers should be sought and taken into account in reaching any decisions about the provision of services which affect them.'*¹⁷⁸ One way to achieve this is through the attendance of the young person at the meeting that makes the decisions about their future. Some interview participants found the prospect of involving young people to be daunting and struggled to make it a comfortable experience for young people:

*'those case conferences can be quite oppressive for young people because it's like they are on trial – all this personal stuff is talked about and shared. I think it could be done in a better young person-centred way.'*¹⁷⁹

Unless it is explained to the young person what he or she may expect and support and reassurance provided young people may well decide for themselves that they do not want to be part of the process:

¹⁷⁶ interview A7/V1
¹⁷⁷ Warrington (2011)
¹⁷⁸ page 13
¹⁷⁹ interview A7/V1

*'we did invite the young person to some of the meetings but she declined because, on the one hand, she was concerned there were meetings being held to discuss her but, on the other hand, she didn't want to put herself into the forum where there were people she didn't know.'*¹⁸⁰

Other interview areas appreciated the importance of making it work:

*'the role of parents and children in [strategy meetings] is important in terms of being part of establishing a joint journey to try to resolve the situation.'*¹⁸¹

Other areas were achieving significant success:

*'the feedback was very positive. They really liked the fact that we were all sitting round the table and that it involved people who all had a role, they were there for a purpose. They feel very supported.'*¹⁸²

Ensuring that young people understand why practitioners are attending a meeting about their welfare was a key point. When discussing intensely personal and difficult issues it is crucial that practitioners only attend if they have something to contribute:

*'we invite people from agencies that are able to give us some resources – we keep them quite tight. We invite the people who need to be there.'*¹⁸³

Developing a programme of support

6.15 The research questionnaire asked what elements of intervention would be included in a programme of support. Around a third of interview participants were unable to say whether different elements would be made available, indicating that this was not well understood across the agencies. This makes it difficult to ensure a cohesive response to meet the complex needs of young people at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation.

First steps

6.16 The interview data showed that, for those at risk but not yet ready to disclose or to move on:

*'a safety plan is always included because they won't stop straight away. How would they get help if they needed it.'*¹⁸⁵

Previous research¹⁸⁶ stressed the importance of ensuring safety and building trust as the first stage in any intervention in order for there to be sufficient disclosure from the young person to understand the problems that need to be addressed. The quality of the human contact involved in any intervention was found to be crucially important, as was the need to focus on skills and personal development, and improvement in self-esteem.

Therapeutic outreach

6.17 Therapeutic outreach was reported as available by just over a third of

¹⁸⁰ interview C6/V1&O1
¹⁸¹ interview A5/L1
¹⁸² interview B9/C2
¹⁸³ interview B9/C2
¹⁸⁴ interview B5/V2
¹⁸⁵ interview C8/C1
¹⁸⁶ Itzin (2008)

interviewees (39%). Pearce¹⁸⁷ promotes the value of intervention through the provision of therapeutic outreach to support young people to recognise and build up resilience to the risk of sexual exploitation. This is characterised as ‘holding the young person in mind’ – the very essence of a child-centred approach. It means working with a young person in a flexible way, noting when and where they are comfortable. Studies of resilience have found that ‘being there’ for young people can enable a caring and supportive adult to counter previous exposure to risk and help young people to develop protective behaviours.’¹⁸⁸ A widely used model was developed by Barnardo’s¹⁸⁹ and is known as the 4 ‘A’s. This was developed as a practitioner friendly description of a range of Barnardo’s services but is well suited to the style of holistic intervention that only specialist services can deliver and which appears to work particularly well with sexually exploited young people:

- **Access**

Offering support in a way that most enables young people to accept it. This means services that are practically accessible:

‘you can’t expect young people in such a rural area to come to you, you’ve got to take that provision and that information out to them’¹⁹⁰

and also delivered by practitioners who are personable and reach out to young people to build effective relationships with them.

- **Attention**

This can mean offering a safe and stable adult presence to replace their experience of exploitative adults. This can be achieved through a balance of listening and providing practical support. Crucially it means focusing on what is important to young people:

‘we’re a dedicated service for that young person... we will start from the young person’s point of view, even though it might not be the bit that’s worrying everybody, we will start from the bit that the young person feels, so they feel very much that we’re set up for them’¹⁹¹

‘that’s not the only thing that’s going on in her life... for her it [stopping the abuser] was important but there were other things for her much more important – issues around her mum and her mum’s attitude to her and her mum’s support for her, living at home and the difficulties that was causing for her. I think it was very often more important to her than issues about exploitation.’¹⁹²

- **Assertive outreach**

This is close to the therapeutic outreach model advocated by Pearce.¹⁹³ It involves persistently maintaining contact, often using innovative ‘youth worker’ approaches to gain trust and maintain engagement with a young person. One interviewee described this approach – and, in his view, the secret of success in addressing child sexual exploitation – as ‘stickability.’¹⁹⁴ This recognises that it may be some time before they are willing to engage;

¹⁸⁷ Pearce (2009)

¹⁸⁸ Coleman and Hagel (2007); Luthar (2003)

¹⁸⁹ Scott and Skidmore (2006)

¹⁹⁰ interview C6/V1&O1

¹⁹¹ interview C6/V1&O1

¹⁹² interview C6/V1&O1

¹⁹³ Pearce (2009)

¹⁹⁴ from transcript of research seminar (February 2010)

“How could anyone make it easier for a young person to tell someone they are being abused?” It doesn’t matter what is done it’s NEVER easy. It’s extremely hard and that’s a fact.’¹⁹⁷

they may drift in and out of a specialist service; they may engage but refuse to acknowledge any form of exploitation for some time; and it may be a very long time before any formal disclosure is made. But it is ‘stickability’ that will help a young person to recognise that you are on their side, undeterred by their challenging behaviour, not looking for any payback (unlike their abusers) and, ultimately, someone they can trust.

It would not generally mean focusing exclusively on the issue of sexual exploitation. As one practitioner describes:

‘if there are serious concerns but no disclosure, but the young person is willing to engage it will be very generalised at first. Befriending in the first couple of sessions, explaining about child sexual exploitation and safety strategies. If they won’t engage, we keep trying.’¹⁹⁵

Practitioners also warned that care is needed in the way in which ‘risky situations’ are broached as it can sound as though it is the young person who is in the wrong.

- **Advocacy**

This is not necessarily work that is visible to a young person. It is work with other agencies to encourage them to engage with young people to address their housing, health, education and other needs. This means representing the young people with services, fighting their corner for them on their behalf or attending meetings with them to give them confidence and to speak for them when necessary. It also means helping other agencies to understand how to make their services accessible to those they may consider to be ‘hard to reach.’ For example:

‘to say to a young person who’s frequently missing from home and disengaged from society “you must attend this appointment at this set time,” It’s not accessible.’¹⁹⁶

6.18 Young people with experience of sexual exploitation talked about what prevents them from speaking out:¹⁹⁸

- **fear of the reaction of the person they are telling** – of not being listened to, not being believed, being judged, being blamed, and seen as a ‘grass’

- **fear of the abuser** – because they are being threatened, bullied, intimidated or controlled; or because they don’t want to lose them:

‘losing the person you think understands and cares and loves you.’¹⁹⁹

- **fear of the consequences** – getting into trouble, what friends and family will think

- **‘it’s hard’** – hard to explain

‘it’s hard to explain it unless it’s happened to you’²⁰⁰

and hard to believe:

‘they’re the only people in your life and the hardest thing that you can

¹⁹⁵ interview A7/C2

¹⁹⁶ interview A5/E1

¹⁹⁷ What Works For Us (forthcoming)

¹⁹⁸ What Works For Us (forthcoming)

¹⁹⁹ from transcript of What Works For Us meeting

²⁰⁰ from transcript of What Works For Us meeting

‘instead of just focusing on the risks in their life I support them with their ambitions to help them to be able to see a brighter future.’²¹¹

ever, ever do [...] is accepting that there's people in this world who are that evil [...] nobody could possibly do that to anybody and why would anybody pick me to do that.’²⁰¹

- **shame** – embarrassment, feeling dirty

‘It's hard to be really honest with project workers and others because they would think you were “stupid” for putting up with them’²⁰²

- **lack of trust**

‘can't trust them – what will they do if I tell.’²⁰³

6.19 What helps them to tell their story is feeling confident in who they tell because they have had time to get to know them, because they are ‘professionals’ and because they don't feel that they will be judged. For those young people finding it difficult to talk about what has happened to them activity can be a helpful way forward:

‘I hadn't talked about what was happening to me before that because I didn't want people to think I was bad or stupid. It felt safer writing things down, knowing that no-one would change my words.’²⁰⁴

A number of interviewees mentioned the importance of involving young people in creative projects as part of a programme of support:

‘what we really need is to be able to do some art and drama with young people – it's incredibly empowering. It helps them to recognise that there is a way forward.’²⁰⁵

This can have added benefits:

‘the project helped my parents understand about what was going on.’²⁰⁶

A number of local projects have also worked with young people to use their stories to contribute to the development of preventative resources. Examples include the books *Out of the Box*²⁰⁷ and *Pieces of Me*²⁰⁸ developed with young people from Doncaster Streetreach and Sheffield Services; *In a new light*²⁰⁹ developed by the NWG; and several Barnardo's projects which have involved service users in the development of animation and video resources. Members of the **What Works for Us** group have also recently contributed to the development of an EastEnders storyline.²¹⁰

Moving on

6.20 Discussion with young people revealed that they were keen for project workers to support them to move on. While recognising the need to talk about what had happened to them, they were keen to focus on the future and to be involved in deciding what that future might be:

²⁰¹ from transcript of **What Works For Us** meeting

²⁰² from Youth Advisors Presentation to the Council of Europe, Rome (2010)

²⁰³ **What Works For Us** (forthcoming)

²⁰⁴ from Youth Advisors Presentation to the Council of Europe, Rome (2010)

²⁰⁵ interview C8/H1

²⁰⁶ Photovoice (2010), p61

²⁰⁷ Streetreach (2009)

²⁰⁸ (2009)

²⁰⁹ Photovoice (2010)

²¹⁰ for examples see *Out of the Box* (2009); *In a new light* (2010); *Hidden* (2009) developed by Barnardo's Cymru; *Me, Jenny and Kate* (2010) and *Innocence* (2010) developed by Barnardo's SECOS

²¹¹ from Youth Advisors Presentation to the Council of Europe, Rome (2011)

‘Health and education don't always attend [case conferences] so we don't get an input’²¹³

‘you get your childhood took away from you, and you've come out and you go into services, [...] you have no time to be a child because all your time is took up by these services, going and doing this, that and other, instead of asking me what I want to do.’²¹²

It was also recognised that this sometimes called for a ‘tough love’ approach. Young people felt that it was unhelpful for past experience to ‘excuse’ future behaviour, but that they should be encouraged to take action to move forward as part of the process of recovery. This often means re-engaging with education and training as well as addressing health and other personal issues:

- **education**

This was reported to be available as part of a programme of support in just over half of the practitioners interviews. This is a worrying finding given the ages of many of the young people being worked with, and the frequency of truanting or poor educational attainment among young victims of sexual exploitation (see Chapter 8). For those who had been out of education for some time, facilitating a return to learning is a key element of a programme of support.²¹⁴ There were a number of examples of good practice. In one area a specialist Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) offers a learning package through joint work with the child sexual exploitation worker. The young person is able to build up a portfolio of work which is submitted for accreditation and also used for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

- **health**

This was reported to be available as part of the programme of support by 61% of practitioners interviewed. However, the research questions covered a wide range of health service provision and showed a predominance of sexual health interventions, with other health support lacking. The main concern was access to CAMHS:

‘CAMHS just don't see it as their speciality – they didn't turn up to the training.’²¹⁵

Without an understanding of sexual exploitation it is difficult to provide the kind of support that young people require:

‘it's difficult to get the right sort of psychological help. They won't engage in in-depth therapy. They need something more suited to this particular group.’²¹⁶

This was considered to be particularly important because:

‘a difficulty with direct work is that [young people] block it out as a coping strategy – the direct work opens a can of worms and they don't have any support in place to help them through that.’²¹⁷

Another interview participant added:

‘I think it's a national issue with CAMHS, about how they engage young

²¹² from transcript of **What Works For Us** meeting

²¹³ interview A7/C1

²¹⁴ Jago and Pearce (2008)

²¹⁵ interview C8/C2

²¹⁶ interview C8/C1

²¹⁷ interview A7/C2

*people and what kind of services they offer and how they seem to struggle to hold on to the difficult kids.*²¹⁸

The issue of access to suitable mental health care appears to become even more difficult for older teenagers. CAMHS services stop when children reach 16. They may then be referred to an adult service which may not be suitable to the needs of 16–18 year olds:

*'17-year-olds drop between two services.'*²¹⁹

- **drug and alcohol services**

Over half the practitioners interviewed recorded that drug intervention was available as part of the programme of support (56%). Addressing substance misuse will often be part of a programme of support at some stage

- **housing**

Just under half of the practitioners interviewed reported that other agencies made an input to the programme of support. Housing was included as an important element of the programme but there were many concerns expressed about the lack of availability of suitable accommodation for those young people who are unable to remain at home. Brodie has recently explored the provision of safe accommodation for those in the care system who are at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation.²²⁰

This research showed that this group of young people is likely to have experienced a range of difficulties which means that they need support in other aspects of their life as well as a safe place to live that protects them from their abusers. Care can provide young people with safe relationships and a safe place to live. However there is a recognised association between care and the risk of sexual exploitation and sexually exploited young people report variable experiences, and suggest that professionals inside the care system have not always provided the stability and security that they have been seeking. There is also an increasing awareness that young people may be particularly at risk from their peers. The chaotic behaviour of many young people at risk or experiencing sexual exploitation means that they are more likely to be placed in residential care (see Chapter 8) but it has been suggested that foster care may be more suitable.²²¹ The difficulty here is that at least one interview participant found that:

*'there are no foster carers to respond to young people who have been sexually exploited or therapeutic environment for them.'*²²²

For those leaving care, the picture is again patchy. In general leaving care services have had a positive effect in terms of planning accommodation and liaising with housing providers.²²³ However Ofsted²²⁴ has found that young people whose behaviour is described as chaotic are often placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. As has already been mentioned (see 5.13) interview participants are very concerned that, rather than a safe environment, bed and breakfast accommodation places young people

²¹⁸ interview C6/C1

²¹⁹ interview C8/A1

²²⁰ Brodie et al (2011)

²²¹ Lillywhite and Skidmore (2006)

²²² interview C8/C2

²²³ Stein (2004)

²²⁴ Ofsted (2009)

'it is common for children and young people who are sexually exploited not to recognise they are being abused. The needs of children and particularly of young people aged 16–17 years are likely to be overlooked for this reason' (p21)

vulnerable to sexual exploitation at increased risk. Young people in such situations generally have infrequent contact with professionals yet still need the stable presence of trusted and supportive adults.

Working with older teenagers

6.21 In 2009 the National Youth Agency (NYA) found that most LSCBs 'fail to grasp that issues pertaining to safeguarding adolescents are particular and different to those pertaining to children.'²²⁵ Many of the interview participants reported that it was particularly difficult to get a programme of support in place for an older teenager. The research found a number of reasons:

- **the current priority given to younger children in the home**, as already discussed (see Chapter 4)

- **less likely to be known to services**

*'the difficulty with the 16+ [age group] is, they're not often involved with many agencies because they can be beyond school leaving age so they can be missed in a way that younger children hopefully aren't missed...so I think that is a bit of a problem because they don't have those networks around them that younger children have, that are statutory like "you must go to school" and those things. It's easier for them to be invisible... the older they get the more difficult it is to spot.'*²²⁶

- **rejecting services**

Some practitioners simply pointed to the innate difficulties of working with older teenagers who are striving to be independent:

*'the difficulty is not about our willingness to engage with or to provide services, it's more 16–18-year-olds' burgeoning independence and how do you deal with that, how do you keep them engaged when they desperately don't want to engage with statutory services? I think maybe that's why it's difficult for social services to work with the 16–18-year-old group. Frankly I don't think that's down to our unwillingness to do so.'*²²⁷

The danger here is:

*'they say "they're not meeting my needs, they don't do anything for me" and they step away and they become even more vulnerable and isolated.'*²²⁸

- **trying to be independent**

For young people at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation, skilful navigation is required between offering them protection and supporting them to test boundaries and take risks – an essential part of adolescence. The key is guiding young people to avoid harmful risk factors and to build protective factors.

