



Making every child matter ... everywhere

CEOP thematic assessment

June 2011

Out of Mind, Out of Sight

Breaking down the barriers to understanding child sexual exploitation

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A – BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

1 Introduction

CEOP has carried out a rapid assessment of 'localised grooming' in the UK. This is a form of sexual exploitation, previously referred to as 'on street grooming' in the media, where children have been groomed and sexually exploited by an offender, having initially met in a location outside their home, usually in a public place (such as a park, cinema, on the street or at a friend's house). Offenders often act in concert, establishing a relationship with a child or children before sexually exploiting them. Some victims of 'street grooming' may believe that the offender is in fact an older 'boyfriend', introducing peers to the offender group who may also be sexually exploited. Abuse may occur at a number of locations within a local area and on several occasions.

'Localised grooming' has been subject to considerable media attention following a number of prosecutions of adult males for the grooming and sexual exploitation of children and young people in various towns and cities in the UK. Several NGOs have reported that large numbers of victims of this type of child sexual exploitation have accessed their services across the UK. However, there have been comparatively few prosecutions, and there is a general lack of knowledge of grooming and sexual exploitation in the UK and the threats posed to children and young people.

In order to inform responses to 'localised grooming', a rapid assessment of the intelligence and information held by police forces, local authorities, LSCBs, NGOs and local service providers, on this particular form of sexual exploitation, has been undertaken. Information gathered during this assessment demonstrates the difficulty of measuring the scale of the issue, provides an opportunity to highlight good practice in a number of areas of the UK and the gaps which remain, and enables the recommendation of a number of measures for improving the UK's response to child sexual exploitation.

A – BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

2 Objectives

This thematic assessment was undertaken with four principle objectives:

1. Assess the size and scale of 'localised grooming' in proportion to the overall known picture of sexual exploitation of children under the age of 18 in the UK
2. Establish any patterns of offending profile or victim experience
3. Assess the effectiveness of processes which might help identify such offending or potential victims
4. Recommend action to be taken to reduce the risk in future, including any urgent action that becomes apparent

It was aimed to determine the known extent of child sexual exploitation, based on intelligence and information held by relevant agencies, and to determine the proportion of cases which fit the profile of 'localised grooming'. This assessment therefore represents an audit of the current knowledge of the scale of child sexual exploitation among those police forces, LSCBs, children's services and service providers who responded to the request for information.

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3 Methodology

A rapid assessment methodology was implemented to compile the necessary data for the assessment of 'localised grooming' in the UK. Rapid assessments are typically undertaken in situations where (i) it is necessary to gather data quickly, where resource constraints and timing issues rule out conventional research approaches (such as long-term surveys and detailed statistical analysis; and in-depth focus groups/interviews and qualitative analysis); and (ii) agencies require data to facilitate the development of policy, intervention and evaluation programmes. It is important to note that this thematic assessment aimed to assess the known picture of 'localised grooming'. Establishing the known picture precludes the estimation of the number of children at risk of sexual exploitation, based on known and measurable vulnerability indicators among children in the UK (e.g. Harper and Scott, 2005; Scott and Skidmore, 2006; DCSF, 2009; Firmin, 2011).

This methodology was implemented in order to produce the assessment within six months, incorporating four strands of enquiry:

(i) A review of relevant literature

Relevant literature was identified and reviewed. There is a substantial body of literature on child sexual exploitation in the UK, much of which is relevant to 'localised grooming'.

(ii) An assessment of relevant intelligence held on systems by various relevant agencies

Agencies contacted for intelligence included police forces, local authorities, Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs), Area Child Protection Committees in Scotland (ACPCs), specialist community and voluntary sector service providers for sexually exploited or missing children, and services operated by larger NGOs such as Barnardo's. Agencies were asked to submit data relating to the period 1 January 2008 to 1 March 2011, and pertaining to cases of child sexual exploitation. There is no single indicator, held by any agency, which can be taken to illustrate the scale of child sexual exploitation or 'localised grooming'. Agencies were therefore asked to submit a wide range of rich data which would enable CEOP to extract information of particular relevance to 'localised grooming'. The information request disseminated to agencies consisted of two parts: (i) a document outlining the aims of the thematic assessment, the definition of 'localised grooming' with examples of the types of cases relevant to the profile, and a detailed description of the data required; and (ii) a questionnaire for completion, designed to capture as much relevant detail as possible. Distinct requests were disseminated to the safeguarding community and law enforcement, in recognition of the differing types of information likely to be held by agencies within each sector, and the language used.

In recognition of the novelty of 'localised grooming' as a concept and the difficulties many agencies would likely face in its interpretation, it was important to include several examples of the types of cases covered by the term in the intelligence request document. It was also recognised that some agencies would be unable to extract relevant information quickly and easily from data storage systems. It was therefore requested that agencies outline any difficulties faced in collating information for their response. Although agencies were asked to complete a questionnaire with relevant information, respondents were also given the option of using a spreadsheet, should this be more convenient for compiling their response.

(iii) Consultation with victims of child sexual exploitation

Victims were given an opportunity to relay their experiences during a consultation day. This provided an opportunity to obtain a more detailed understanding of grooming, exploitation and deficiencies in current approaches to tackling child sexual exploitation from a victim's perspective.

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(iv) Debriefs of frontline practitioners

In order to augment the data obtained from relevant agencies, a number of practitioners, including Senior Investigating Officers were subject to debriefing. Notes were taken during debriefs and subsequently collated and analysed.

SIOs offered a unique, first hand perspective of difficulties encountered in the investigation of child sexual exploitation cases. These debriefs offered an insight into the identification of victims from a police perspective, the effectiveness of disruption techniques, the importance of partnerships and multi-agency approaches, and the characteristics of offenders.

Other key practitioners consulted, included individuals from voluntary sector organisations and children's services. These practitioners all offered a valuable insight into working with victims, multi-agency arrangements and relationships with the police.

Overall, these four strands of enquiry have ensured that findings are corroborated by multiple sources.

3.1 Methodology limitations

Given the pace with which relevant data was collated, agencies had a limited timeframe to interrogate their data storage systems, extract relevant information and configure data into a format suitable for submission to CEOP. Agencies from each sector faced particular difficulties in submitting a comprehensive response.

Owing to the range of crimes under which child sexual exploitation may be recorded (Appendix C), police forces were therefore to sift through intelligence systems to locate all sexual offences against children within the specified time period, and determine whether cases met the profile outlined in the information request. The way in which intelligence is captured and stored varies across police forces, and does not necessarily lend itself to the straightforward identification of relevant cases. Local authorities faced similar difficulties in responding to the information request.