- **lack of expertise**

Many commented that, within specialist teams, there was no difference in the way that they would respond to different age groups but that there were real difficulties with accessing appropriate services:

'there's a real gap', 'just seem to be lost,' 'a lack of services for that age

²²⁵ Cook (2009) p14

²²⁶ interview A5/C1

²²⁷ interview C6/V1&O1

²²⁸ interview C6/V1&O1

group.’²²⁹

Previous research has found that ‘little is known about work with adolescents – most previous work on prevention and family support focussed primarily on services for children under 11.’²³⁰ As a result one interview participant said:

‘I really do fear for the post 16s who just walk away from the agencies. I don’t think there’s enough out there for them...specialism might lead to improved outcomes for this group.’²³¹

6.22 A child-focused approach to safeguarding young people from sexual exploitation is crucial but this needs to take account of generic patterns of behaviour endemic to adolescence. There may be significantly different perceptions of ‘risk’ between a young person and those offering protection. A young asylum seeker or runaway is likely to be more focused on finding a ‘safe’ place to live and may be prepared to negotiate with exploiters to do so, and may consider sex as a price that they have to pay. This is their brave and courageous way of managing their appalling situation. That they have notions of their own agency does not mean that they are not deserving of support and protection – far from it – but that help needs to be offered in a way that recognises their underlying concerns:

‘give autonomy to that young person and do lots of advocacy and give that young person a voice.’²³²

Links with adult services

6.23 This is an issue with which many areas continue to struggle and which is said to have become even more difficult with limited access to adult safeguarding services:

‘that’s been a real issue. Unless young adults have a diagnosis of some kind, mental health or learning disability or a physical disability, they do not get a service. And there’s very little understanding in Adult Services about how to deal with [sexual exploitation].’²³³

Supporting families and carers

6.24 The guidance recognises that ‘sexual exploitation can have profound and damaging consequences for families, including parents and carers, siblings and extended members, and impact on their health, work life, family cohesion, economic stability and social life’ and goes on to recognise that ‘life becomes difficult to manage and the stress of a situation which they do not understand can lead to despair, limiting their capacity to respond to the needs of their children.’²³⁴ The research questionnaire asked whether intervention includes support for families and carers. The response showed that just under half of the interviews suggested that this was available. There was considerable recognition of the need for support for parents:

‘If it’s someone outside the family grooming a young person the parents

²²⁹ interview A1/C1

²³⁰ JRF (2000)

²³¹ interview A5/E1

²³² interview C6/V1&O1

²³³ interview A5/L1

²³⁴ DCSF (2009) p22

need support. It’s a horrible thing for them to go through.’²³⁵

Another interview participant added:

‘often you’re working with people who can’t protect their children...the power of the abuse is so significant that even “good parents” can’t protect their children...you can have a lot of capacity to parent in every sense, those children still get sexually exploited.’²³⁶

Supporting parents and carers is also key to the progress of the young person:

‘if you leave the family out then you haven’t looked at all the needs of the young person’²³⁷

because, for example:

‘if they don’t address the family conflict issues the young person is still going to go missing from home. They think the direct work is a magic wand.’²³⁸

6.25 However there was a lack of access to parenting support workers:

‘I’m not meant to [support parents] but because there are so few resources for parents... you’ve got that difficult dilemma about not getting drawn too much into the parents’ needs because I’m there to support the young people, but I have been drawn into giving support and trying to signpost parents.’²³⁹

It was one of the issues raised in discussion when practitioners were asked what new tools and resources they felt they needed:

‘more support groups for parents;’²⁴⁰

‘we have some leaflets for parents but no one will fund them – let alone support any specific training for them.’²⁴¹

6.26 The guidance and responses from interview participants were based on the need for support to enable parents to cope. There was little recognition of the positive role that parents can play as partners in the work with young people. Parents generally know the young person better than anyone else and can be a crucial source of understanding of the exploitative situation and the young person’s needs. For example, some areas were still wrestling with the concept of inviting parents and carers to the meetings:

‘the parents aren’t always invited...they’re going to be adopting a more family group conferencing model here which would mean more opportunity for parents to be involved.’²⁴²

But in other areas it has been found to be a positive experience:

‘at the end of the meeting the parents said they felt very supported as they felt that it was shared responsibility rather than leaving it just to

²³⁵ interview A7/V1

²³⁶ interview A5/L1

²³⁷ interview A5/E1

²³⁸ interview A7/V1

²³⁹ interview C8/V2

²⁴⁰ interview A9/C1

²⁴¹ interview C8/A1

²⁴² interview A8/V1

themselves.’²⁴³

Involving young people in developing policy and practice

6.27 Although nearly a quarter of interview participants reported that young people were involved in the development of child sexual exploitation strategies, there is very little evidence from interview data on this work, or on how young people contribute in practice. This suggests that professionals do not routinely integrate the views of young people into their responses to sexual exploitation. Concerns are often raised about the appropriateness and sensitivity of involving young people in discussions about policy or practice and the resource intensive nature of this work. However the data does reveal some ‘one offs’ where individual practitioners are committed to a participatory approach:

‘a voluntary agency did some work with particularly vulnerable people around two years ago.’²⁴⁴

Some practitioners recognised and noted the added value of working alongside young people:

‘there is certainly a role for the involvement of young people. There is a lot to learn from what works for them, what would have made a difference for them at the time, the means of communication...’²⁴⁵

Elsewhere young people have also been involved in developing and delivering training²⁴⁶ and in service level participation or advisory groups which contribute to on-going practice development and evaluation:

‘...we have tasked our young people in the participation group to do a very small piece of work to look at exploitation on the internet. And then we’ve got a drama group that are actually going to raise awareness of cyber bullying and exploitation.’²⁴⁷

In at least one local area a young person and parents affected by sexual exploitation are represented on the LSCB sub group and have been involved in the development of the local protocol. At a national level the CEOP Young People’s Advisory Panel (YAP) has contributed to both the development of their resources and organisational knowledge. But despite these examples there is little evidence that it is happening routinely and the examples often represent time-limited pieces of work rather than the presence of an integrated culture of commitment to participation.

²⁴³ interview B9/C2

²⁴⁴ interview C8/A1

²⁴⁵ interview C8/C3

²⁴⁶ see, for example, the *Train the trainers* programme developed by the nia project and The Children’s Society

²⁴⁷ interview C4/P1

Resources

Working with young people

What Works For Us (WWFU) is a national young people’s advisory group set up in through a partnership of NWG, Barnardo’s and ECPAT UK in June 2010. Building upon participation work of local projects it seeks to develop means of ensuring young people’s perspectives can feed into policy and service development. The primary purpose of the group is to influence improvement in support for young people at risk or experiencing sexual exploitation. The group has directly involved 22 young people from over 13 projects across England. A further 35 young people have contributed to a questionnaire project. The group is open to young men and women aged 16–21 with direct experience of accessing specialist sexual exploitation support. The group meet quarterly, in various locations across the UK. Travel costs for all participants and those supporting them to attend meetings are funded through the WWFU group. To become involved with WWFU, contact Camille Warrington – camille.warrington@beds.ac.uk

Previous work of members includes:

- developing and implementing a young people’s questionnaire on service provision (August 2010)
- making a presentation at the Council of Europe launch of a campaign on sexual violence against children (December 2010)
- contributing to the Comic Relief campaign and development of the EastEnders storyline (December 2010)
- providing a young person’s perspective for the CEOP Thematic Assessment on policing and prosecution (April 2011)
- contributing to the consultation by the Association of Young People’s Health exploring the health needs of young people affected by sexual exploitation (June 2011)

A number of other resources have been developed through participation work with young people at local and national levels. Full details are available from the NWG – www.nationalworkinggroup.org.uk

They include:

- **Face up to it** (2008)
an online resource for young people developed by Barnardo’s and available from www.faceup2it.org
- **Hidden** (2009)
a DVD telling the stories of three young people affected by sexual exploitation, produced by Barnardo’s Cymru
- **Innocence** (2010)
a DVD written and filmed in partnership with young people from the Barnardo’s SECOS and ACE projects

- **In a new light** (2010)
a booklet of photography and writing, and accompanying exhibition, produced by young people from 7 different projects, coordinated by the NWG
- **Out of the Box: young people's stories** (2009)
A booklet of creative writing by young women from Doncaster Streetreach and NSPCC London projects, supported by the University of Bedfordshire
- **Pieces of me** (2009)
A booklet of creative writing and photography by young women from Taking Stock and the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service

Working with parents and carers

CROP was founded in 1996 and driven by the experiences and needs of affected parents. It is the only UK organisation to specialise in working alongside the parents, carers and wider family of child sexual exploitation victims. www.cropuk.org.uk

Available publications include:

- **A Guide to Parent Support Work** (2008)
A worker's guide to supporting parents affected by the sexual exploitation of their children
- **STOP! She's My Daughter** (2007)
Mothers of abuse victims share their stories of sexual grooming and exploitation in the UK
- **A Work in Progress, parents, Children and Pimps: Families Speak Out About Sexual Exploitation** (2005)
Parents' personal accounts
- **Advice to Parents** (3rd edn) (2004)
A booklet for parents and carers

Self assessment checklist for supporting young people and their families and carers

- All professionals who work directly with those at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation have the skills and knowledge to do so
- Services are fully accessible to all young people who may need them, regardless of gender, ethnicity or any other characteristic
- Services are flexible to meet the needs of both young children and adolescents
- Services are available to children and young people believed to be at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation regardless of whether or not they have made a formal disclosure
- Children and young people attend strategy meetings and care pathways are discussed and explained
- Parents and carers attend strategy meetings and care pathways are discussed and explained
- Transition arrangements are in place for young people reaching the age of 18 and still in need of services
- Where parents/carers are not implicated in child sexual exploitation, access to support is available
- Feedback from service users is taken into account in the development/review of services
- A process has been developed for professionals to meet and agree a plan as soon as concerns have been recognised
- A wide range of services are available to respond to the needs of children and young people at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation

Recognising criminality

Key statistics on identifying, disrupting, investigating and prosecuting abusers

- 31% of (89) interviews reported that **local training covered disruption**
- 73% of (89) interviews reported that the **police were involved in disruption**
- 33% of (89) interviews reported that **children's services were involved in disruption**
- 31% of (89) interviews reported that **licensing authorities were involved in disruption**
- 27% of (89) interviews reported that **carers were involved in disruption**
- 16% of (89) interviews reported that **health practitioners were involved in disruption**
- 14% of (89) interviews reported that **voluntary organisations were involved in disruption**
- 39% of (89) interviews reported that the **'disruption element of the local strategy was under review**
- 51% of (89) interviews reported that **child abduction notices** were used
- 20% of (89) interviews reported **the use of covert surveillance**
- 31% of (89) interviews reported the use of **forensic evidence**
- 27% of (89) interviews reported **other investigative techniques**
- 48% of (89) interviews reported that a **police operation had taken place within the last year**
- 24% of (89) interview participants reported that **abusers had been prosecuted in the last year**
- support for young people should be provided by a specialist CSE service, a witness service or others with a trusting relationship with the child – but **a third of interview participants were unable to say who would provide such support**
- 38% of (89) interviews reported that the 'prosecution' element of the strategy was **under review**

Sexual exploitation of children and young people should not be regarded as criminal behaviour on the part of the child or young person, but as child sexual abuse (p6)

'take effective action against offenders so that they can be held accountable, through the criminal justice system, while safeguarding the welfare of the child'²⁴⁸

'We can't talk about disruption and prosecution without talking about multi-agency work'²⁴⁹

'I'm not sure there are any consequences for the perpetrators at the moment.'²⁵⁰

Summary of findings

7.1 A key principle of the guidance is '*recognising criminality*'. Much of the focus of a child sexual exploitation strategy is on the young person and their behaviour. Where a risky situation is recognised, action to remove that risk is often part of the direct work with the young person rather than focusing attention on disrupting or prosecuting the alleged abuser. This can mean removing the young person to a place of safety which, *in extremis*, may mean secure accommodation. This further victimises young people and reinforces their view that they are bad and somehow to blame for the situation. It is crucial that local strategies should be developed with an understanding that serious criminality is involved in exploitation. The guidance requires that strategies should be based on the dual aim of protecting young people and disrupting and prosecuting abusers. Action taken should demonstrate that it is the abuser who is to blame. This message should be clear to abusers themselves, to their young victims, their victim's parents and carers, and to the wider community.

7.2 The research has found a particular tension between safeguarding and prosecution. Many interviewees acknowledged that safeguarding young people must be the guiding principle of all aspects of a child sexual exploitation strategy. However it is also recognised that prosecuting abusers is a key element of ensuring that young people are safe. The tension arises in terms of decisions about gathering evidence and, in particular, the use of covert surveillance. This is explored in this chapter along with approaches to disruption, investigating abusers and supporting young people through this very difficult time. As with all other aspects of a child sexual exploitation strategy explored in this report, the value of a multi-agency approach emerges.

Training

7.3 Less than a third (31%) of the interview participants reported that the training available to them included information on disruption. Even fewer (30%) reported the availability of training on how to investigate cases of child sexual exploitation.

Identifying abusers

7.4 Less than a quarter of LSCBs were able to demonstrate strategies for both protecting children from sexual exploitation and prosecuting abusers. While in some areas the police are key partners in multi-agency partnerships and, in others, major operations have been launched to target those who sexually exploit young people, other areas have yet to develop the proactive approach required in circumstances in which victims are reluctant to make disclosures. Without a proactive approach, identifying potential abusers depends on the testimony of the young victim. This means that action is unlikely to take place until the young person is seriously entrenched in the exploitative process. Relying on the young person to provide the information that will

²⁴⁸ ACPO (2009) p9

²⁴⁹ from transcript of research seminar (22nd July 2011)

²⁵⁰ interview A10/01

Local procedures should specify how professions can work together to deliver disruption plans (p24)

identify his or her abuser places an enormous additional burden on them. Early identification through proactive policing allows for early intervention to support the young person and can prevent serious abuse from taking place.

Disruption

7.5 A key principle of the guidance is *'taking action against those who sexually exploit children and young people to minimise the risk of exploitation.'*²⁵¹ This includes disrupting risky and potentially abusive activity and situations. The research found that there were some concerns that disruption can simply lead to displacement:

*'it just removes them from one place to another. That's the problem with it. It serves its purpose but it's not actually a solution... its sometimes all you can do.'*²⁵²

One LSCB commented that:

*'we don't really buy into disruption.'*²⁵³

But, in the main, interview participants saw it as a vital stage in the process of safeguarding young people, provided that it is not seen as the only solution. The research found that a deterrent message can be enough, in some cases, to put a stop to potential abuse but that, in all cases, it sends a very valuable message to young people and their families and carers:

*'that actually somebody does give a damn.'*²⁵⁴

This reflects earlier research findings²⁵⁵ which suggested that:

*'if we don't do this it appears that nothing is happening. The young person continues to feel complicit whereas disruption activity gradually shows them that something wrong is going on. And the same for the perpetrators – they don't just feel that they can carry on regardless.'*²⁵⁶

Another positive outcome is that, through the disruption process, information is collated that may help to build a prosecution case if the disruption tactics themselves fail to deter an alleged abuser.