Although children's services may possess data pertaining to child sexual exploitation, this data cannot be easily retrieved. 'Localised grooming' is a novel term, used for the purposes of this assessment, though not used by practitioners for recording data. Information is unlikely to be easily extracted from databases through a simple search, and the identification of records relevant to the 'localised grooming' profile may necessitate a manual trawl of thousands of records. According to DCSF guidance (2009) LSCBs should put in place systems to monitor prevalence and responses to child sexual exploitation within their area. However, many LSCBs do not collate relevant data. Current research identifies the need for improved data recording systems to reveal the extent and nature of child sexual exploitation (Jago et al, 2010).

Service providers for sexually exploited children possess a considerable quantity of information relating to victim experiences of 'localised grooming'. Many service providers belong to the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People (NWG), and many are operated by large children's charities, notably Barnardo's and the NSPCC. Such services were eager to share their expertise with CEOP for the purposes of this assessment. However, some service providers do not possess the necessary resources to store and extract information in an accessible format. Consequently, some service providers were unable to supply information relating to all cases of 'localised grooming' over the defined period, instead providing a representative snapshot¹.

¹ Some cases may also be subject to confidentiality issues

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The limitations of the methodology can be summarised as follows:

- (i) Child sexual exploitation is often hidden from view. The thematic assessment sought to determine and assess the known scale of 'localised grooming' based on information held by relevant agencies.
- (ii) All agencies faced particular difficulties in responding to the information request. As a result, information submitted to CEOP during the rapid assessment is incomplete, and does not represent the totality of information relating to child sexual exploitation or 'localised grooming' held by relevant agencies.
- (iii) Of those agencies which were able to respond, many were unable to provide information relating to the complete study period, from 1 January 2008 to 1 March 2011. Instead, agencies submitted a snapshot of relevant data.

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4 Definitions

Media coverage of cases of child sexual exploitation in the UK introduced the crime ‘on street grooming’ to the wider public (e.g. Sunday Times, 5 January 2011, *‘Revealed: conspiracy of silence of UK sex gangs’*). Broadly defined, the phrase ‘on street grooming’ has been used to refer to cases of child sexual exploitation where children have been groomed by an offender, having initially met in a location outside their home, usually in a public place (such as a park, cinema, on the street or at a friend’s house). Offenders often act as a group, establishing a relationship with a child or children before sexually exploiting them. Some victims of ‘on street grooming’ may believe that the offender is in fact an older ‘boyfriend’, and will introduce peers to the offender group who may also be sexually exploited. Abuse may occur at a number of locations within a region and on several occasions over an extended period.

However, it was found during the early scoping of this research that ‘on street grooming’ is a misleading phrase which does not accurately describe the nature of this particular model of child sexual exploitation. Definitions of terms used to describe child sexual exploitation are important for shaping responses to the issue at a local level (Harper and Scott, 2005). Jago and Pearce (2008) state that defining child sexual exploitation is central to the way in which local partnerships tackle the sexual exploitation of children and young people. Definitions of issues connected with child sexual exploitation determine thresholds for intervention – it is important that relevant agencies have a shared understanding of terminology and recognise a common threshold for intervention in exploitation.

For the purposes of producing this assessment and responding to public concern over cases of ‘on street grooming’, CEOP has used the phrase ‘localised grooming’ to describe the issue and gather relevant information from partner agencies. ‘Localised grooming’ can be broadly defined as cases of child sexual exploitation where children have been groomed and sexually exploited by an offender, having initially met in a location outside their home, usually in a public place (such as a park, cinema, on the street or at a friend’s house). Offenders often act in concert, establishing a relationship with a child or children before sexually exploiting them. Some victims of ‘street grooming’ may believe that the offender is in fact an older ‘boyfriend’, introducing peers to the offender group who may also be sexually exploited. Abuse may occur at a number of locations within a local area and on several occasions. ‘Localised grooming’ cannot be easily separated or detached from other forms of child sexual exploitation.

‘Localised grooming’ is used hereafter as a working label for the form of sexual exploitation identified as a public protection issue in media coverage of the issue. The following models of sexual exploitation were excluded from the analysis: peer-on-peer exploitation, online grooming, familial child sexual abuse, stranger abduction and the trafficking of non UK nationals for sexual exploitation.

Unless otherwise stated, ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ should be taken to mean both males and females.

B – FINDINGS

The following section presents findings from each strand of enquiry – the literature review, the intelligence submitted to CEOP, the victim consultation and the frontline practitioner debriefs.

5 Literature review

In accordance with the principles of the Rapid Assessment outlined above, a review of relevant literature has been undertaken. Key themes are outlined below.

5.1 Parameters of 'localised grooming'

'Child sexual exploitation' is a form of child sexual abuse, clearly defined in statutory guidance (DSCF, 2009):

"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 vulnerability."

This definition was devised in consultation with expert service providers, academics and other stakeholders working at a practice level, and is based on a shared understanding of the nature of child sexual exploitation. The concept of 'localised grooming' is clearly a form of child sexual exploitation. Anyone can be exploited regardless of age. However, for offences specifically relating to child sexual exploitation, such as section 47 (paying for sexual services of a child) and section 48 (causing or inciting child prostitution or pornography), a child is defined as under 18. Where the child sexual offences involved a breach of trust, a child is also defined as being under 18. Exploitation may not end at 18, but continue into adulthood. Research has suggested that 70 % of adult prostitutes were sexually exploited as a teenager (Paying the Price, 2004), and a Home Office study of Crime Reduction Programme projects concerning adults involved in prostitution found that out of 122 participants, 25 were abused through commercial sexual exploitation whilst under 16 and 39 were abused through commercial sexual exploitation aged 16-18 (Hester and Westmarland, 2004). The continuation of sexual exploitation of children into adulthood suggests that once entered into exploitation, there are considerable barriers to exit which are not easily overcome (Pearce, 2009).

Child sexual exploitation encompasses a spectrum of experiences including abuse for commercial gain (Melrose, 2004, 2009). Barnardo's research has demonstrated that many victims enter into coercive relationships with an adult, who then grooms the child to engage in sexual activity with a wider group of offenders, and perhaps for commercial sexual exploitation (Scott and Skidmore, 2006).