Methods of disruption

7.6 In a few of the areas interviewees considered that they were poorly equipped to disrupt alleged abusers:

*'I don't think we are quite there yet.'*²⁵⁷

Some agencies felt that it was not within their remit to disrupt alleged abusers:

*'disruption is police work, other agencies may not have the power to get involved in disruption work.'*²⁵⁸

But there was a significant amount of interview data on disruption

²⁵¹ DCSF (2009) p15

²⁵² interview A5/L1

²⁵³ from scoping data

²⁵⁴ interview A5/C1

²⁵⁵ Jago and Pearce (2008)

²⁵⁶ Jago and Pearce (2008) p22

²⁵⁷ interview C2/C1

²⁵⁸ interview A6/V2

techniques. Around two thirds of our interviewees discussed disruption which suggests that this is an element of the strategy that many agencies were involved with and understood. The tactics for disruption included:

- **early preventative measures, such as making those areas where young people are known to go without supervision as safe as possible, and addressing specific risks and known 'hotspots'**
- **more intrusive interventions including informal warnings, licensing restrictions and court orders.**

By and large it seems that specialist child sexual exploitation workers, where they exist, focus on the former strategy, creating safer environments (managing the risks that young people take by increasing their understanding and their resilience), while the police focus on monitoring specific locations and the activities of the alleged abuser. As with other aspects of a child sexual exploitation strategy, to be effective these delineated interventions rely on a multi-agency response. It was suggested that:

*'outreach work is part of the disruption strategy and all local community agents can be part of it.'*²⁵⁹

7.7 The research showed that disruptive strategies were often planned at a strategy meeting. Some practitioners suggested that the impact of a multi-agency discussion is sometimes enough to put an end to the abuse:

*'the intervention at that level, just because we're involving other partners, can be enough to prevent a young person being sexually assaulted or go on to being groomed into prostitution.'*²⁶⁰

Disruptive strategies: working with young people to manage risks

7.8 As discussed in chapter 5, part of the initial work with young people is about raising awareness of sexual exploitation and the support that is available to those at risk. This usually includes developing an awareness of protective factors and enhancing their own resilience to keep themselves safe. Helping young people to recognise exploitation, and providing them with the tools to protect themselves, is a key element of disruption. These 'tools' will range from practical measures – a phone number they can call if they feel in danger – to addressing self esteem and helping young people to understand that they have a right to a relationship that is free from violence and sexual coercion. This work will normally be delivered by a specialist child sexual exploitation team.

7.9 A key element of keeping young people safe is to ensure that they have somewhere safe to live. Participants in one interview area reported that they were taking action to remove young people at risk from bed and breakfast accommodation and other unsuitable environments:

*'we will go into those bed and breakfasts of a night, we will remove children if we think they're in the wrong place, we will talk to housing and to the landlords about that – we will offer young people some form of emergency accommodation.'*²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ interview A5/C2

²⁶⁰ interview A6/P1

²⁶¹ interview A8/V1

For those young people who are in care some areas reported that they took action to split the young people up, sometimes accommodating them outside the local authority area. This is an expensive option and interviewees feared that it may not be available for much longer:

*'it's very expensive actually – but she's safe and she's making progress... if we try to bring them back, they jump up and down, quite rightly so as well I think [...] but I'm under pressure to bring kids back because obviously the costs, and that's a worry for me because I do honestly think, going forward in the future, that decisions will be made on terms of finance rather than terms of child safety, or having consulted with the child and the child's happy to stay where they are, but we just ignore that and bring them back anyway because we can't afford it. That hasn't happened yet [...] I'm still overspending on external placements, [...] but in these particular times of cuts, I will not be allowed to continue to make that kind of dent in the public purse.'*²⁶²

7.10 There is also a key role to play for parents and carers and it was reported that:

*'on the whole most parents and carers are more than helpful in the disruption of it...where it doesn't work it's because of either sheer exhaustion or there are other areas of wilful neglect already taking place.'*²⁶³

The research revealed a range of practical actions, including:

*'blocking the drives of children's homes with their own cars to stop these men.'*²⁶⁴

However, it was also commented that residential home staff sometimes have restrictions in what kind of disruption work they can do when children are showing risky behaviours:

*'It's very difficult for residential staff in particular to do certain things because of the restrictions placed upon us by the national minimum standards, in particular around [...] locking doors [...] one of the problems we were facing was that kids would be given mobile phones that we wouldn't know about, they'd be getting a phone call at three o'clock in the morning, they'd be slipping downstairs undetected, and walking out of the building and getting into cars, and coming back two hours later [...] we were powerless to stop it because we couldn't even lock doors. We couldn't seize mobile phones. We were restricted in what we could do. [...]'*²⁶⁵

Other interviewees suggested that there was some confusion among residential care home workers about the action that they can take, and called for leadership within the profession on this issue because:

'the majority feel that they don't have the authority to remove that person's mobile phone so that we could use it for evidence. [...] They're very uncomfortable about gathering evidence which would assist us that

²⁶² interview A6/C1

²⁶³ interview A5/E1

²⁶⁴ interview A5/C2

²⁶⁵ interview A9/C1

*way because they feel that they're not protected. There's a lot of unknown issues for residential care staff which is a problem.'*²⁶⁶

They overcome these issues by involving children and young people in developing a policy on how to act on those circumstances:

*'eventually I sat down with a group of looked after children, a consultation group [...]. We ran it past children's rights [...] it was controversial in that there was restriction of liberty [...] We also had policies again where we could seize mobile phones and SIM cards, and provide them with phones that they could only ring the homes and the police on to keep them safe [...].'*²⁶⁷

Disruptive strategies: targeting locations

7.11 The research found that disruptive activity also focuses on locations. It was suggested by a number of interview participants that removing the opportunity for offending by monitoring identified hotspots, or by increasing awareness of potential criminal activity taking place, can be effective:

*'one of the things that comes up regularly when I talk about hotspots is taxi firms, takeaways, parks, where young people... will gather together. I know this is where a lot of the networking takes place. When I speak to girls and say "How did you get to know such-and-such?," it'll be through a friend or he works at such-and-such takeaway, or I met him at the taxi rank, or he hangs about at the park. There's always a place where the meeting first took place.'*²⁶⁸

Focusing on areas where young people 'hang out' can help to raise awareness with young people:

*'we have like a, probably twice a year, like a night safe campaign where we go to these honey-pots and try and target the young people, actually see what they're up to and if we do identify specific locations we do try, myself and the education worker, to go into the schools, let the teachers be aware of it, because it's a safe haven for them.'*²⁶⁹

As with implementing other disruptive tactics multi-agency work with the police is essential:

*'the vol sector is part of things [here] For example, with the night time economy the Operations Inspector works with the [local drop-in]. We attend his briefing – the drop-in can have a radio and be part of the operation.'*²⁷⁰

Disruptive strategies: targeting businesses

7.12 Research showed that, in many cases, disrupting hotspots involves working with businesses to help to make them safer for young people. In some areas there was frustration that this was yet to be addressed as part of the local strategy:

'the police could use their powers better. We know that men turn up at

²⁶⁶ interview A6/P1

²⁶⁷ interview A6/C1

²⁶⁸ interview A9/PO1

²⁶⁹ interview A2/P1

²⁷⁰ interview C2/O2

*certain establishments. Why don't the police look at that? It's getting better but there is a tendency to wait for something to happen.'*²⁷¹

But the research found a more proactive approach in other areas. For example:

*'If you are aware of a hotspot, say a particular hotel or café, you can educate the staff. "Are you aware that [this area] has a particular problem with adults taking advantage of young people? People are using your premises and so you can help us to stop that.'*²⁷²

In some areas hotels and taxi offices have been provided with information about exploitation:

*'not accusing them, but the approach was this is the sort of thing that happens, if you know about it, let us know.'*²⁷³

This can be welcomed by local businesses:

*'the new nightclub owner [...] is absolutely onboard with us, he thinks we're wonderful, he's happy for his daughter to go and he wouldn't have been happy for his daughter to go before, he's really tied in.'*²⁷⁴

7.13 Sometimes businesses are less willing to cooperate or are believed to be complicit. In such cases action taken is more intrusive:

*'we have three or four times this year run an operation in the various hotspots. We go in during a night duty and deal with any crimes committed to do with sexual exploitation. But it's also to protect. We distribute cards to young people.'*²⁷⁵

This often involves the use of licensing. The LSCB has an important role in licensing as child protection is now to be taken into consideration:

*'the Safeguarding Board is a responsible authority under licensing provision and we do get sent copies of cases where there might be some concerns. So, for example, if there was somewhere that was repeatedly selling underage, or where there was activity that was dodgy, we would get copied into that, and we have on very rare occasion made representations against licenses being renewed.'*²⁷⁶

Research showed that this can be seen as a positive move by those businesses keen to demonstrate that their services are safe:

*'it now works like if anybody applies for an under-18 licence to do a disco, they're asked to come to us for a risk assessment and we work with them to risk assess all the sexual exploitation stuff. Having worked with three or four nightclubs now we use that to make sure that the way the venue's run and the leaving home and the arriving is all safely taken care of.'*²⁷⁷

And, where cooperative, businesses often become an important source of information:

'[specialist police], they have links with all the taxi licensing, links with

²⁷¹ interview C8/C2

²⁷² interview A7/L1

²⁷³ interview A6/P1

²⁷⁴ interview A5/V1

²⁷⁵ interview A7/P1

²⁷⁶ interview C1/L2

²⁷⁷ interview A5/P1

*all the taxi firms, so we can get them involved in the disruption of picking certain individuals up, or dropping them off, or gleaning intelligence, you know, you're getting phone calls from this person, where are they being taken to, who's paying for the fares, that kind of thing? So we do liaise with Licensing specifically around mainly taxi firms.'*²⁷⁸

Where firmer action is required, over a third of practitioners interviewed reported cooperation with licensing authorities:

*'we have a strong licensing team. They do a lot of closures and reviews and come down very heavily.'*²⁷⁹

It should be noted that, as with other aspects of a child sexual exploitation strategy, this approach requires resources. These are not always available:

*'I ordered a mini operation last year...as part of it [the specialist police officer] went round to a few hotels and taxi offices just telling them information about exploitation...the approach was "this is the sort of thing that happens, if you know about it let us know"...but it's the sort of thing we struggle to get time to do.'*²⁸⁰

Disruptive strategies: targeting offenders

7.14 The research found other examples of disruption which specifically targets offenders. This appeared to be conducted largely by the police and involves:

- **basic policing**

For example:

*'knocking on doors, checking car registrations etc'*²⁸¹

and

*'if there is nothing else we can do then the police will start driving around to let them know there is a police presence'*²⁸²

- **'managing' suspects**

Through offender-focused meetings:

*'if there's an offender who's not currently in prison or wanted but because either the intelligence on them or the previous convictions we think they pose a threat through serious violence or serious sexual violence, we put them into a Serious Offender Review Team (SORT) group, then they are assessed as high medium or low risk and managed by one of the Detective Inspectors...it's not just MAPPA subjects'*²⁸³

- **child abduction warning notices**

Previously known as abduction notices or harbourers' warnings, this was the tactic most often mentioned by interview participants. There were a number of negative responses:

not understood

*'we don't know how to use abduction notices'*²⁸⁴

²⁷⁸ interview A9/C1

²⁷⁹ interview C2/P1

²⁸⁰ interview A9/P1

²⁸¹ interview C8/P3&4

²⁸² interview A9/H1

²⁸³ interview A9/P1

²⁸⁴ interview C8/P3&4

not helpful

*'I think in too many cases people are trying to rely on the abduction notices as the be all and end all of this, it's going to stop it, then it doesn't, all it does is just kind of displace the activity to somebody else, because [...] that individual will know somebody else and [...] the link would still carry on'*²⁸⁵

unintended consequences

*'some of the girls had street names that they hid behind so the police inadvertently exposed their own self defence...They were not revealing their own identity to the suspects, they were all considerations that ultimately you'd have to think about...So the self protection that they were developing, we helped to expose.'*²⁸⁶

But, in the main, interview participants were enthusiastic about their use as a deterrent provided that they were used well:

a powerful effect

*'at a takeaway a person has been served with an abduction notice. That gets passed around. The stigma is attached about an older man being in a relationship with a young person. Generally speaking they don't like that if it's a family group or business. They don't like the publicity. Generally they're taken notice of'*²⁸⁷

an opportunity to intervene with young people

*'remove an offender from a child to give breathing space so that the rest of the work can be done around protection and prevention'*²⁸⁸

removes the opportunity for an offender to rely on ignorance of a young person's age

*'the Section 2 abduction notices are excellent in the sense [that] of course a lot of our young people will tell people that they're over 16 when they're not 16. So we've got to try and redress that balance a little bit, take the onus away from the young person, put the onus on the offender.'*²⁸⁹

Increased use of child abduction warning notices in some areas has helped to develop understanding to enable them to be used far more effectively, for example including a photograph of the young person:

*'it was a learning curve as with all of these things. They used identification as a defence ultimately, saying the child we are talking about was not the child they were on about...this was Mary Smith, they were saying "I know you as Sarah, you tell everyone I know you as Sarah" for instance, so when you served the notice on them they'd sign it but then if they got caught, "no, she's Sarah."'*²⁹⁰

- **court orders**

Court orders, including Risk of Sexual Harm Orders (RSHOs) and Sexual Offence Prevention Orders (SOPOs) were mentioned less frequently.

²⁸⁵ interview A9/P1

²⁸⁶ interview A5/C1

²⁸⁷ interview A7/P1

²⁸⁸ interview A1/C1

²⁸⁹ interview A2/P1

²⁹⁰ interview A5/L1

Although their potential was recognised in a few areas it is clear that it would be helpful to provide tools to guide the police in their use as part of a child sexual exploitation strategy.

Investigating abusers

7.15 Two models were identified in the research. One model involved specialist police officers within a multi-agency team, often co-located with welfare colleagues, undertaking small-scale investigations as part of the regular business of the team. In other areas, police teams were put together to mount specific large-scale operations. While it is clear that established multi-agency specialist units would not have the capacity to handle a major operation, involving huge numbers of police officers and analysts, there are difficulties with short-term investigation teams. Often when the operation is over, the expertise disappears with the team. Few areas had addressed the relationship between on-going police investigation work and larger operations.