Recent research by Barnardo's has defined a spectrum of child sexual exploitation, based on a loose typology:

- (i) 'Inappropriate relationships'. Usually involving a lone perpetrator who has inappropriate power or control over a young person, whether physical, emotional or economic. There is likely to be a significant age gap between perpetrator and victim. The young person may also believe that they are in a loving, equal relationship.

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- (ii) “Boyfriend model of exploitation and peer exploitation”. The perpetrator befriends and grooms a young person into a ‘relationship’ and subsequently coerces them to have sex with friends or associates. This includes gang exploitation and peer-on-peer exploitation.
- (iii) “Organised/networked exploitation or trafficking”. Young people are passed through networks of offenders, possibly between towns and cities, where they may be coerced into sexual activity with multiple men. Victims may also be used as agents to recruit other children and young people (Barnardo’s, 2011).

Victims experience child sexual exploitation differently, as abuse may or may not develop across this spectrum. Child sexual exploitation is a process, rather than an isolated incident, beginning with grooming, and potentially culminating in commercial sexual exploitation (CROP, 2009).

Creegan et al. (2005) state that in between the extreme ends of the spectrum, child sexual abuse perpetrated by a lone individual and abuse through commercial sexual exploitation, children and young people may be “involved in a range of equally exploitative sexual relationships... They sometimes include a single sexual partner using physical or emotional coercion, but are perceived by the young person as a lover and protector rather than as an abuser”. Statutory guidance notes that “many children and young people are groomed into sexually exploitative relationships but other forms of entry exist. Some young people are engaged in informal economies that incorporate the exchange of sex for rewards such as drugs, alcohol, money or gifts. Others exchange sex for accommodation or money as a result of homelessness and experiences of poverty... The perpetrators of sexual exploitation are often well organised and use sophisticated tactics. They are known to target areas where children and young people might gather without much adult supervision, such as shopping centres, cafes, takeaways, pubs, sports centres, cinemas, bus or train stations, local parks, playgrounds and taxi ranks, or sites on the Internet used by children and young people. The process of grooming may also be visible in adult venues such as pubs and clubs. In some cases perpetrators are known to use younger men, women, boys or girls to build initial relationships and introduce them to others in the perpetrator networks” (DSCF, 2009).

More recent research suggests changing and emerging forms of exploitation, noting that interventions need to be adaptable, maintaining a multi-agency approach (Pearce, 2010; Firmin, 2011). Ongoing research illustrates the changing patterns of exploitation and abuse experienced by young people (Warrington, 2010; Jago, 2010; and Jago et al, 2010).

Broadly defined, ‘localised grooming’ refers to cases of child of sexual exploitation involving an element of grooming and solicitation in a public place, either online or offline, where a child has been groomed for sexual activity with the offender and their associates. Where grooming is involved, the exploitative relationship may persist for an extended period, and the child may believe that they are in a legitimate relationship with the offender. Victims may also be coerced into introducing friends and acquaintances to the offender and their associates. Those children who are introduced to the offender network are not necessarily groomed prior to being sexually abused. Victims of ‘localised grooming’ may not perceive their exploiter as an offender or an abuser, but as an ‘older boyfriend’.

When compared with the definition of child sexual exploitation enshrined in statutory guidance, it is evident that this understanding of ‘localised grooming’ is broadly consistent with the wider understanding of child sexual exploitation. Indeed, the term ‘localised grooming’ describes many of the exploitative relationships involving a grooming component that fall within the statutory definition of child sexual exploitation, excluding the extreme ends of the spectrum. The statutory definition of ‘child sexual exploitation’ is victim-based; ‘localised grooming’ differs in that it describes a particular offender modus operandi (MO) based on grooming and the sexual exploitation of a wide group of victims. ‘Localised grooming’ can therefore be broadly equated with child sexual exploitation, but is distinguished by a specific offender MO. Given that ‘localised grooming’ is a form of child sexual exploitation, this literature review reflects on the broader relevance of research into child sexual exploitation for ‘localised grooming’.

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Pearce et al. (2002) have undertaken a qualitative study of 55 young women experiencing child sexual exploitation from male perpetrators, identifying three broad categories of the child sexual exploitation continuum, including (i) children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation, (ii) children and young people swapping sex for favours; and (iii) children and young people self-defining as prostitutes. In the first category, children and young people engage in sexualised risk-taking, including running away from home and accepting lifts in cars from unknown older men. These men were in the early stages of grooming the young people for sexual exploitation. In the second category, children and young people exchange sex for accommodation, drugs and alcohol, and other gifts, often with an older man identified as a 'boyfriend'. This leads to an increasing detachment from home and family life. Finally, in the third category, children and young people were exchanging sex for money. Pearce (2003) found that many of the children and young people in this category were habitual drug users. Pearce's model is a useful means of conceptualising child sexual exploitation as a continuum, with patterns of 'localised grooming' evident throughout.

Examples of 'localised grooming' can be identified in general research literature on child sexual exploitation. Harper and Scott (2005) conducted an assessment of child sexual exploitation in London, interviewing a number of service providers for sexually exploited children and young people. It was found that most children and young people who had accessed services had been exploited in the context of a relationship with an older man, most frequently in their 20s, who they perceived to be an older boyfriend. These 'boyfriends' introduced the girls to a wider group of men in various locations, usually a private residence. Sex would be swapped for drugs, alcohol, clothes or other commodities. The girls perceived this exploitation to be part of their relationship, suggesting that offenders had groomed victims for exploitation.

An assessment of the scale and nature of sexual exploitation of young people in Glasgow, based on interviews with Barnardo's local 'street team', found that young people attended parties in private residences in the city, where they were introduced to older men and offered drugs and alcohol in exchange for sex (Munro, 2004). Offenders targeted young people congregating at particular city centre locations, and there was some evidence to suggest that children in care were particularly vulnerable to grooming. Some girls were taken to a restaurant where they were sexually exploited, and a young male in local authority care was also targeted by two older males. The grooming process was central to the exploitation, where offenders would attempt to impress victims, taking them on rides in their car, and offering gifts such as mobile phones. The mobile phone was considered particularly important in the grooming process, as it provided a direct line between the offender and victim, and empowered the victim to stay away from their care placement for longer periods of time. Grooming created a dependency among victims. The offenders were regarded as 'boyfriends', and their residences were regarded as safe houses where they could bring their friends. In some cases, victims actually believed that they were exploiting the adults by using sex as a tool to obtain accommodation and material goods.

Some victims reported that they had been directed to recruit other girls. Victims who had been groomed over a period of time were instructed by offenders on the types of girls they should recruit. For example, Nash and Cusick (2004) have reported that girls aged between 13 and 15 were found to be in inappropriate relationships with eastern European adult males in their 20s in Lewisham. These girls met the men in the city centre and regarded them as their 'boyfriends'. Some girls reported being introduced to much older men by their 'boyfriend' and being offered gifts. Others were encouraged to introduce other girls to their 'boyfriends'. The Jill Dando Institute of University College London has undertaken a social network analysis of victims of sexual exploitation in two cases which conform to the above definition of 'localised grooming', assessing the relationships between groups of victims in each case (Brayley and Cockbain, 2010c). It was found that some girls were completely unconnected with other victims abused by an offender network, suggesting that offenders targeted some girls opportunistically. However, other girls were heavily groomed by offenders and led to believe that an offender was their 'older boyfriend'. These girls were used to recruit other victims. Consequently, in both cases of 'localised grooming' subject to analysis, a larger group of victims was clustered around one or more central 'girlfriend' figures in the victim network. The majority of victims in both cases were friends prior to being sexually exploited by the offender network.

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Overall, it is evident that existing literature on child sexual exploitation has documented victim experiences of sexual exploitation consistent with the specific ‘localised grooming’ model.

5.2 Victim experiences

Any child could be at risk of sexual exploitation. For a small number of children, this risk may be particularly significant. Risk factors underlying vulnerability to child sexual exploitation are well established in research literature, and widely understood by practitioners on the frontline (e.g. van Meeuwen et al, 1998; Pearce et al, 2002; Scott and Skidmore, 2006).

Research has illustrated that many victims of child sexual exploitation share general patterns of vulnerability, though there may be substantial variation in the experience of particular risk factors among sexually exploited children and young people. Research literature points to a wide range of risk factors, including, but not limited to:

- ➔ repeated incidents of going missing;
- ➔ issues with identity, isolation and detachment;
- ➔ disengagement from education/school and other societal institutions;
- ➔ personal or parental substance misuse;
- ➔ mental health issues;
- ➔ chaotic family life and neglect;
- ➔ physical or sexual abuse;
- ➔ detachment from family life and/or living in care;
- ➔ housing issues;
- ➔ family bereavement;
- ➔ socioeconomic disadvantage;
- ➔ association with risky adults;
- ➔ peers or siblings in sexually exploitative relationships; and
- ➔ learning difficulties and disabilities.

These risk factors can be broadly divided into categories, such as situational and emotional; or social, economic, environmental and familial (Lebloch and King, 2006). Individual cases of child sexual exploitation are characterised by a complex interplay of these factors. Some victims of sexual exploitation do not exhibit any of the vulnerabilities listed above. Project work suggests that many children who experience sexual exploitation have stable family lives. It cannot be assumed that child sexual exploitation exclusively affects chaotic or dysfunctional families. Indeed, offenders who

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groom children for sexual exploitation exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities, leading children to go missing for periods of time and engage in substance misuse, causing dysfunction in previously stable families (CROP, 2010a).

As 'localised grooming' falls under our broader understanding of child sexual exploitation, it is not possible to distinguish a specific and distinct subset of risk factors associated with 'localised grooming'. It would be unhelpful to narrow down the broad spectrum of established child sexual exploitation risk factors. Jago and Pearce (2008) state that wider conceptions of risk are preferred, as this will lower thresholds for intervention, encompassing a greater number of children at risk, widening access to services, and therefore reducing incidents of child sexual exploitation. Scott and Harper (2005) also state that restrictive conceptions of risk may have a negative impact on the range of services on offer and interventions that could be made, should a child be at risk of sexual exploitation.

Specific risk factors associated with child sexual exploitation in research literature are outlined in greater detail below, grouped under more general headings, and with a particular focus on their manifestation in cases of 'localised grooming'.

5.2.1 Going missing or running away

Children and young people who go missing or run away from their place of residence face an increased risk of sexual exploitation. The link between incidents of going missing and sexual exploitation is well established in research literature. Children and young people go missing from their place of residence in response to a range of push and pull factors.

Sexually exploited children and young people may go missing from their place of residence as a consequence of being groomed. In this scenario, children are groomed by an offender, initially staying away from home for a short period of time, perhaps at the residence of the offender, where they will be sexually exploited and perhaps offered alcohol and drugs. The offender may offer little more than a place of comparative comfort, where the child or young person is treated like an adult. The offender becomes a significant 'pull factor', encouraging the victim to go missing from home and cultivating a sense of trust and affection with the victim as part of a grooming process. Over time, the relationship between the offender and the victim develops. The offender coerces the victim into sexual activity with friends or associates, and the victim is kept away from home for longer periods of time. Repeat missing episodes may suggest that a child or young person is being groomed and sexually exploited. Young people may go missing overnight and returned to their place of residence by the morning (Evans et al, 2007). It is important to note that victim behaviour may be altered by as a result of being groomed. Offenders may encourage children to go missing from home, experiment with drugs and alcohol, play truant and engage in other risky behaviours. Such changes in a child's behaviour are likely to result in conflict with parents and cause family lives to become increasingly dysfunctional (CROP, 2010a).

Alternatively, children and young people may also be 'pushed' from their place of residence for a number of reasons, such as neglect, parental substance abuse, disrupted and changing care placement experiences, physical or sexual abuse, or a general deficit of parenting. A number of factors may cause family lives to become chaotic. Sudden changes, such as a family bereavement, may cause dysfunction in families and lead to children and young people going missing or running away. Where family life is dysfunctional, young people may see running away from a difficult situation to be a positive step towards taking control of an otherwise intolerable situation (Pearce et al, 2002). Being pushed from a place of residence may cause a child or young person to spend an increasing amount of time on the streets, where they may be identified as vulnerable to grooming by potential exploiters. A lack of suitably trained or supported care staff providing foster or residential placements may result in indicators of exploitation being overlooked. Placement providers need particular training and support to manage the specific demands presented by sexually exploited children and young people (Brodie et al, 2011). In combination, the lure of an offender who appears to offer the child affection and a dysfunctional or turbulent home life may cause a child to go missing, placing them at risk of exploitation.

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In 2009/10, it has been reported that children and young people under the age of 18 represented 64 % of all missing reports made to 30 police forces in the UK (NPIA, 2010). Although multiple reports may relate to a single individual, owing to repeat missing incidents, there were over 60,000 reported incidents of children and young people aged 12 -17 going missing. The majority of children and young people reported missing in this age bracket were female. Research has also suggested that 1 in 12 children who run away from home are harmed whilst away (Rees and Lee, 2005).