Gathering evidence

7.16 The police clearly have a key role in gathering intelligence that could be used as evidence although, as this report has shown (see Chapter 4), this requires a conceptual shift to enable them to engage appropriately with young people:

*'I think they need to sort their attitudes out and try to be more understanding, just like to have a bit more respect and give people time so they can talk. If the police come in like they do, rushing in with their attitudes, the girls won't sit down and talk to them. But if they gave the girls a bit more time to help them then maybe they'd do a bit better.'*²⁹¹

It is also important to ensure that young people do not feel the weight of responsibility:

*'when you come forward and you make a disclosure, it's as though it's the child's job to gather all evidence and then pass it to the police.'*²⁹²

The research shows that, where a child-centred approach is adopted, the outcome has been positive:

*'we have our Child Exploitation [police] officer at the sexual exploitation meeting and, if the young person wants to, they can speak to them after the meeting or at another location a bit later on...that's just really to make sure that they know what their options are and that if there is ever anything they want to talk to the police about they've got a named person they can contact...it's creating the environment where you're more likely to get a young person coming back because they know that the Child Exploitation Officer is really approachable and they'll get a bit of confidence.'*²⁹³

²⁹¹ Taylor-Browne (2009), p17

²⁹² from transcript of WhatWorks For Us meeting

²⁹³ interview A9/L1

It is important for cases to be managed so that interventions to safeguard children and young people also support the gathering of evidence (p13)

Information sharing

7.17 Research showed that the other agency most likely to be involved in gathering evidence is children's social care (60%). A third of interview participants reported the involvement of health (33%) and a similar number of carers (30%). The research found frustration among investigation officers that information was not being shared, or not being recorded in an appropriate way. However it was understood that welfare agencies needed help to understand the difference between information, intelligence and evidence, and how it should be recorded. Recording small pieces of information, although apparently insignificant on their own, can be important to build up the jigsaw picture, and crucial to the development of a prosecution case. This can include details about the young person's behaviour, including running away, returning distressed, dishevelled or drunk, and other incidences that could indicate that a young person is at risk of exploitation. It can also include information on the alleged abuser. But it is important that the information is not only recognised as important but recorded properly. This does not need to be a complicated arrangement. Recording who saw a car and on what day transforms the usefulness of a car registration number jotted down on a scrap of paper to intelligence that can be used as evidence in a prosecution case. In one example:

*'children's homes employ a pro forma – any tel calls that come in for a young person resident there, the office will ask "What's your name? Why do you want to contact this person? What's your relationship? Do you know that they are 14?" And they will do a 1471 to get the number and record that too.'*²⁹⁴

In another area care home staff were proactive about the kind of information they could collect and record and had:

*'CCTV outside the [residential home] so... if they pull into the car park at the front, we can get times and that type of thing.'*²⁹⁵

7.18 The format for recording information, given as an example above, is a tool that can be used with a wide variety of agencies and:

*'quite often the parents will complete those as well.'*²⁹⁶

Where agencies, parents and carers have been guided to record information accurately and consistently this has been a significant support to police investigations. The aim has not been to turn social workers and other welfare practitioners into police officers but to build some structure into the way that basic information is recorded so that it has validity:

*'at the time the police gave us some forms where we can actually share information. It was a little too elaborate, there were different forms for different people. Those have now been renewed and it's a very much simpler process.'*²⁹⁷

The research suggests that information gathering and sharing is best where there are dedicated (and, ideally, co-located) multi-agency teams. Within

²⁹⁴ interview A7/L1
²⁹⁵ interview C7/C1
²⁹⁶ interview A1/L1
²⁹⁷ interview A9/H1

these teams all practitioners develop an understanding of what kind of information may develop into intelligence, and may ultimately be used in evidence. Where all agencies share the same dual objectives of safeguarding young people and prosecuting their abusers, there is less evidence of a reluctance to blur the roles, with practitioners from both the welfare and criminal justice agencies contributing to the gathering of evidence. Similarly, where a child sexual exploitation coordinator, or a central point of contact, has been identified, this has proved to be a turning point for gathering information and building successful cases against the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation:

*'we have information where we have a dedicated coordinator, and none where there is no one and no resources to collect it.'*²⁹⁸

7.19 The routes for reporting the information are also an important factor:

*'we tried to create a system whereby there was a single point of contact in each agency... but, although it was useful training, the system was cumbersome and didn't work. We [now have] an operational group with a referral system into that rather than SPOCs trying to gather evidence and passing it on to the police.'*²⁹⁹

That was echoed in another area:

*'there was a network of SPOCs in different agencies and the information was supposed to go to a certain place but we don't hear any feedback [...] so it feels like there's a vacuum there. There's a procedure but there aren't the resources to actually handle the information once it's received.'*³⁰⁰

It is important that the flow of information should be in both directions so that agencies are aware of action planned or taken by the police:

*'he [a police officer] kept people fully informed. So if there was going to be an arrest or surveillance or whatever, he would fully inform the other agencies about what the police were doing. What he found was that if he didn't tell people they didn't know what they were doing and maybe thought the police weren't doing a great deal. But if he told them what they were doing they loved it because then they really understood what the police were doing and were grateful that they were doing as much as they possibly could.'*³⁰¹

However the interview data revealed that many agencies are unaware of criminal investigations. Some agencies:

*'wouldn't necessarily get told about it'*³⁰²

and would not hear about it until it was reported in the local newspaper. This raised questions about the level of support that was being provided for the young people involved:

'you can read the newspaper and be aware that there's been a prosecution ...but they're not cases that have been brought to [the sub group] which is rather interesting...there's been no referral in and there's been no

²⁹⁸ Jago and Pearce (2008) p20
²⁹⁹ interview A9/C1
³⁰⁰ interview B2/V2
³⁰¹ interview A9/P1
³⁰² interview A6/P1

support.’³⁰³

Investigative techniques

7.20 The research questionnaire asked which investigative techniques have been used. The data was very limited with around 60% of interviewees providing no data at all on investigative techniques. The research showed that successful criminal investigations aimed to corroborate a young person’s evidence so that the burden of evidence does not lie solely with the young person:

‘like all criminal investigations, one relating to child abuse is a search for the truth and officers should focus efforts, from the outset of a child abuse investigation, on gathering evidence that does not rely entirely on the victim’s statement.’³⁰⁴

This would involve:

‘standard policing tactics to support what the girls are saying.’³⁰⁵

7.21 Covert surveillance was the technique most often discussed in interviews and was noted for discussion at the specific seminars with police officers. The research showed how important this was as an investigative tactic but that careful consideration was needed to balance the need for evidence with the overriding need to protect young people:

‘key to learning all round is understanding the impact of capacity of the child... you have to risk assess using covert surveillance and if that risk assessment is based on the idea that these young people are consenting then errors of judgement will be made. If you bring into that risk assessment an analysis of how much coercion is likely or known to be occurring towards the young person then better judgements will be made as to the appropriateness of covert surveillance.’³⁰⁶

The research showed that it was crucial to make safeguarding a priority and to be clear about when and how agencies would intervene to protect a young person:

‘it is about the issue between the protection of children and the detection of crime and those areas can and do cross over when you’re doing covert surveillance. I think you’ve got to be very careful about the agreements you make about when any surveillance team will act to protect children.’³⁰⁷

7.22 The research also showed that forensic evidence is often used for corroborative purposes, and for evidential purposes where no complaint has been made:

‘we have had prosecutions in the past where the young person has not made a complaint but we have had DNA evidence. We understand that it’s very intrusive. We would only do it in the best interests of the young person, if we could justify it.’³⁰⁸

³⁰³ interview A5/E1

³⁰⁴ ACPO (2009) p18

³⁰⁵ interview B9/P1

³⁰⁶ interview A5/L1

³⁰⁷ interview A5/L1

³⁰⁸ interview A7/P1

Prosecuting abusers

The role of the CPS

7.23 The research questionnaire asked about the role of the CPS. The research found an almost unanimous response that a greater and more positive involvement was needed from the CPS. There were exceptions in areas with a great deal of experience in bringing prosecutions related to child sexual exploitation:

‘we’ve got dedicated CPS lawyers who are deemed to be specialist on sexual exploitation and abduction notices, that kind of thing, so we refer to them first and it’s a continual process, we keep ringing to get advice, “are we going the right way with this, what do we need for this?”...so it’s a continuous process between us and CPS.’³⁰⁹

However, in other areas, interview participants spoke frequently of a lack of cooperation from the CPS, often based on a perception that young people are likely to be unreliable witnesses because:

‘it’s such a difficult scenario to get a coherent, thoughtful, logical account of what’s happened, going back months previously.’³¹⁰

It is clear from the divergence of experience and the depth of feeling from a range of practitioners across a number of different areas that there is a real need to spread good practice from those areas in which the CPS have succeeded in bringing successful prosecutions to other more wary areas.

Supporting young people and their families through the process

7.24 The research found that support for young victims and witnesses could be provided by a specialist CSE service but the largest response (43%) was in respect of ‘other services’. This could be anyone involved with the young person and typically included the police and the youth offending service. This is likely to reflect the recognition that whoever has built up a relationship with the young person would be best placed to support them at this particularly difficult time. The statistics also reflect the lack of a specialist CSE service in many areas. There was no explanation of the low response in respect of the specialist witness service (just 33%) other than that it would be yet another professional brought into that young person’s life.

7.25 It should also be noted that there was a high level of missing data in respect of this question – typically 30% of practitioners interviewed offered no information. This is likely to represent the fact that few interviewees had experience of a case going to court. Less than half of practitioners interviewed reported that a specific police operation in relation to child sexual exploitation had taken place within the last 12 months.

7.26 There was little discussion of the value of special measures. Since 1999 special measures have been automatically available to all victims of sexual offences involving violence, abduction or neglect who are under 17. They are also likely to be available to older witnesses but at the discretion of the court. Special measures will usually mean that the young person will give

³⁰⁹ interview A1/C1

³¹⁰ interview A9/P1

³¹¹ Jackson (2010)

‘I didn’t think anything could be worse than what had happened to me’³¹¹

their main evidence by means of a video-recorded interview and that any cross-examination will be by a live link so that the young person is not actually in the court room. Where a young person does attend the court room, application can be made to clear the court of the press and the public to make it a private hearing and a screen can be put in place to shield the young witness from the defendant. In addition to special measures, a further important provision, introduced in 1999,³¹² is the restriction on the circumstances in which the defence can bring evidence about the sexual behaviour of the victim of serious sexual offences.

7.27 Previous research found there to be a significant gap between the policy vision of a child-friendly court and the reality of many young peoples' experiences, particularly in the cases of the most vulnerable of young people.³¹³ This research revealed that, in most cases where there had been experience of court proceedings, interview participants were appalled by the impact of the court experience on young victims:

*'these girls have had the most horrendous time in court, it has been horrific, it's abusive... nobody wants to tackle that.'*³¹⁴

Following court

7.28 The process of going to court can have a positive impact. Research has shown that, for young victims, it is important to be believed by the court and to have the support of family and friends.³¹⁵ The conviction of the defendant is also important, not least in helping the young person to feel safe and to be able to move on. However, this is not always the outcome:

*'one youngster did take a matter to court but the judge said she was 16, she knew what she was doing, he hadn't committed a sexual offence for years although he was a Schedule 1 offender. She's in adult prostitution now – she took that big risk and it never worked for her, and the judge was appalling.'*³¹⁶

Whatever the outcome some interview participants were clear about the need to keep supporting young people after a trial because of the very real danger of re-victimisation.

Supporting practitioners

7.29 In discussion with interview participants it was often revealed that this work is *'psychologically draining'*.³¹⁷ The issue of supervision was raised and it was noted that another advantage of close multi-agency working, was that good practice in terms of supervision spread across agencies. However, this is not an issue that has been fully addressed in many areas.

³¹² Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999

³¹³ Plotnikoff and Woolfson (2009)

³¹⁴ interview A5/C1

³¹⁵ Plotnikoff and Woolfson (2009)

³¹⁶ interview A8/V1

³¹⁷ interview B9/P1

Resources

- **CEOP** is expanding its **Think U Know programme** to include the provision of educational resources and also training for the police. This will be available at www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- Brayley, H, Cockbain, E. and Laycock, G (2011) **The Value of Crime Scripting: Deconstructing Internal Child Sex Trafficking in Policing**, Vol 5, No.2, pp 132–143, available at www.policing.oxfordjournals.org/content/5/2/132.full.pdf
- The **UCL Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science** has developed a graphic model of internal child sex trafficking called a crime script. *'Crime scripting can deconstruct a complex crime into its component parts. This offender-focused crime script can be used to inform targeted multi-agency interventions aimed at disrupting, detecting and preventing specific steps in the crime commission process.'* This crime script was based on existing police data from two major internal trafficking operations, spanning hundreds of child abuse instances. It proved an effective way translating masses of data into a clear sequence of actions and decisions.
- Cockbain, E., Brayley, H and Laycock, G (2011) **Exploring Internal Child Sex trafficking Networks Using Social Network Analysis in Policing**, Vol 5, No. 2, pp 144–157, available at www.police.oxfordjournals.org/content/5/2/144.full.pdf
- The **UCL Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science** has examined networks of victims and offenders involved in internal trafficking. This study demonstrates how multi-agency crime reduction initiatives can be informed by a clearer understanding of the structure and function of victim and offender networks. Police data from two major internal trafficking investigations, covering 36 victims and 25 offenders, were used to create and analyse networks. The study showed how network software available to the police, can be used not only to visualise networks but to identify key actors and structural weaknesses. These findings can inform targeted, proactive and collaborative interventions.
- For general guidance see ACPO/NPIA (2009) **Guidance on Investigating Child Abuse and Safeguarding Children**, Second Edition, London: ACPO/NPIA, available from www.npia.police.uk
- For guidance on the use of **Child Abduction Warning Notices** see www.npia.police.uk/en/17488. The Missing Persons Bureau community of the secure police website POLKA contains templates for s2 and s49 notices as well as a protocol for their use
- For information on **special measures**, see www.cps.gov.uk/legal/s_to_u/special_measures and also Crown Prosecution Service (2006) **Children and Young People: CPS Policy on Prosecuting Criminal cases Involving Children and Young people as Victims and Witnesses**, London: CPS
- CROP produced a guide to the **Sexual Offences Act 2003**, still available from www.cropuk.org.uk

Self assessment checklist on identifying, investigating, disrupting and prosecuting abusers

- All local practitioners working with children and young people recognise that those at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation suffer significant harm and should not be regarded as displaying bad or immoral behaviour
- Proactive investigation of location 'hot spots' and to identify potential abusers is undertaken
- Cases are managed in a way that supports the gathering of evidence
- All agencies in direct contact with children and young people understand how to record information for evidential purposes
- Action is taken promptly to disrupt child sexual exploitation, involving all relevant agencies
- Prosecutions are pursued wherever possible to prevent re-offending
- Investigative methods have been developed to minimise the reliance on the evidence of the child or young person who is the victim of child sexual exploitation
- Where criminal proceedings take place against exploiters, access to special measures are requested where appropriate
- Arrangements are in place to support young people and their families throughout any investigation and court proceedings process and beyond to avoid re-victimisation
- Parents, carers and young witnesses are kept informed of progress at all stages
- Arrangements are in place to support young people after any court proceedings have concluded to minimise the risk of re-victimisation

LSCBs should put in place systems to monitor prevalence and responses to CSE within their area (p20)

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 educational organisations, health, the police, social care, housing services and voluntary and community sector organisations (p25)

Key statistics on data collection

- **over 1,000 young people on one day were known to be receiving support** in England because they have been identified as at risk of, or experiencing sexual exploitation
- **59%** of (100) LSCBs surveyed reported that they were **not recording data on child sexual exploitation**
- **48%** of (89) interviews reported that **data was collected in their own agencies**
- there was agreement **in just one interview area** that **data was collected at both agency and LSCB level**, and that there was **a shared database**

Summary of findings

8.1 Collecting and managing data is a key element of a child sexual exploitation strategy. It provides a clear picture of the scale and nature of the issue locally, helps to spread awareness and to spot trends. As a management tool it also provides vital data to assess resource requirements and can also be used as a way for LSCBs to monitor the effectiveness of multi-agency partnerships to tackle child sexual exploitation:

*'we feed in information to the LSCB so we would regularly give them updates in terms of what we were doing, what our business was, presentations to everybody on the LSCB.'*³¹⁸

Yet it is an area of work that few LSCBs have taken forward. The survey data showed that well over half of LSCBs (59%) were not recording any data.

8.2 Through the process of developing the data collection trial and collating data for the national snapshot, and through the research interviews, it became clear that the situation was even worse than it appeared at first. This was one of the areas of the survey where local activity appears to have been 'talked up'. In areas where data was said to be collated, it was often very limited and may only have been provided by one agency. In reality there is a great deal of information, particularly in areas where a formal assessment has taken place and a strategy meeting held, or where the police are involved in an investigation. However that information is unlikely to be flagged as 'child sexual exploitation' and it is rare for it to be held in one place. It is buried in individual case files and spread across different agency systems:

*'there is masses of information but no one has the time to record it. It needs managing properly and it needs an analyst.'*³¹⁹

If information is requested by LSCBs, by the media or, indeed, by researchers, staff are diverted from other tasks to trawl painstakingly through notes on files to extract the required information:

'the difficulty is that files are full of minutes and reports and it is a case of

³¹⁸interview A2/C1

³¹⁹interview B9/P1

*wading through them for the particular information in response to each question.*³²⁰

During the course of this project this happened in a number of areas in response to CEOP's call for data for their thematic assessment,³²¹ and in response to our own data 'snapshot' on 6 June 2011.

- 8.3** This chapter reports on the data collection trial and also sets out the findings from a national snapshot of data, providing a step towards a clearer understanding of the nature and prevalence of child sexual exploitation in England.

Data collection trial

- 8.4** This was an area where LSCBs seemed to recognise a need to make progress and welcomed the offer of a data monitoring tool to trial. Over a quarter of the 100 LSCBs surveyed offered to take part in the trial, although this number decreased over time as spending cuts began to limit the capacity of LSCB staff, with reports that they were carrying vacant posts or in the midst of reorganisation.