It has been suggested that around 90 % of children and young people who have been subject to grooming and sexual exploitation have gone missing from their place of residence at some stage in the grooming process (DCSF, 2008). There is a clear link between children going missing and sexual exploitation – it is likely that many children who experience ‘localised grooming’ go missing from home either before exploitation occurs, or in response to being groomed.

5.2.2 Children in care

Children in the care system are vulnerable to sexual exploitation (Home Office, 2006). Children who experience sexual exploitation may be in care or have previously been in care. Although it is difficult to estimate the overall proportion of victims of child sexual exploitation who have been in care, the Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board Sexual Exploitation Service reported that in 2009/10, 23% of children and young people referred to the service were in care at the time of the referral, and a further 8% had previously been care (Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board, 2010). In West Mercia, the NPIA state that one care home has reported 265 children missing since 2008, with one child reported missing on 81 separate occasions (NPIA, 2010). Coy (2008) states that victims of sexual exploitation in the care system “share patterns of vulnerability, despite wide diversity in the family circumstances that precipitated entry into care”.

Law enforcement guidance clearly states that “Many of the children and young people who deliberately go missing are considered by some to be ‘streetwise’ and able to look after themselves; in fact, these children are even more likely to put themselves in positions of danger... They are more likely to engage in further risky behaviours, such as misusing substances, committing crimes and mixing with inappropriate adults... children who go missing repeatedly, whether from home or care, should not automatically be considered to be at diminished risk; they are vulnerable each time they go missing... Each episode of going missing should be individually considered, without forgetting the information that may be available from previous episodes.” (ACPO, 2011).

As discussed in section 5.2.1, going missing from place of residence is associated with an increased risk of experiencing sexual exploitation. Children go missing from care for various reasons, though Smeaton (2009) has identified that some are children who are moved between care placements frequently and are required to change schools with each move; in other cases, accommodation may be unsuitable. Children in these circumstances may not feel attached to any one place of residence and feel compelled to run away.

It has been reported that children in care are three times more likely to go missing than children living in the family home (Rees and Lee, 2005). Lancashire Constabulary has identified that 41% of missing incidents were repeat missing persons and 81% of these were from children’s homes and hospitals (NPIA, 2011). Coy (2008) has suggested that young people in the care system are inherently insecure and likely to suffer from a lack of self-esteem, emotional difficulties and a need for affection. The breakdown of care placements exacerbates feelings of insecurity and the inability to form close relationships. Peers in the care system may share the stigma of institutionalisation and the feeling of dislocation from mainstream society. Coy (2008) makes the observation that many adult women involved in sex work have a care background. Children and young people in care who experience sexual exploitation may swap sex for money as adults. In many regions in England, up to half of women involved in sex work had spent time in the care system as a child. This may be a result of young people leaving care without the necessary skills to live independently (Cusick, 2002). Clearly, the risk of sexual exploitation does not cease when an individual reaches the age of 18.

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Creegan et al (2005) state that children in the care system may be vulnerable to exploitation as a result of family dysfunction, abuse and neglect. These children and young people may suffer from emotional problems, and are “often desperate to accelerate the journey into adulthood” in order to take control of their own destiny, making them vulnerable to sexual exploitation. In a study of 55 sexually exploited young women, 39 had experience of being in local authority care (Pearce et al, 2002), and a Barnardo’s assessment of the sexual exploitation of young people in local authority care in Glasgow found that adult males were deliberately targeting girls in supported accommodation (Creegan et al, 2005). Young women would repeatedly go missing, and would be taken to private residences in flats in the city during missing episodes where they were introduced to older males and offered drugs and alcohol in exchange for sex. The young women subject to this study reported being drugged and unable to recall what had happened to them.

Overall, children and young people who repeatedly go missing are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, and a significant proportion of children and young people in the care system go missing from placements (Scott and Skidmore, 2006). Where children and young people in care are groomed for sexual exploitation, they may be coerced into swapping sex for accommodation, becoming increasingly detached from any form of support (Palmer, 2001; Pearce et al, 2002).

5.2.3 Detachment

Smeaton (2009) has undertaken a major study of ‘detached’ children in the UK, defining ‘detached’ children as living outside key societal institutions, such as family, education or statutory services; they have no formal sources of support and are likely to be self-reliant. Detachment takes many forms, ranging from children and young people truanting from school and disengaging from education to those who are missing from home, living in the street and disconnected from all societal institutions.

Detachment from education, resulting in low educational attainment, is cited as a common factor among sexually exploited children (Scott and Skidmore, 2006). Truanting from school is the risk factor associated with child sexual exploitation manifested earliest within the scope of statutory services. Children and young people who disengage from school may have been groomed by an offender and lured away from school. Alternatively, victims of grooming may initially endeavour to attend school, despite having been kept out late the previous night by offenders, therefore presenting to teachers as fatigued and withdrawn. Eventually, efforts to attend school in the face of repeated late nights may be abandoned, leading to children failing to attend school at all. In some cases, offenders may loiter outside school premises in an attempt to identify and make contact with potential victims. Scott and Skidmore (2006) note that the loss of educational prospects as a result of exploitation may increase the importance of achieving adulthood through the development of sexual relationships with older people. Truanting is therefore an indicator that a child may be at risk of sexual exploitation (Harper and Scott, 2005). Where children have been forced to change schools as a result of frequent changes to accommodation and a chaotic lifestyle, the value of education becomes diminished in the face of lowered expectations of life, and they may simply cease to attend school (Smeaton, 2009).

Detachment from education is an early indicator that a child is at risk, and may be the first step towards detachment from other societal institutions, including the family and care placements. Smeaton (2009) interviewed children and young people as part of a substantial piece of qualitative research on detached children. A number of other factors could be associated with detachment, including the psychological abandonment of attachment figures, whether a parent or carer; and neglect, perhaps owing to parental substance abuse. Detachment is a process, perhaps beginning with educational underachievement and a disengagement from education, coupled with spending increasing amounts of time away from home, leading to a complete break from all societal institutions and formal sources of support, making children vulnerable to attention from inappropriate sources. Two thirds of respondents in Smeaton’s research began spending time on the streets whilst still living at home with a parent or carer.