- 8.5** When the data monitoring tool was made available further challenges were reported. The calls for data from CEOP for the thematic assessment and for this project revealed to many areas the inadequacies of their local information systems. In one case:

*'we have considered the documentation but a difficulty is we do not routinely record incidents.'*³²²

In many areas it also demonstrated a lack of awareness and low identification of young people at risk of, or experiencing sexual exploitation:

*'we have adopted the trial documentation as our local data collection tool but at present our numbers remain low. We expect we need to do more to raise awareness of signs and symptoms.'*³²³

Many areas had realised that it would not be possible to embed a data collection scheme until these issues of awareness have been addressed. It was a wake-up call for many about the lack of progress that had been made in the development of a child sexual exploitation strategy:

*'this piece of work has highlighted the information that we don't currently collect and we will be moving forward by establishing a multi-agency exploitation steering group which it is intended will address these matters.'*³²⁴

A positive outcome is that the trial has galvanised a number of areas to address these inadequacies:

*'it will help us to move this work on'*³²⁵

- 8.6** The trial areas were enthusiastic about the trial and, within the initial three months, were already reporting that it had revealed characteristics of sexual

³²⁰ from correspondence with trial areas

³²¹ CEOP (2011)

³²² from correspondence with trial areas

³²³ from correspondence with trial areas

³²⁴ from correspondence with trial areas

³²⁵ from correspondence with trial areas

exploitation locally which would influence how they shaped and targeted their policy and practice:

*'it has given us a lot of valuable information on child sexual exploitation.'*³²⁶

The data collection tool was considered by the trial areas to work well. Comments made by trial areas on issues with its use, together with an insight into how categories of data were interpreted and information presented in the national snapshot, have since been used to amend and improve the basic tool. This is an important legacy of the research – a tried and tested data collection model already in use in a number of areas and contributing important data for the development of local strategies.

National snapshot

- 8.7** The lack of local data has meant that there has been little opportunity to assess the national picture of child sexual exploitation. The guidance sets out the figures extrapolated from small-scale studies and concludes that the figures used to date have been *'a considerable under-estimate of the extent of the problem.'*³²⁷

- 8.8** This research aimed for a 'snapshot' of data on all young people at risk of, or experiencing sexual exploitation who were being worked with on 6 June 2011 in England. LSCBs trialling the data collection tool were asked to contribute to the 'snapshot.' Data was also collected from other LSCBs, statutory and voluntary agencies, all using the same data collection tool to aid consistency. A breakdown of those agencies is included in table 2 below.

The size of the problem

- 8.9** Data was collected on 1065 cases of young people³²⁸ in England. It is sobering to consider that over a thousand young people were causing significant concern in respect to sexual exploitation on just one day. Inevitably this is not a true reflection of the number of young people experiencing sexual exploitation because, as this research has shown, a third of LSCBs are not delivering a child sexual exploitation strategy to identify and support young people at risk, or experiencing sexual exploitation. We also know that, for the reasons discussed in 8.4–8.5, not all LSCBs or partner agencies who have begun to address sexual exploitation were able to participate in this exercise. The figure is likely to be a significant underestimate of the size of the problem nationally but it is a significant starting point. The data also provides some interesting findings in relation to the characteristics of those young people who have been identified, and the nature of the abuse they have suffered.

³²⁶ from correspondence with trial areas

³²⁷ DCSF (2009) p20

³²⁸ this included young people over 18 but who were referred to services in respect of child sexual exploitation at up to age 18

8.10 Table 2 provides a breakdown of case information received by region of England. The geographical breakdown of the data reflects the knowledge held within agencies rather than an accurate assessment of the prevalence of child sexual exploitation in each area. The breakdown by agency contributing the data is also significant (although, in some cases, the data may have been collated by that agency on behalf of a number of partners). Over half of the cases were provided by voluntary sector projects. This reflects the fact that specialist projects are most likely to collect data specifically in respect of child sexual exploitation. This geographical breakdown is an indication of where specialist projects exist rather than an indication of the location of sexually exploited young people.

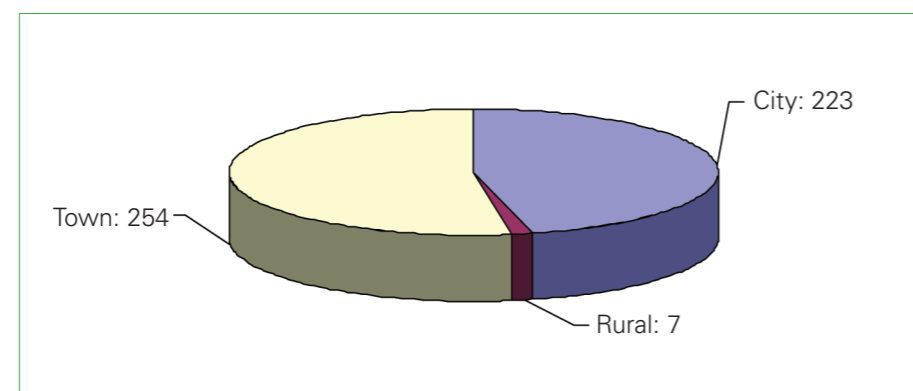
Only a third of the records were collated by LSCBs. The remaining records were submitted directly by statutory agencies.

Table 2 – Cases by geographical area

Region of England	Type of agency			Total	%
	Statutory	Voluntary	Mixed		
London	70	112	0	182	17.1
South West	0	40	0	40	3.7
South East	14	27	0	41	3.9
East	50	18	0	68	6.4
W Midlands	67	28	0	95	8.9
E Midlands	36	112	0	148	13.9
Yorkshire & Humber	78	112	8	198	18.6
North West	120	112	0	232	21.8
North East	3	58	0	61	5.7
Total	438	619	8	1065	

8.11 The data has also been broken down to give an indication of the type of area where the exploitation is said to have taken place. This is based on the 484 cases where this information was known/made available to us and is shown in figure 1. Again, the data must be considered as showing the location of specialist projects rather than the type of location where child sexual exploitation takes place. The 'urban myth' is explored in Chapter 5.

Figure 1 – Nature of location



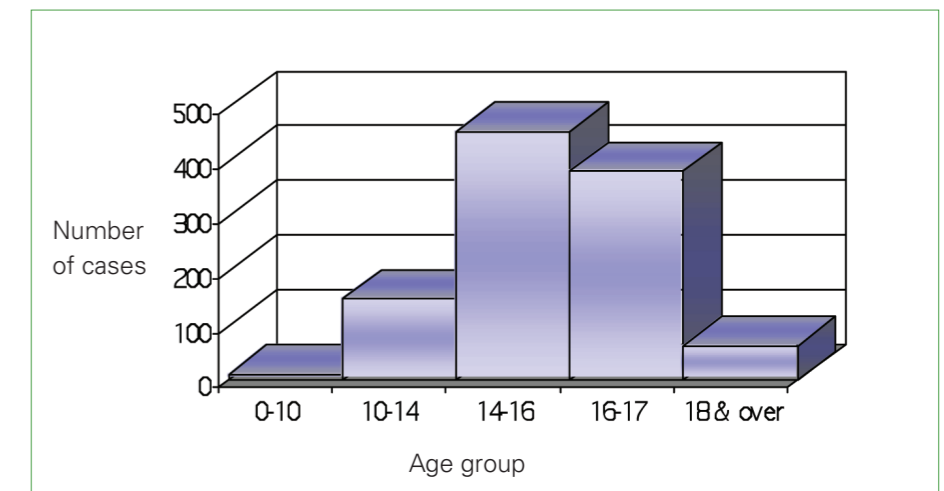
Characteristics of sexually exploited young people

8.12 Data was requested on a range of characteristics of young people:

- **age**

The exercise called for data on the current age of the young person and also on the age of the person at the time of the first assessment. This was because we wanted to include in the snapshot young people who were over the age of 18 but who were under 18 when they first received support. Current age was provided in 1064 cases (all but one of the cases). The average was shown to be 15 years of age. This was also the most frequent age reported. The youngest child reported was just four years old and the oldest was 25 years old. The number of cases in each age group is shown in figure 2.

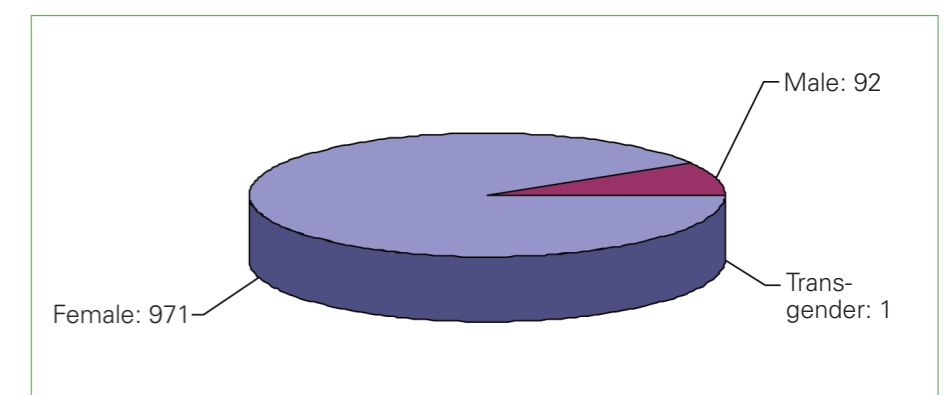
Figure 2 – Number of cases per age group on 6 June 2011



- **gender**

Again, there was only one case for which no information was provided. The majority of the cases related to girls. As figure 3 shows, boys represented only 8.6% of the cases, with just one case identified as transgender. The difficulty of identifying boys and young men at risk of sexual exploitation is explored in Chapter 5.

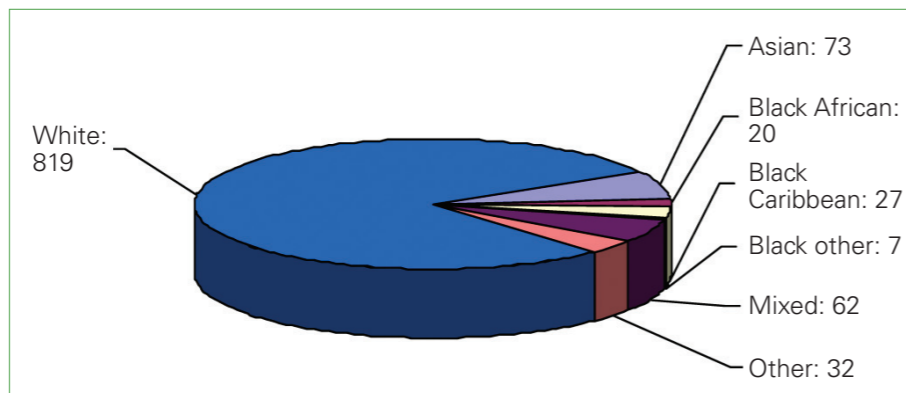
Figure 3 – Number of cases by gender



- **ethnicity**

The ethnicity of young people was also requested. Where this was known (in 1040 cases), it is represented in figure 4.

Figure 4 – Number of cases by ethnicity



The breakdown shown in figure 4 does not vary greatly from the ethnic breakdown for the 0–18 population in England.³²⁹ However, LSCBs will need to consider the local ethnic population to consider whether referrals reflect the needs of all communities. As discussed briefly in Chapter 5, more research is needed on how to assess risk and how to intervene to support young people in different communities.

- **nationality**

Nationality information was provided in 775 cases (72.8%). Of these, the majority were categorised as British (98%). Table 3 provides a breakdown between British, European, and non-European cases.

Table 3 – Cases by nationality

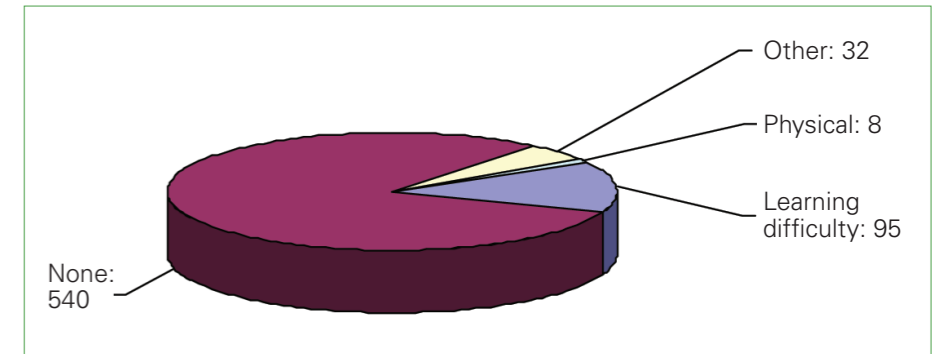
Nationality	No. of cases	% of available data
British	759	98.0
European	11	1.4
Non-European	5	0.6
Total	775	100.0

The high proportion of British young people reflects the low recognition of trafficking from abroad in the interview data (see table 6).

- **disability**

This information was provided in 821 cases. In 146 of the cases it was reported that there was no disability data available. The breakdown for the 675 cases in which a specific disability was listed is shown in figure 5. The 'other' category included sight impairment but also included issues other than disabilities, including behavioural problems, mental health difficulties and autism.

Figure 5 – Cases by specified disability

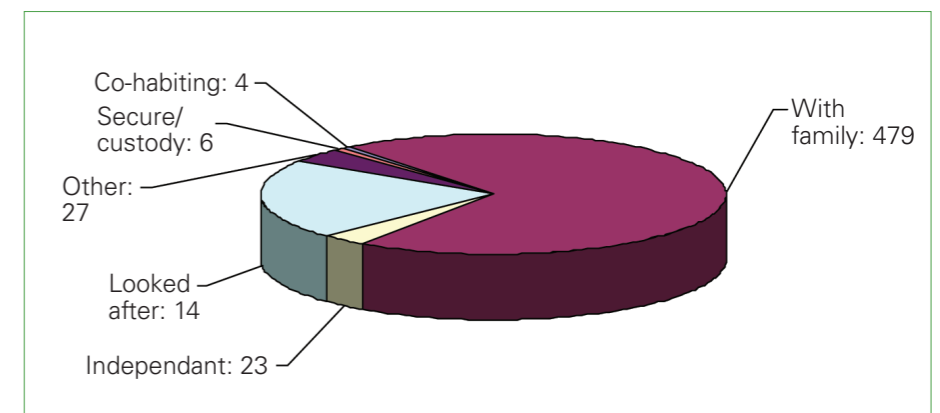


Again, the issue of disability was discussed very briefly in Chapter 5. This is an under-researched area of vulnerability to sexual exploitation. That well over 100 cases of young people with some form of disability were recognised as at risk on one day suggests that there is an urgent need to consider prevention strategies for this group.

- **living situation**

This information was provided for a total of 684 cases. It was specified that the living situation was not known in a further 170 cases. A breakdown of those cases where information was known and provided is set out in figure 6.

Figure 6 – Living situation of the young person



The majority of young people were living with their families. Of these the data also showed that 339 were living in the family home and 16 in kinship care (no additional information was provided in the remainder of the cases). Of the 145 young people described as 'looked after', Table 4 provides a further breakdown of the situation for the 134 cases for which this information was available.