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Children who are detached from societal institutions and the family are likely to experience a lack of love and affection from an appropriate adult figure. This may cause children to seek attention from inappropriate sources. Approximately a fifth of children interviewed by Smeaton reported having been sexually exploited. Girls reported having relationships with older men, being forced to have sex with older people for money. Whereas boys who had been sexually exploited by older men stated that they were in fact exploiting these older men by swapping sex for accommodation, gifts and money, girls often perceive older men to be their 'boyfriend'. About half of the relationships girls reported with older 'boyfriends' began whilst the girl was still living at home or care but spending increasing amounts of time on the streets. In some cases, the older 'boyfriend' was the reason the girl ran away from home, demonstrating that grooming can cause a child or young person to go missing, and that offenders target vulnerable children in public places.

Children living in the streets may also engage in substance misuse, either as a result of detachment and a need for some form of escapism; in response to peer pressure, where potential friends are few and far between and the need for informal peer support is heightened (Smeaton, 2009); or as a result of coercion from an older 'boyfriend' as part of the grooming process (Munro, 2004). Where substance misuse becomes an issue, vulnerability to sexual exploitation can be exacerbated. Offenders may entice children and young people into sexual encounters with promises of drugs and alcohol, or they may use drugs and alcohol as a means of diminishing the resistance of the child to sexual activity.

Overall, detachment refers to a process of disengagement from structures of support. Children and young people at risk of experiencing 'localised grooming' and sexual exploitation are likely to first disengage from education, and some children and young people will become increasingly detached over time, spending increasing amounts of time away from home until fully detached from all sources of support. Detachment may be in response to being groomed by an older 'boyfriend', though detachment places children and young people in very insecure and perilous circumstances regardless of the initial cause, and renders them vulnerable to 'localised grooming'.

5.2.4 Identity and agency

Children and young people may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation and 'localised grooming' on account of issues associated with identity. Children and young people in transition from childhood to adulthood experience many changes, including a desire to act independently from parents/carers and experiment with their developing sexuality. In isolation, these behaviours are unlikely to place a child or young person at risk, though the interaction of issues associated with identity and agency and other risk factors may lead to vulnerability. The concept of 'identity' includes sexual identity, intellectual and personal identity, and ethnicity.

For example, Ward and Patel (2006) have explored the way in which ethnicity is likely to affect experiences of sexual exploitation, drawing on evidence from a voluntary sector service in east London for young women experiencing sexual exploitation. It is argued that sexual exploitation is underpinned by various complex and hidden issues within specific cultural contexts. For example, few south Asians are represented in the care system, and as such, they may be perceived to be less likely to experience sexual exploitation, or exploitation may be more difficult to detect. Macskill (2006) states that some immigrant parents in the UK perceive that British society is "too liberal", and are therefore reluctant to use professional services. Ward and Patel (2006) report a number of culturally specific problems experienced by Bangladeshi young women that may lead to or exacerbate vulnerability to sexual exploitation. It is suggested that Bangladeshi girls may be more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation, experience economic hardship and report high levels of familial conflict and physical abuse. It is also reported that many Bangladeshi girls who underachieve at school may be more vulnerable to forced marriage. In combination, these factors may cause children and young people to run away from home and become engaged in street-based activities. This is not dissimilar to the model of detachment outlined above. Ward and Patel (2006) state that identity is shaped by interactions with peers whilst living within the boundaries of family culture-based expectations. They argue that this may affect the way in which children and young people experience vulnerability and seek help from statutory and non-statutory services.

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Sexual orientation and gender identity may also affect the way in which children and young people experience sexual exploitation. Stonewall report that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people may experience homophobic and transphobic abuse in the home, causing them to run away (Gold, 2005; NSPCC, 2007). Many LGBT young people, particularly those from rural areas, are attracted by larger cities where they can access an LGBT community and explore their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. However, LGBT young people who run away from home are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Stonewall Scotland (2009) report that young LGBT people may be forced to have sex with strangers in exchange for accommodation. Smeaton (2009) reports that these young people, predominantly young men, may claim that they are in fact exploiting older men, though Palmer (2001) has illustrated the considerable economic inequality between older men and homeless young gay men, discounting the possibility of young gay men being able to make an 'informed choice'. Furthermore, many services for sexually exploited children and young people are developed for girls and young women. Young gay men may have difficulty accessing services for sexually exploited children and young people (Lilleywhite and Skidmore, 2006). This population is therefore hidden, and the scale of this particular form of sexual exploitation is difficult to gauge.

In addition, the agency of children and young people must be considered in cases of sexual exploitation. Scott and Skidmore (2006) state that the transition from childhood to adulthood can lead to the risk of sexual exploitation, particularly in circumstances where parental support is inadequate. Children may wish to make a rapid transition into adulthood, where they can take control of their life and escape an unhappy care environment.

Many children and young people who have been groomed and sexually exploited by an offender do not regard themselves as victims (Warrington, 2010). They may instead believe that the offender is an older 'boyfriend'. Offenders encourage these feelings of loyalty, playing on the victim's desire to be treated as an adult and exercise their own agency in the exploration of their sexuality. The perception that an offender is an older 'boyfriend' will prevent the victim accessing services for sexually exploited children. Where statutory services are able to intervene in exploitative relationships, it may be extremely difficult to engage the child or young person and intercede in the relationship. Similarly, where children and young people argue that relationships are not exploitative, in spite of the judgement of statutory and non-statutory bodies, it may be extremely difficult for police forces to investigate and prosecute offenders (Munro, 2004). Young people aged 16 or over can consent to sexual activity, but not sexual exploitation. Exploitation is evident where there is an inequality in the respective levels of economic, social and cognitive powers of the child or young person and their exploiter (Chase and Statham, 2005). However, the police and service providers may experience difficulties in mediating the relationships between young people aged 16 and over and older adult males (LeBloch and King, 2006). It should be noted that these adult males may also be sexually abusing children and young people under the age of 16 – this is clearly within the offender profile outlined in section 6.3.2.

Furthermore, victims of 'localised grooming' who believe the offender is their older 'boyfriend' will regard these relationships as positive, particularly where they have experienced neglect and a deficit of affection from adults in the past. They do not necessarily regard themselves as being 'exploited' or the 'victims of abuse'. Offenders play the 'boyfriend' role in the grooming process, encouraging feelings of loyalty to discourage reporting to law enforcement and to facilitate the development of the exploitative relationship. Brown (2006) has stated that use of the language of 'exploitation' will be offensive to victims, and will actively discourage engagement with services for sexually exploited children, the police or other statutory services. Pearce (2006) has stated that "when this progressive stage of transition from child to adult is interrupted by manipulative adults' intent on using the young person's anxiety to create deeper rifts between the child and their support structures, the already difficult transition is made harder to manage. In these cases, it is often the times that the young person is the most rejecting, the most aggressive and challenging that they are most in need." During the transition from childhood to adulthood, young people are eager to exert agency in the development of 'romantic' relationships. Offenders can take advantage of this to prevent victims engaging with statutory and non-statutory services.