³²⁹ this was checked against the estimate provided for 2009 by the Office for National Statistics

Table 4 – Location of looked after children

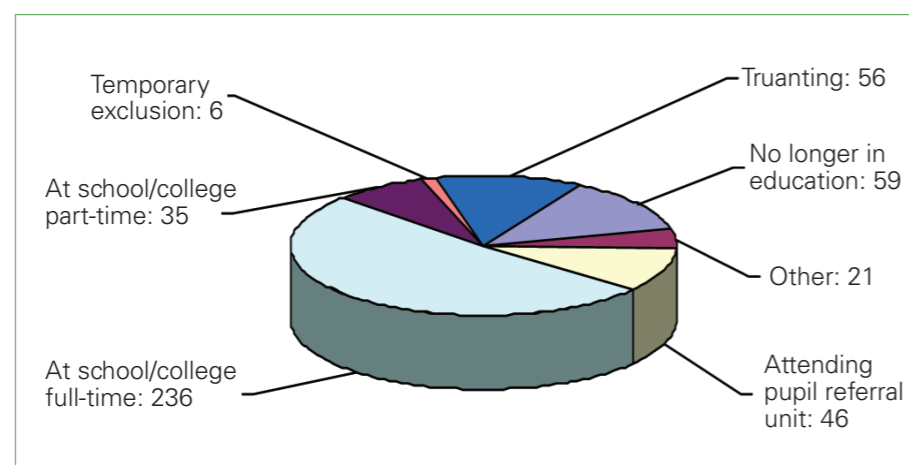
Location if looked after	Frequency	%
Residential children's home	73	54.5
Private fostering	36	26.9
Supported accommodation	7	5.2
Bed & breakfast	3	2.2
Other (undefined)	15	11.2

The research has shown that many LSCB areas recognise the vulnerability of young people in residential homes. The breakdown shows that significant numbers of 'looked after' young people were recognised as at risk. The majority of those were living in residential care although it is not possible to say from this data whether that was the case when they were first recognised as at risk. It is important to note that the majority of young people recognised as at risk in this snapshot were living with their family. This underlines the message that sexual exploitation occurs everywhere and can affect young people in very different situations. It should be noted that those living at home also shared some of the difficulties explored in terms of education, health and substance misuse. It underlines the importance of developing family support work, and involving parents and other family members in support plans.

• **education**

Data for this category was provided in 459 cases. It was specified that the education situation of the young person was not known in a further 234 cases. A breakdown of those cases where information was known is set out in figure 7.

Figure 7 – Education



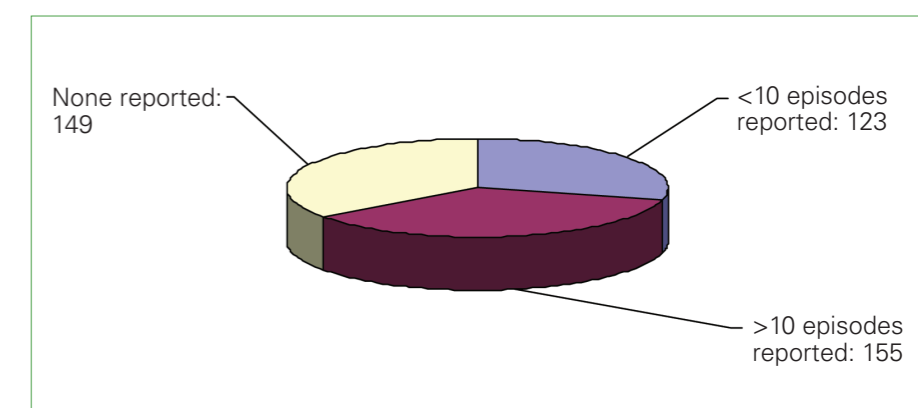
This shows that the majority of young people were still in full-time education – unsurprising given that the majority of cases involved those aged 15 (again the data is influenced by the types of agencies that replied). However there were an alarming number of young people outside mainstream education – truancing, temporarily excluded or attending a Pupil Referral Unit (108). A number of young people (67) were also identified as having special educational needs. This shows that, while preventive

work in schools is vital, it is also important to try to capture the attention of young people who may not be in mainstream education.

• **incidence of going missing**

Data on missing episodes was provided in 427 cases. This included cases where it was known that no missing episodes had been reported. A breakdown of the data is shown in figure 8.

Figure 8 – Missing incidences known to agencies

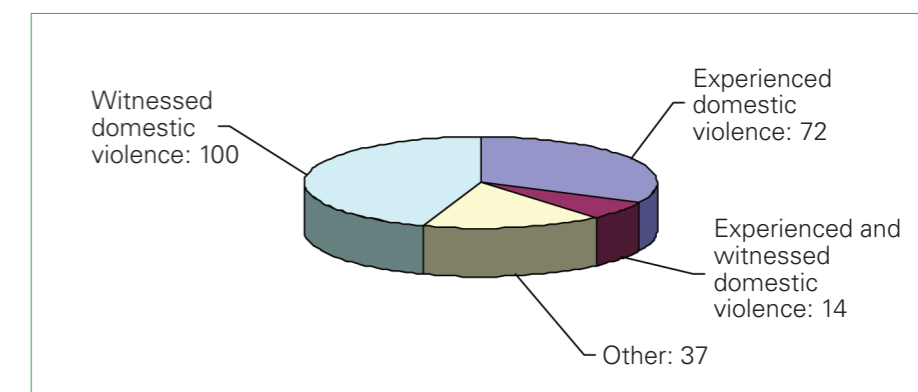


In over a third of the cases identified (155 from a total of 427), young people had been reported as missing over 10 times. The strong link between going missing and vulnerability to sexual exploitation has been addressed at some length in Chapter 5. This breakdown of the data provides further endorsement of the need to link missing and child sexual exploitation strategies.

• **involvement in domestic violence**

Data on domestic violence was requested. This showed that this was known to be a factor in 223 of the cases. Figure 9 gives a breakdown of that data.

Figure 9 – Domestic violence



Taking into account those who both witnessed *and* experienced domestic violence, witnessing domestic violence was the most frequent experience (114) but a significant number of young people had experienced domestic violence themselves (86). The 'other' category related mainly to sexual abuse, both historical and current (24 from a total of 37 cases). Other forms of violence involved peers, with either the young person or the peer as

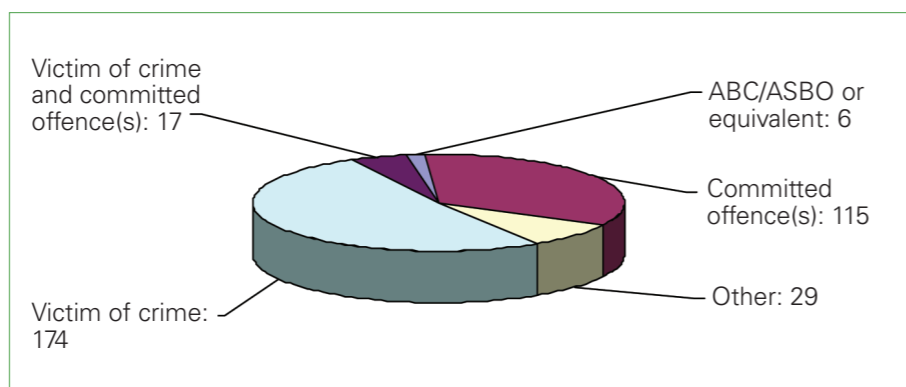
the perpetrator (12 cases).

This is an important finding. Understanding the potential link between domestic abuse and sexual exploitation should help LSCBs to focus the prevention aspect of their child sexual exploitation strategies appropriately. This link is explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

• **criminal justice involvement**

Data was requested on criminal justice issues. Information was provided in 341 cases. A breakdown of issues is shown in figure 10.

Figure 10 – Criminal justice issues



There was an additional case in which the young person had both received an ASBO and was a victim of crime, and three cases in which the young person had received an ASBO, had committed a number of offences and was also a victim of crime. Again, the link between child sexual exploitation and criminality is explored in Chapter 5.

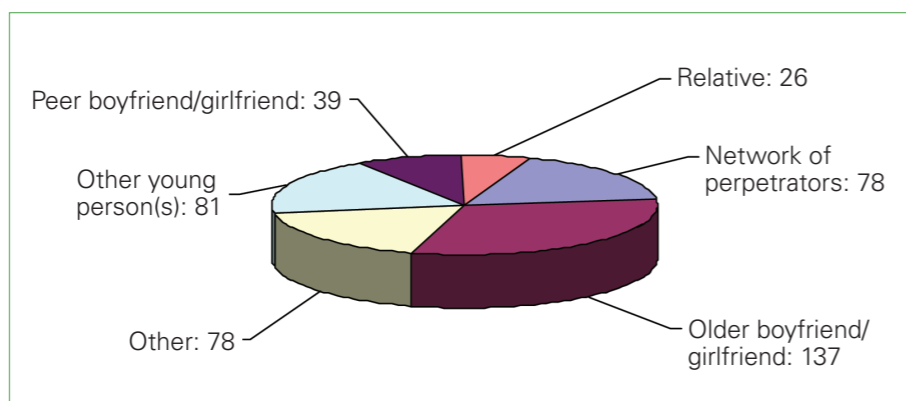
Nature of exploitation

8.13 Data was requested on who (by category) had initiated the exploitative process, the methods of coercion and the level of exploitation.

• **who initiated the exploitative process?**

This data was provided in 439 cases. In a further 46 cases it was reported that this information was not known. The breakdown for those cases where data was provided is shown in figure 11.

Figure 11 – Who initiated the sexual exploitation



The research findings suggest that the most commonly recognised form of child sexual exploitation is grooming by an older 'boyfriend'. This is further explored in the breakdown of the data on methods of coercion.

• **methods of coercion**

The data, provided in 473 cases, is broken down in table 5. The 'other' category included risky peer behaviour, gifts (variously money, a place to stay, alcohol, cigarettes and drugs), and 'party lifestyle'. In most cases (78.9%) only one form of coercion was indicated but in other cases up to five different methods of coercion were selected.

Table 5 – Methods of coercion

Method of coercion	No. of cases
Grooming	211
Pressure from an exploited peer	77
Gang-related activity	27
Local businesses	26
Social networking	82
Other uses of the internet	36
Mobile phone	62
Other	58
Not known to the agency	75

Both figure 11 and table 5 underline the emergence of 'new' models of exploitation, often involving peers and frequently using new technologies to make contacts.

• **level of exploitation**

This data was provided in 481 cases and is summarised in table 6. Again, more than one answer could be provided but the vast majority provided only one (78.8%) with the rest indicating up to four different options.

Table 6 – Level of exploitation

Level of exploitation	No. of cases
Risky behaviour	337
Swapping sex	112
Commercial sexual exploitation	38
Moved from location to location in the UK	47
Moved between countries	1
Other	67
Not known	20

Only one case of cross-border trafficking was identified. This is perhaps unsurprising given that this seems to be a separate specialism for many professionals and the majority of the cases identified involved young people identified as British.

Agency response

8.14 Data was requested on the nature of the support provided for the young person, the social care outcome and also the criminal justice outcome in terms of an investigation into the abuse.

- **type of support provided**

Data was requested on the main focus of support for the young person. Agencies could identify as many as eight different types of support for each case. The information, available in 862 cases is provided in table 7.

Table 7 – Main support provided

Type of support	No. of cases for which it was provided
Managing risk	785
Addressing substance misuse	57
Addressing sexual health	116
Addressing mental health	32
Education	74
Family support	122
Addressing criminal behaviour	34
Other	568

Most agencies offered more than one type of support (in 748 cases). Where only one option was selected (in 217 cases) that option was usually ‘managing risk’.

A high number reported ‘other’ support but this was mainly used as a device to provide a narrative about the young person’s situation. Typically data was recorded on the level of need, the nature of the young person’s vulnerabilities and the risks they were exposed to, how concerns had first been raised as well as the kind of activities that were being offered to the young person. This additional support included information on safe relationships and self esteem.

- **social care response**

Data was requested on the social care response for each young person. This information was made available in only 484 cases. The breakdown is shown in table 8.

Table 8 – Social care response

Social care response	Frequency
Child in Need	97
Child Protection Plan	171
Specific child sexual exploitation plan	167
No social care/strategy meeting	49

- **criminal justice response**

Data was requested on the progress of any criminal investigation. This showed that the police were known to be actively involved in 238 cases. Data was provided on 158 of those cases in relation to court proceedings. A breakdown of this data is shown in table 9.

Table 9 – Progress of court proceedings

In progress	Abuser convicted	Completed but no conviction	Other	Total
103	34	18	3	158

The most striking statistic is the relatively low number of cases in which any criminal proceedings are taking place. The very low number of cases completed reflects the rarity of sexual exploitation cases reaching court. It may also reflect the low number of young people still receiving support following the court proceedings.

8.15 The national data collection exercise experienced many of the same difficulties as the CEOP thematic assessment. The CEOP exercise was differently focused on a specific area of sexual exploitation – ‘localised grooming’ – and derived most of its data from the police and so had a far greater focus on the offender. In particular it did not include peer on peer abuse which this research has found to be a growing area. It also collated data over a period of time as opposed to a data in respect of a single day. What the exercises had in common was the difficulty of accessing data, particularly data from LSCBs. Both exercises found that ‘data relating to child sexual exploitation is often partial and incomplete, concealed in secondary indicator data, or simply unrecorded.’³³⁰

8.16 The issue with data collection is an important one. It is crucial to have a clear picture in order to properly assess the need for resources:

‘what we need is hard data because then you can actually make an argument for why we need more resources in that area or how we can use the resources we already have more efficiently’³³²

Examining links and trends in the data can also help LSCBs to use their limited resources in the best possible way, for example targeting early intervention on those groups seen to be most at risk. Developing a tried and tested tool is an important step towards effective and consistent local and national data collection. However, what the trial and the thematic assessment have both shown is that a tool is not enough. A tool can only be effective where the LSCB is following the guidance so that agencies are working together, practitioners understand and identify child sexual exploitation, agencies share and record information, and that information is regularly collated by the LSCB. As this research has shown, this is not the case in many areas. Put simply, no amount of tools will produce data in areas where there is no mechanism to identify and address child sexual exploitation. Until child sexual exploitation becomes a priority for all LSCBs, and the guidance followed across the country to develop effective strategies, any data collection exercise will provide a significant under-recording of the number of young people abused in this way.

‘exploitation doesn’t focus on anybody’s particular data, it’s neither registered as sexual abuse or sexual exploitation’³³⁰

³³⁰ interview A8/V1

³³¹ CEOP (2011)

³³² interview B5/V2

Resources

- The data collection monitoring tool is available at www.nationalworkinggroup.org.uk
- For an example of how to use data in an annual report see www.safeguardingsheffieldchildren.org.uk
- See also CEOP (2011) **Out of Mind, Out of Sight: Breaking down the barriers to understanding child sexual exploitation**, London: Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre Available from www.ceop.police.uk/Publications/Documents/ceopdocs/ceop_thematic_assessment_executive_summary.pdf (the Executive Summary is available from www.ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/ceop_thematic_assessment_executive_summary.pdf)

Self assessment checklist for collecting and managing data

- the LSCB coordinates a data collection system to monitor the nature and prevalence of CSE locally, and to assess outcomes for children and young people
- the LSCB contributes data to a national snapshot coordinated by CEOP

'[CSE] been around for a long time and there doesn't seem to be a lot of progress on it really'³³³

'I think there are spots of good practice in every area – but it's spots'³³⁴

What is the impact of the guidance?

- 9.1** The essential task for this research project has been to look at the way the guidance has been implemented by LSCBs across England. What the research has revealed has been both an inspiration and a cause for serious concern. It has been an inspiration to learn what can be achieved by those LSCBs who are following the guidance and, after scoping the issue, have set up a multi-agency group to develop a child sexual exploitation strategy that really delivers – supporting young people through an incredibly damaging time in their lives and putting an end to their abuse through the prosecution of offenders. But a real concern has been that, despite the passage of 10 years and successive sets of comprehensive government guidance, this inspirational work is limited to a few areas of the country. LSCBs elsewhere are not fulfilling their responsibilities; young people are suffering horrific abuse; abusers are evading justice.
- 9.2** The impact of guidance has been limited. Government guidance originally took the form of *Safeguarding Children from Prostitution*.³³⁵ While considerably narrower in focus than the current guidance, this document introduced the dual aim of protecting young people and taking a proactive approach to the investigation and prosecution of offenders. A review of its implementation found that it had been far from successful. While 11 areas in England recognised a problem with children abused through prostitution, only 6% considered that they were meeting the dual aim.³³⁶ The current guidance, expanded and updated in 2009, has had a similarly limited impact. This research has found that it has not been implemented in half the country.
- 9.3** Local histories and circumstances emerge as more influential than national policy or guidance. Where practice seems to be most developed, addressing child sexual exploitation can be traced back to the late 1990s. The 2009 guidance sets out the appropriate steps for LSCBs to take. It should be noted that, while the guidance was widely welcomed, it did not seem to have been embraced as a user-friendly document. A number of interviewees asked for a copy of the interview schedule as this seemed to them to offer a useful checklist. The 'checklist' had been directly derived from the guidance but clearly provided a more accessible guide to the action required of LSCBs and their partners. It was also interesting to note that, when asked what additional tools might be helpful, there were a number of requests for a risk assessment matrix and other model documents, including an assessment tool and a draft action plan as well as models of successful practice. While there were few quibbles with the aims and direction of the guidance, there may be more effective ways to bring key elements of its content to the attention of strategic leads and practitioners.
- 9.4** Many LSCBs have taken little or no action following the publication of guidance in 2009. Others are pushing to develop the work but finding it a long and hard struggle to gain the commitment of partner agencies. This report, and the practical tools also developed as part of the project, are

³³³ interview A9/C1

³³⁴ interview C7/C1

³³⁵ DH (2000)

³³⁶ Swann and Balding (2002)

designed to boost the implementation of the guidance to bring ‘the rest’ up to the standard of ‘the best’. But it has to be recognised that this is likely to be an uphill battle in the current economic climate.

The economic climate

9.5 The research team returned to the 24 interview areas to assess the impact of the cuts. Voluntary sector projects have already suffered and that means a reduced service to young people at a time when referrals are increasing. The signs are that safeguarding units have generally survived intact but the delivery of a child sexual exploitation strategy is likely to be hampered by:

- cuts to generic services on which such strategies rely to meet the needs of sexually exploited young people. This includes Connexions and other youth services
- increased workloads. The research found that the lead professional role and frequently the coordinator role had been added to existing responsibilities. Cost cutting measures have increased workloads to an even greater degree so that services become even more stretched
- training and travel budgets have suffered significantly which has an impact on the provision of training and on the ability of staff to attend training and also regional meetings and national conferences which, as the research has found, were often the ways in which practitioners developed their knowledge of child sexual exploitation.

9.6 This period of austerity means that LSCBs must be able to justify their allocation of resources. It has become all the more important for an investment to be made into scoping the issue locally and adopting robust data collection and monitoring systems so that the scale and nature of local need can be properly assessed. The model data collection tool has been developed as part of this research project for just this purpose.

9.7 It is also crucial that local areas consider the economic cost of *failing* to intervene to protect and support young people at risk. Barnardo’s has recently published the result of an assessment of the potential savings from their own interventions for young people who have been sexually exploited.³³⁷ This found that the costs associated with sexual exploitation increased significantly with no intervention – an increase six times greater than the estimated cost of the intervention itself. In addition, LSCBs and partner agencies need to calculate carefully the savings that can accrue from the efficiencies of co-location. The unified approach in Blackburn is said to have achieved a 30% drop in the number of children missing between 2005/2006, prior to setting up the team, and 2010/11.³³⁸ Which LSCB can afford not to take action?

The reform agenda

9.8 Resources have always been a struggle. The research found that another challenge to the wider implementation of the guidance has been the child

³³⁷ Barnardo’s (2011)

³³⁸ Children & Young People Now, published 9 Aug 2011

protection procedures themselves. Munro’s review of child protection³³⁹ advocates a reduction in the central prescription and interference and a move to a system characterised by the development of professional expertise to work effectively with children, young people and their families. This should enable local partnerships to build on the ways of working that they know from professional experience to be the most effective and – as some have already fought hard to do – move away from the stranglehold of time limits and working practices that do not serve the needs of this particular group of young people. The government response³⁴⁰ has been encouraging. The research suggests that this fundamental change in the way of working would be a significant step in the right direction although there are still issues to be addressed in terms of training, resources and priority.

9.9 The approach of ‘localism,’ together with a less rigid child protection system, could provide a context in which LSCBs and their partner agencies have the freedom to deliver a strategy for child sexual exploitation tailored to local need. However, there is a balance to be struck between local freedom – which may result in a continuing postcode lottery as far as a response to child sexual exploitation is concerned – and a national lead which sets out a clear priority for this area of work, and supports that priority with the necessary resources.

A national action plan

9.10 In 2011 Barnardo’s launched a campaign to highlight the ‘urgent need to cut children free from sexual exploitation.’³⁴¹ The campaign called on government to take a lead in ensuring a fundamental shift in policy, practice and service delivery in England. In response Tim Loughton MP, the Children’s Minister, announced that a cross-government action plan to prevent child sexual exploitation would be developed to embed the guidance and to ensure an improved response.³⁴² The central themes from the findings of this report have been noted by the Department for Education in the preparation of a national action plan which is expected to be published shortly. This provides an opportunity for government to challenge all LSCBs to take action. It is to be hoped that government does not shrink from that challenge because it is abundantly clear that yet another ‘guidance’ document will not prompt the fundamental shift that the campaign seeks. The national action plan will be impotent without an obligation on LSCBs to act and the resources to enable them to do so.

9.11 The reality is that the sexual exploitation of young people is not a new issue. Government guidance has been available to local partnerships for over 10 years. The reaction has shown that words are not enough – there must be an obligation on LSCBs, and their partner agencies, to act. The situation is unlikely to improve without a clear lead from government and from the heads of profession in the relevant agencies. We support the Barnardo’s campaign to ‘cut young people free’ from sexual exploitation. We welcome

³³⁹ Munro (2011)

³⁴⁰ Department for Education (2011)

³⁴¹ Barnardo’s (2011)

³⁴² Tim Loughton’s speech to Barnardo’s (17 May 2011) is available from www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/speeches/a0077355/tim_loughton-to-barnardos-event-on-child-sexual-exploitation

What's going on?

Annex A Key statistical findings

the lead taken by CEOP to address this issue on behalf of the police. We support the work of the Office of the Children's Commissioner to enquire into gang and group associated sexual exploitation of young people. We hope that the government's national action plan will be a real catalyst for change so that all young people who experience sexual exploitation will have the support and protection that they need and that abusers will no longer be able to act without impunity.

'there are current protocols in operation in less than a quarter of LSCBs'³⁴³

'a third of the country has no plans to deliver a child sexual exploitation strategy'³⁴⁴

LSCB coordination of partnerships

- **67%** of (89) interviews considered child sexual exploitation to be a **priority for their LSCB**
- **55% of (100) LSCBs** surveyed reported a **specific protocol** in place
- **38% of (100) LSCBs** surveyed reported a **sub group** in place
- **43% of (100) LSCBs** surveyed had identified **lead professionals**
- **25% of (100) LSCBs** surveyed reported that a **coordinator** was in place
- **less than 10% of areas have co-located units in place, or planned**
- **24%** of (89) interviews reported that **young people had been involved** in the development of the strategy

There were no plans:

- in **13%** of (100) LSCBs surveyed for a **specific protocol** to be developed
- in **43%** of (100) LSCBs surveyed to **review their protocol** in the light of the 2009 guidance
- in **33%** of (100) LSCBs surveyed for a specific **sub group to be set up**
- In **21%** of (100) LSCBs surveyed for **lead professionals** to be identified
- in **64%** of (100) LSCBs surveyed to appoint a **coordinator**

Identifying child sexual exploitation

- **72%** of (89) interviews reported that **training was available on the identification of child sexual exploitation**
- but
- **16%** of (100) LSCB areas surveyed had **no plans to provide specific advice on child sexual exploitation** to professionals, young people or parents and carers
 - **60%** of (89) interviews reported that awareness raising was undertaken with practitioners
 - **44%** of (89) interviews reported that awareness raising was undertaken with **young people**
 - **38%** of (89) interviews reported that awareness raising was undertaken with **parents/carers**

³⁴³ from What's Going On? An Interim Report available from cara.senouni@beds.ac.uk

³⁴⁴ from What's Going On? An Interim Report available from cara.senouni@beds.ac.uk

- **73%** of (89) interviews **identified local issues** that placed young people at risk of sexual exploitation
- **young people going missing and looked after children were most likely to be targeted by strategies to address child sexual exploitation:**

Risk group	% interviews reporting some targeted work (n=89)
'children regularly absent from education'	43% (a further 23% reported that none was done)
'children who regularly go missing'	53% (a further 14% reported that none was done)
'children affected by gang activity'	14% (a further 51% reported that none was done)
'children with mental health issues'	24% (a further 43% reported that none was done)
'children abusing drugs or alcohol'	39% (a further 28% reported that none was done)
'children with disabilities or special needs'	24% (a further 41% reported that none was done)
'looked after children'	51% (a further 17% reported that none was done)

- **76%** of (89) interviews recognised **grooming by adults** in their area
- **73%** of (89) interviews recognised **peer recruitment** in their area
- **69%** of (89) interviews recognised the **use of the internet** in sexual exploitation in their area
- **52%** of (89) interviews recognised **the movement of sexually exploited young people from place to place in the UK**
- **42%** of (89) interview participants recognised **sexual exploitation associated with gangs** in their area
- **37%** of (89) interviews recognised cases of **trafficking from abroad** for child sexual exploitation in their area
- **66%** of (89) interviews considered that **referral routes were clear**
- **44%** of (89) interviews reported that the 'identification' element of the local strategy was **under review**

Engaging with young people

- **52%** of (89) interviews reported **training on ways to engage with young people** at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation
- **44%** of (89) interviews reported that **a specific information protocol** was in place

- **76%** of (89) interviews reported that **intervention was discussed at a strategy meeting**
- **53%** of (89) interviews reported that **education interventions** were available
- **56%** of (89) interviews reported that **drug and alcohol interventions** were available
- **42%** of (89) interviews reported that **health interventions** were available
- **46%** of (89) interviews reported that **family support** was available
- **39%** of (89) interviews found that **therapeutic interventions with young people** were available
- **24%** of (89) interviews reported that **young people had been involved** in the development of local strategies
- **43%** of (89) interviews reported that the 'engagement' element of the local strategy was **under review**

Identifying, disrupting, investigating and prosecuting abusers

- **31%** of (89) interviews reported that **local training covered disruption**
- **73%** of (89) interviews reported that the **police were involved in disruption**
- **33%** of (89) interviews reported that **children's services were involved in disruption**
- **31%** of (89) interviews reported that **licensing authorities were involved in disruption**
- **27%** of (89) interviews reported that **carers were involved in disruption**
- **16%** of (89) interviews reported that **health practitioners were involved in disruption**
- **14%** of (89) interviews reported that **voluntary organisations were involved in disruption**
- **39%** of (89) interviews reported that the **'disruption element of the local strategy was under review**
- **51%** of (89) interviews reported that **child abduction notices** were used
- **20%** of (89) interviews reported **the use of covert surveillance**
- **31%** of (89) interviews reported the use of **forensic evidence**
- **27%** of (89) interviews reported **other investigative techniques**
- **48%** of (89) interviews reported that a **police operation had taken place within the last year**

- **24%** of (89) interview participants reported that **abusers had been prosecuted in the last year**
- support for young people should be provided by a specialist CSE service, a witness service or others with a trusting relationship with the child – but **a third of interview participants were unable to say who would provide such support**
- **38%** of (89) interviews reported that the 'prosecution' element of the strategy was **under review**

Collecting and managing data

- **over 1000 young people on one day were known to be receiving support** in England because they have been identified as at risk of, or experiencing sexual exploitation
- **59%** of (100) LSCBs surveyed reported that they were **not recording data on child sexual exploitation**
- **48%** of (89) interviews reported that **data was collected in their own agencies**
- there was agreement **in just one interview area** that **data was collected at both agency and LSCB level**, and that there was **a shared database**

Sue Jago led the project. Sue has a background in policy development relating to child sexual exploitation, trafficking and prostitution. Previous research includes an exploration of ways to gather evidence against the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. During the course of the project Sue was part of the Reference Group for the CEOP thematic assessment of 'street grooming'.

Dr Lorena Arocha led the quantitative data collection trial. Lorena has conducted research on trafficking and other forms of exploitation such as bonded labour and forced labour in different national/regional contexts, in South Asia as well as in the UK. Lorena was part of the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group during its first year, conducting an evaluation of the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Human Trafficking in the UK. She is currently working on Comic Relief funded research examining cross-border child trafficking prevention initiatives across three different geographical regions.

Dr Isabelle Brodie led on the analysis of the project data. Isabelle has researched extensively in the area of child welfare, including children and young people in care. Isabelle has recently carried out a review of literature relating to safe accommodation for young people in the care system and who are also sexually exploited and trafficked.

Professor Margaret Melrose has been researching the topic of sexually exploited young people for a number of years and has published extensively in the field of child and adolescent drug use and prostitution. Margaret has evaluated provision for young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation and produced empirical evidence showing why and how young people become involved. She is currently evaluating a programme run by the Metropolitan police to support young people involved in, or at risk of, violent or sexual victimisation; undertaking a study of the needs of young female offenders as they make the transition from custody to community (funded by the Sir Halley Stewart Trust) and a study of sexual victimisation within gangs (funded by the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England).

Professor Jenny Pearce had overall responsibility for the management of the project. Jenny has conducted extensive research in this area including studies of safeguarding sexually exploited young people, trafficked young people and the development of young people-centred accounts of exploitation. Jenny is Director of the Institute of Applied Social Research and the International Centre for the Study of Sexually Exploited and Trafficked Young People. She is Chair of the UK Home Office Child Trafficking International Sharing Forum and co-founder and management group member of the NWG. She is a member of the Policy Steering Committee of Eurochild, Brussels, and has worked with the Council of Europe as a rapporteur for their campaign *One in Five: preventing sexual violence against children*.

Camille Warrington has a background in youth work. Her work has focused primarily on the engagement and wider participation of those traditionally excluded from decision-making processes. Camille spent two years coordinating the NWG and, in this role, set up a national young people's advisory group, *What Works For Us?*, which she continues to coordinate. Since 2010 Camille has been leading work on young people's participation while undertaking a professional doctorate exploring young people's experience of sexual exploitation support services and their involvement in decision making.

What's going on?

Annex C The project Advisory Group

Chair:		Professor Susanne MacGregor
Members:	ADCS	Jenny Coles (2010 only)
	Barnardo's	Julie Harris Carlene Firmin
	BASW	David Barnes Sue Kent
	CEOP	Zoe Hilton Graham Ritchie
	Comic Relief	Debbie Walmsley
	CROP	Aravinda Kosaraju Natasha Canfer
	Crown Prosecution Service	Pam Bowen
	Department for Education	Andrew Sargent Jean Pugh
	Department of Health	Tania Celani Monique Akosa
	ECPAT UK	Hannah Pearce
	Home Office	Ifeyinwa Okoye Alastair Noble Wayne Jones
	Home Office research	Alana Diamond Laura Blakeborough Sara Skodbo
	LSCB representative (Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Group)	Ann Lucas
	Missing People	Martin Houghton Brown
	NPIA	Charlie Hedges
	NSPCC	Nasima Patel
National Working Group	Camille Warrington Heather Fraser	
Specialist project representative (Safe and Sound, Derby)	Sheila Taylor	
UK Human Trafficking Centre	Martin Reeve Mike Hand	
Welsh Assembly Government	Sandra Owens Rebecca Powell	

What's going on?