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Early intervention is therefore preferred, as victims may become increasingly resentful of any intervention if the relationship between the child or young person and the exploiter becomes entrenched. Taylor-Browne (2002) and Melrose (2010) have examined barriers to exiting child sexual exploitation, focusing particularly on commercial sexual exploitation, noting that financial difficulties, substance misuse and addiction, housing problems, and the detachment from family support and social networks are major barriers. In cases of sexual exploitation involving grooming, the perception of their relationship with their exploiter may also prevent children and young people from accessing support.

5.3 Indicators of sexual exploitation

All forms of sexual exploitation, including 'localised grooming', are harmful, resulting in a number of alterations to the victim's behaviour.

The level of harm escalates according to the extent of the grooming and sexual exploitation. Indicators include poor educational attainment, going missing from home, detachment from family and social networks, distress to parents or carers, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies, injuries associated with sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, substance misuse, mental health problems, suicidality, secretiveness, coming into possession of money or gifts with no reasonable explanation of how they were obtained, association with risky individuals and displaying inappropriate sexual behaviours (Jago and Pearce, 2008; CROP, 2009; DCSF, 2009; Barnardo's, 2010).

These indicators are predominantly associated with girls and young women. Boys and young men may experience sexual exploitation differently, and as a result, may present a range of distinct indicators. The experience of boys and young men is explored in more detail in section 5.4.

Sexual exploitation can be correlated with a number of other risk factors and behaviours, such as going missing from home or place of residence, youth offending and substance abuse. Consequently, victims are likely to come into contact with a range of agencies which could potentially identify sexual exploitation and escalate concerns to police, LSCBs and local children's services. Agencies likely to come into contact with sexually exploited children include:

- sexual health clinics, family planning clinics, walk-in clinics, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs) and GPs;
- youth workers in various sectors;
- education professionals and others working in educational settings, such as school nurses;
- children's services and social workers;
- police forces, including public protection units, vulnerable victims units, missing person units, child abuse investigation teams, divisional criminal investigation teams, rape investigation teams and others;
- Youth Offending Teams (YOTs); and
- specialist services for a range of issues and client, including missing children and young people, sexually exploited children and young people, LGBT young people, substance abuse and homelessness.

The ways in which harm caused by sexual exploitation may be presented to various agencies is outlined below.

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5.3.1 Health

Children and young people who are experiencing sexual exploitation may be at an increased risk of contracting STIs, unwanted pregnancies, and injuries associated with sexual abuse. These symptoms may be presented to a range of health care professionals, including sexual health clinics, walk-in clinics, general practitioners and dentists. Health care professionals are generally skilled in the identification of child sexual abuse, and guidelines for health care professionals have been developed to facilitate the identification of abuse and advise on the appropriate course of action (National Collaborating Centre for Women's and Children's Health, 2009), though some victims will demonstrate a reluctance to take up a referral to attend sexual health services or other agencies, for fear of their sexual activity being discovered by a parent or carer, or law enforcement.

Children and young people who contract STIs or seek emergency contraception should arouse some suspicion, particularly where children and young people repeatedly contract STIs, seek emergency contraception and experience unwanted pregnancies whilst under the age of 16. Children and young people may attend sexual health clinics accompanied by a considerably older 'boyfriend'. Wherever this occurs, staff must consider the possibility that the child or young person is being sexually exploited and take appropriate action. It has been noted that confidentiality issues may restrict information sharing with police and other services, even where exploitation is strongly suspected (Munro, 2004; Creegan et al, 2005; Pearce and Jago, 2008).

At a macro-level, relevant agencies should monitor rates of STIs and teenage pregnancies in local areas. Where rates are high, or should rates increase very rapidly over a short space of time, there may be an increased level of sexual exploitation in the local area (Harper and Scott, 2005).

5.3.2 Education

As discussed previously, children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation may become disengaged from education. Children and young people may disengage in order to spend time with an exploiter, or meaningful attendance at school is undermined by late nights spent with exploiters. Where children and young people become disengaged from education, the failure to achieve adult status through educational attainment may exacerbate the need for exploited children and young people to validate their transition to adulthood through relationships with older men (Scott and Skidmore, 2006).

Consequently, teachers may be the first to observe a child or young person's failure to attend school. Attendance may become patchy, with children and young people spending increasing amounts of time away from school. Absences may be unexplained, and when these children and young people do attend school, they may appear fatigued and withdrawn. Should a child or young person conform to this pattern of behaviour, this information should be shared with children's services and other relevant agencies in the region as the basis for multi-agency assessment. Schools have a statutory safeguarding responsibility for children. It is therefore important that school staff members are able to identify the signs of sexual exploitation and are fully aware of the appropriate response in accordance with local protocols (DSCF, 2009).

5.3.3 Police

Police forces may encounter sexually exploited children as a result of investigations or victim complaints. Where a child has been groomed, it must be considered that the child is not an isolated victim of abuse, but one of a larger number of victims targeted by a group of offenders.

However, as previously noted, some children who are groomed and sexually exploited may believe that exploiters are their older 'boyfriends' and will not make any complaint to police forces. Where children and young people have been

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groomed and manipulated, they may feel complicit in the abuse. They may also be concerned about the possibility of their own criminal behaviour emerging during investigation, such as substance misuse, or that they may not be believed by the police should they allege that they have been raped or sexually assaulted. Offenders may lead victims to believe that cooperation with the police will result in criminalisation, rather than assistance. In a study of projects for tackling prostitution, Hester and Westmarland (2004) found that few prosecutions resulted from known cases of child sexual exploitation. Young people were reported to be unwilling to give evidence in court, and police were unable to gather the evidence necessary to secure a conviction. However, police forces should not wait for a complaint to be made before taking action to address possible sexual exploitation (Jago and Pearce, 2008). Research in Ireland conducted in 2002 demonstrated that 55 % of men and 22 % of women aged 18 – 29 have never disclosed experiences of sexual abuse to a professional, most commonly out of shame or embarrassment (McGee et al., 2002). In an update of this 2002 study conducted in 2005, it was found that only ten men (of 178) and 28 women (of 290) reported their experiences of sexual abuse to the police (McGee et al., 2005). Evidently, it cannot be assumed that victims will approach the police to disclose experiences of sexual abuse.