Annex D The initial survey form

Local strategy	No plans	Planned	Underway	Action complete	Further information/contact point
Is your LSCB planning to review the local response to child sexual exploitation?					
Has your LSCB developed specific local procedures?					
Has your LSCB set up a sub group to address sexual exploitation?					
Have lead professionals been identified in key agencies?					
Has your LSCB appointed/identified a sexual exploitation coordinator?					
Has your LSCB provided advice on reporting concerns for: (a) professionals? (b) parents and carers? (c) young people?	(a)				
	(b)				
	(c)				
Is there a specialist service in your area providing support for young people at risk, or experiencing sexual exploitation?					
Does your local response include disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators?					
Training	No plans	Planned	Underway	Action complete	Further information/contact point
Do you use any local training on: (a) how to identify young people at risk, or experiencing, sexual exploitation? (b) how to safeguard young people from sexual exploitation? (c) how to gather evidence of sexual exploitation?	(a)				
	(b)				
	(c)				
Data monitoring	Yes		No		Further information/contact point
Do you collect data on the number of young people who are being worked with in your area: (a) believed to be at risk of sexual exploitation (b) believed to be experiencing sexual exploitation (c) using other categories	(a)				
	(b)				
	(c)				

Annex E The practitioner schedule of questions

Topic 1 – What is known about child sexual exploitation in the area?	
1.1 Are there any relevant local demographic or geographic features? (please specify)	yes/no/dk
1.2 Has a scoping exercise been undertaken?	yes/no/dk
1.3 Is data held locally on prevalence?	yes/no/dk
1.4 Are you aware of/have you worked with/do you have data for the following in your area in the past year? (a) children believed to have been trafficked (b) sexual exploitation involving the internet (c) sexual exploitation involving gang activity (d) sexual exploitation involving grooming by adults (e) sexual exploitation involving peer recruitment	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c) (d) (e)
1.5 What are the local routes into sexual exploitation? (a) adult individuals (b) organised groups of adults (c) peers (d) gangs (e) known businesses (eg taxi ranks, fast food outlets) (f) other (please specify)	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f)

Topic 2 – The development and implementation of the local CSE strategy	
2.1 Is child sexual exploitation a priority issue for your LSCB?	yes/no/dk
2.2 Is there a specific CSE protocol?	yes/no/dk
2.3 Is there a sub group addressing this issue?	yes/no/dk
2.4 Have lead professionals been identified?	yes/no/dk
2.5 Has a coordinator been identified/appointed?	yes/no/dk
2.6 Is the coordinator also the CP coordinator?	yes/no/dk
2.7 Which agencies are most active in this area? (please specify)	
2.8 Is there a local specialist service? (a) a statutory service? (b) an NGO? (c) no such service	(a) yes/no/dk (b) yes/no/dk (c) yes/no/dk
2.9 Have young people been involved in the development of the strategy?	yes/no/dk

Topic 3 – Delivering the strategy – identification	
3.1 Is awareness raising undertaken? (a) with practitioners in child care statutory agencies? (b) with other statutory agencies? (please specify) (c) with practitioners in specialist NGOs? (d) with other NGOs? (e) with the police? (f) with parents/carers? (g) with children and young people?	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g)
3.2 Is training on identification provided for key agencies? (please specify)	yes/no/dk
3.3 Is there a specific information sharing protocol?	yes/no/dk
3.4 Does the CSE strategy focus on specific at risk groups? (a) children regularly absent from education (b) children who regularly go missing (c) children affected by gang activity (d) children with mental health issues (e) children abusing drugs or alcohol (f) children with disabilities or special needs (g) looked after children	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g)
3.5 Are referral routes clearly signposted?	yes/no/dk

Topic 4 – Delivering the strategy – intervention	
4.1 Is training on intervention provided for key agencies? (please specify)	yes/no/dk
4.2 Who carries out assessments? (a) statutory children's services? (b) specialist project – statutory? (c) specialist project – NGO?	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c)
4.3 Is intervention discussed at a specific strategy meeting?	yes/no/dk
4.4 Does intervention include: (a) therapeutic outreach? (b) input from education? (c) input from health? (d) input from drug and alcohol projects? (e) other agencies (please specify) (f) support for families/carers?	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f)

Topic 5 – Delivering the strategy – disruption	
5.1 Is training on disruption provided for key agencies? (please specify)	yes/no/dk
5.2 Which agencies are involved in disruption tactics? (a) police? (please specify which Unit) (b) licensing authorities? (please specify) (c) CPS? (d) statutory children's services? (e) NGO specialist service? (f) health? (g) carers? (inc parents, foster carers, residential carers) (h) other? (please specify)	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h)
5.3 What disruption tactics are used? (a) overt surveillance (b) abduction notices (c) cooperation with licensing authorities (d) other (please specify)	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c) (d)

Topic 6 – Delivering the strategy – prosecution	
6.1 Is training on investigating sexual exploitation provided to key agencies? (please specify)	yes/no/dk
6.2 Which agencies are involved in gathering evidence? (a) police (please specify which Unit) (b) CPS (c) statutory children's services (d) NGO specialist service (e) health (f) carers (g) other (please specify)	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g)
6.3 Which investigative techniques have been used? (a) covert surveillance (b) forensics (c) other (please specify)	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c)
6.4 Which agency provides support for the victim/witness? (a) specialist CSE service? (b) specialist witness service? (c) other (please specify)	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c)
6.5 Have there been specific police operations focused on CSE within the last year?	yes/no/dk
6.6 Have there been prosecutions of perpetrators for CSE crimes within the last year?	yes/no/dk

Topic 7 – Data collection	
7.1 Is data collated routinely by your LSCB?	yes/no/dk
7.2 Is data collated routinely by your agency?	yes/no/dk
7.3 Is there a shared database?	yes/no/dk

Topic 8 – Further development of the local CSE strategy	
8.1 Is the local strategy under review? (a) in respect of identification? (b) in respect of engagement? (c) in respect of disruption? (d) in respect of prosecution?	(a) yes/no/dk (b) yes/no/dk (c) yes/no/dk (d) yes/no/dk
8.2 Are there plans to develop links with other agencies?	yes/no/dk
8.3 Are there any plans to develop links with other areas?	yes/no/dk

Topic 9 – Following the DCSF 2009 guidance	
9.1 Does the local strategy follow the DCSF 2009 guidance?	yes/no/dk
9.2 Are aspects of the guidance not adopted (a) in respect of identification? (b) in respect of engagement? (c) in respect of disruption? (d) in respect of prosecution?	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c) (d)
9.3 Are there any additional tools that you would find helpful? (please specify)	yes/no/dk
9.4 Have other organisations been helpful with the delivery of the strategy? (please specify)	yes/no/dk

Topic 10 – Resourcing the child sexual exploitation strategy	
10.1 What funding/resources does the LSCB contribute to: (a) training (b) specialist projects (c) other (please specify)	Tick if information provided (a) (b) (c)
10.2 What funding/other resources to partner agencies contribute to the implementation of the strategy? (a) police (b) children's services (c) health (d) education (e) other (please specify)	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c) (d) (e)
10.3 Where a specialist project is in place, how is it funded? (a) local authority (b) PCT (c) trusts and foundations (d) Comic Relief (e) other (please specify)	Tick all boxes that apply (a) (b) (c) (d) (e)

This checklist has been designed to assist LSCBs to assess their progress against the requirements of the guidance to deliver an effective child sexual exploitation strategy and to identify areas in which to focus future activity. It is suggested that the checklist is incorporated into local plans and that each outcome is assessed as

A – in place;

B – under development, or partially achieved or

C – yet to be addressed, or at a very early stage of development.

To coordinate joint working and develop a child sexual exploitation strategy

- The LSCB has fully signed up to the 5 principles underpinning a CSE strategy
 - a shared responsibility
 - an integrated approach
 - a proactive approach
 - a child-centred approach and support for parents and carers
 - recognising criminality
- The LSCB supports a sub group to drive forward work to tackle child sexual exploitation
- All key agencies are represented at the sub group, lead professionals are identified and the expectations of each agency clearly understood
- Child sexual exploitation is championed at the highest level in partner agencies
- An up-to-date and specific child sexual exploitation protocol has been agreed and disseminated, focusing on identification, engagement, disruption and prosecution
- The child sexual exploitation protocol is aligned with other relevant strategies
- There is a coordinator in post whose function is recognised in the local area so that referral routes for concerns are widely understood
- Local partners have agreed to share all relevant information and there is a process for safeguarding children and young people at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation

To identify child sexual exploitation

- A scoping exercise has been conducted focusing on victims, perpetrators and locations
- Key agencies work with a range of other organisations to reduce the risks of child sexual exploitation, according to local need

- All practitioners working with children and young people have the requisite skills and knowledge to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation
- Through training and awareness raising, all local practitioners working with children and young people are aware of the risk factors, including local factors, for child sexual exploitation
- There is a programme in place to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation with children and young people
- There is a programme in place to raise awareness with parents and carers
- The community is aware of the risks of child sexual exploitation and where to report concerns locally
- In all cases of children and young people going missing, the risk of sexual exploitation is specifically considered
- Children and young people who have been victims of child abuse or witnesses of domestic violence are monitored to minimise the risk of sexual exploitation
- Preventative work is delivered as early as possible with children and young people identified as at particular risk, and with their parents/ carers
- Preventative strategies are delivered in a way that is accessible to young people and their families, regardless of gender and community

To support young people and their families and carers

- All professionals who work directly with those at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation have the skills and knowledge to do so
- Services are fully accessible to all young people who may need them, regardless of gender, ethnicity or any other characteristic
- Services are flexible to meet the needs of both young children and adolescents
- Services are available to children and young people believed to be at risk or, or experiencing, sexual exploitation regardless of whether or not they have made a formal disclosure
- Children and young people attend strategy meetings and care pathways are discussed and explained
- Parents and carers attend strategy meetings and care pathways are discussed and explained
- Transition arrangements are in place for young people reaching the age of 18 and still in need of services

- Where parents/carers are not implicated in child sexual exploitation, access to support is available
- Feedback from service users is taken into account in the development/review of services
- A process has been developed for professionals to meet and agree a plan as soon as concerns have been recognised
- A wide range of services are available to respond to the needs of children and young people at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation

To identify, investigate, disrupt and prosecute abusers

- All local practitioners working with children and young people recognise that those at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation suffer significant harm and should not be regarded as displaying bad or immoral behaviour
- Proactive investigation of location 'hot spots' and to identify potential abusers is undertaken
- Cases are managed in a way that supports the gathering of evidence
- All agencies in direct contact with children and young people understand how to record information for evidential purposes
- Action is taken promptly to disrupt child sexual exploitation, involving all relevant agencies
- Prosecutions are pursued wherever possible to prevent re-offending
- Investigative methods have been developed to minimise the reliance on the evidence of the child or young person who is the victim of child sexual exploitation
- Where criminal proceedings take place against exploiters, access to special measures are requested where appropriate
- Arrangements are in place to support young people and their families throughout any investigation and court proceedings process and beyond to avoid re-victimisation
- Parents, carers and young witnesses are kept informed of progress at all stages
- Arrangements are in place to support young people after any court proceedings have concluded to minimise the risk of re-victimisation

To collect and manage data

- The LSCB coordinates a data collection system to monitor the nature and prevalence of CSE locally, and to assess outcomes for children and young people
- the LSCB contributes data to a national snapshot coordinated by CEOP

- **72%** of (89) interviews reported that **training was available on the identification of child sexual exploitation**
- **52%** of (89) interviews reported **training on ways to engage with young people** at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation
- **31%** of (89) interviews reported that **local training covered disruption**
- **30%** of (89) interviews reported that **local training covered investigation**

Who is providing training?

- The research has found that, in some areas, the provision of training is comprehensive and well received; but many areas provide little or no training. The scoping data revealed that 'training' could mean anything from access to information through the LSCB website to formal training courses
- Where training is provided it is sometimes bought in from training consultancies but is more often delivered by those working in specialist projects on a multi-agency basis, reflecting their own experiences:
*'its self taught, we're self taught just by reading literature, national literature and your literature, and going to conferences.'*³⁴⁵
- Where multi-agency training is available it is seen as immensely valuable. It provides information based on local knowledge, delivered by those with expertise in this area of work, and helps to cement inter-agency working. Outcomes were said to underline the value:
*'as soon as you start doing training to a specific group, the referrals from that group increase'*³⁴⁶
- Recent research has shown that the delivery of multi-agency services benefits from multi-agency training in that:
*'there were very substantial improvements in their self-reported understanding of the roles of different professions...and in their confidence and comfort in working with these colleagues'*³⁴⁷
- However, multi-agency training is sometimes difficult to deliver. From some agencies, the opportunity to participate is highly valued, but there is a low take up from others. It is also unlikely that such training 'reaches' senior staff

Who pays?

- Despite the requirement on LSCBs to provide training to enable professionals to deliver a child sexual exploitation strategy, there are no ring-fenced resources to meet the cost
- In some areas the LSCB funds multi-agency training, sometimes bringing

³⁴⁵ interview A9/P1

³⁴⁶ interview B2/V3

³⁴⁷ Carpenter et al (2009)

in a training consultancy

- In other areas local practitioners deliver the training as a 'good will' gesture. This is often provided by staff from small projects with limited resources and inevitably impacts on the 'reach' of the training:
*'we could do a lot more training if people paid for it and we had the staff.'*³⁴⁸
- A huge commitment is required to cover all the agencies that come into contact with young people:
*'training hundreds of professionals to identify signs of sexual exploitation and take appropriate action. The team trains all new police officers and social workers, and others such as teachers, school staff and health workers. The training is also given to staff in cinemas, bowling alleys, shops and hotels – places where sexual exploitation may occur.'*³⁴⁹
- The problem is exacerbated in agencies with a high turnover of staff
- It is also likely to become ever more difficult to manage locally as cost cutting limits the capacity of staff to deliver the training, and other staff to attend the training. LSCB training budgets have also suffered

What is needed?

- The experience of sexually exploited young people³⁵⁰ suggested that there is still an unmet need. It was suggested that many agencies working with young people were unaware of the way in which exploitation takes place. This not only means that signs are overlooked and the opportunities for early intervention are missed but also affects the way that generic services are delivered
- As a minimum, and in accordance with the guidance, LSCBs need to ensure that all practitioners have access to training to enable them to deliver the different elements of a child exploitation strategy – identification, engagement, disruption and prosecution
- Where there is a local specialist project they may be best placed to provide training on identification and engagement
- Specific training from the police on gathering evidence is required to ensure that welfare agencies understand how to record information so that it has a potential evidential value
- There is a need to develop appropriate training from the significant recent experience from multi-agency teams investigating individual cases and from major operations set up to investigate networks of abuse through exploitation. At seminars with the police and also in discussion with police interviewees, specific requests were made for training on how to investigate child sexual exploitation
- It should be a statutory requirement for child sexual exploitation to be on the curriculum for trainee social workers, youth workers, youth offending team practitioners, health workers (primary and secondary care workers); CPS staff and education practitioners including head teachers, teachers,

³⁴⁸ interview B2/V3

³⁴⁹ Nick McPartlan, Manager of Engage, reported in CYPN, 24th August 2011

³⁵⁰ from transcript of WhatWorks For Us meeting

What's going on?

Abbreviations

teaching support staff and education social workers

- In line with a recent review of LSCB training,

*'consideration should be given to building LSCB inter-agency courses into the post-qualifying professional development frameworks for different groups of professional staff. This would both raise the status of courses and might also help to draw in professional groups who are currently under-represented, such as more experienced/senior staff, and doctors.'*³⁵¹

Resources

A number of organisations provide professional training on child sexual exploitation:

- **BLAST**: the BLAST Project, which supports boys and young men at risk of, or being groomed for sexual exploitation also provides professional training. For information contact Phil Mitchell (p.mitchell@mesmac.co.uk)
- **CEOP**: provides a range of training for professionals – see www.ceop.police.uk/training
- **ECPAT**: for information on the ECPAT UK National Training Centre, contact info@ecpat.org.uk
- **Just Whistle**: provides information and training on tackling sexual exploitation, through formal training, seminars and conferences. See www.justwhistle.org.uk
- **NSPCC**: NSPCC Child Protection Learning Resources are available from www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/trainingandconsultancy
- Training may be offered locally by specialist projects, including Barnardo's projects. A regularly updated compendium of training resources can be found at www.cropuk.org.uk or www.nationalworkinggroup.co.uk

ACPCs	Area Child Protection Committees (precursors to LSCBs)
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ADCS	Association of Directors of Children's Services
AMHS	Adult Mental Health Services
CAIU	Child Abuse Investigation Unit
CAMHS	Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services
CEOP	Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre*
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families (now Department for Education)
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
NPIA	National Policing Improvement Agency*
PPU	Public Protection Unit
SPOC	Single Point of Contact
UKHTC	United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre*
WWFU	What Works For Us , young people's participation project
YOS	Youth Offending Service
YOT	Youth Offending Team

*During the course of the research project all became part of the new National Crime Agency

³⁵¹ Carpenter et al (2009)

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