Police forces may be exposed to children exhibiting indicators of sexual exploitation through a number of avenues.

First, as detailed in section 5.2.1, many sexually exploited children go missing or run away from home. When a report of a missing child or young person is filed, a police officer will make enquiries with parents or carers. The police officer will act on any information obtained to locate and retrieve the child. In many cases, missing children and young people are located and returned to their place of residence in a relatively short period of time. The police officer should then undertake a return-to-home interview to establish the child's whereabouts during the missing episode and the identity of individuals associated with during this period (ACPO, 2010). For example, in Lancashire, the Street Safe Project provides return interviews and ongoing support work to young people missing from care. The return interviews are undertaken by project staff working in partnership with police colleagues. The police therefore receive detailed information regarding missing and runaway children and young people, and the information gathered in the return interview contributes to the development of an intervention plan (ACPO, 2010). Although children may have been groomed to be uncooperative and hostile to law enforcement or other statutory agencies, this interview is vital to obtain intelligence for the development of a criminal case. This intelligence should be shared with relevant police units. Similarly, the 'Talk Don't Walk' project in Cheshire interviewed children and young adults who had run away from home to identify the underlying causes and inform the development of effective solutions. The project reported that between 2004 and 2007 it reduced the number of young runaways in the Warrington area by 72% and saved approximately £3.2m, including reduction in crime costs attributed to the project. Since inception, the project has reduced repeat missing incidents by more than half (NPIA, 2011). It is evident from the best practice examples presented in Appendix B that effective measures for gathering intelligence and reducing the incidence of repeat missing persons is the foundation on which effective strategies for reducing the incidence of child sexual exploitation are built.

Second, a child, young person or their parent/carer may lodge a formal complaint of sexual abuse with the police. In such cases, it is essential that the report is referred to the relevant team within the police force. Reports should be referred to Child Abuse Investigation Units (CAIUs) (ACPO, 2009). Sexually exploited children and young people may not initially comply with law enforcement enquiries, particularly where the complaint was made by a parent or carer. The CAIU should nevertheless pursue the investigation based on available evidence and consider alternative strategies for engaging the child or young person.

Finally, police officers may come into contact with sexually exploited children and young people through their criminal behaviour. In a study of the offending histories of service users of Safe and Sound Derby, a specialist service for sexually exploited children and young people, it was found that 40% of 552 service users had an offending history. When broken down by gender, it was found that 55 % of boys and young men had an offending history, compared with 35 % of girls

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and young women. Brayley and Cockbain (2011) have noted that this high incidence of offending behaviour is likely to be related to experiences of sexual exploitation, identifying five broad categories of offending type: acquisition, including shoplifting and petty theft; aggression, including violence towards people and property; non-compliance, such as a breach of a notification order or resisting arrest; escapism, including drug and alcohol related offending; and sexual deviance, including the recruitment of other girls for exploitation. Each of these offending categories can be connected with sexual exploitation. Victims may be compelled to engage in criminal behaviour by their exploiter, such as shoplifting or handling drugs. Sexually exploited children and young people may act aggressively toward others as a symptom of the anger and frustration arising from exploitation. Non-compliance with authorities demonstrates a lack of respect for criminal justice processes, perhaps arising from a frustration at the inability or failure of statutory authorities to effectively intervene in their exploitation. Overall, it is evident that sexually exploited children may commit criminal acts as a result of their sexual exploitation.

5.3.4 Children's and social services

Children at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation may come to the attention of social services. As noted previously, there are various indicators of vulnerability to sexual exploitation, including chaotic or dysfunctional family lives, parental substance misuse, disengagement from education, and going missing from home. Each of these factors may result in the intervention of social services.

However, social services face many challenges in addressing child sexual exploitation. Proactively intervening in exploitation where children resist engagement with social services is a significant problem. Given the difficulties in managing a large and complex caseload, social services may be unable to work with young people who are sexually exploited but resistant to engagement with social services. It has been suggested that resources available for safeguarding children are more commonly directed towards younger children who are sexually abused by family members (Harper and Scott, 2005).

Where children aged 16 and 17 exhibit signs of being sexually exploited by an older male, social services may consider the relationship to be consensual, and that the young person is legally entitled to enter into a sexual relationship. Social workers may perceive that the victim is complicit in the relationship, so intervention is unnecessary. Furthermore, offenders who engage in 'localised grooming' do not target a single child, but a much larger peer group. Social services must be alert to the possibility that offenders in sexually exploitative relationships may in fact be abusing multiple children.

However, research undertaken by the Children's Society has found that older children may not receive an appropriate level of service from social services. There is a general lack of specialist services for young people over 14 which may negatively affect the number of children and young people referred to social services. Furthermore, 11-17 year olds were often regarded as being more competent to deal with maltreatment than younger children, including being able to escape abusive situations and seek help. This finding echoed that of a literature review undertaken by Stein et al. (2009), which emphasised that child neglect is conceptualised and understood differently at different stages of childhood. As a result, thresholds for intervention in sexual exploitation may not be calibrated appropriately to allow sexually exploited children to access help from social services (Rees et al., 2010).

5.4 Boys and young men

The sexual exploitation of boys and young men is often unrecognised and undisclosed; however, boys and young men are also vulnerable to sexual exploitation. For example, since 2003, 670 sexually exploited children and young people have been referred to Safe and Sound Derby since 2003, 29 % of whom were male.

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The mistaken perception that boys are less likely to be at risk can impact upon the interpretation of indicators and the manner of professional engagement (Lilleywhite and Skidmore, 2006). Practitioners have reported that sexually exploited boys and young men face additional difficulties in the disclosure of their abuse to professionals. Some boys and young men who are being sexually exploited may feel that their experiences do not coincide with societal expectations of masculinity and therefore conceal their exploitation from professionals. Similarly, boys and young men at risk of sexual exploitation may not engage with preventative work as they do not perceive themselves to be vulnerable. Often, young men do not disclose their own abuse, though they may highlight peers who have also been abused by an offender or group of offenders without reference to their own experiences.

It has also been noted that sexually exploited boys and young men also demonstrate offending behaviour (Brayley and Cockbain, 2011). For example, boys and young men who are sexually exploited may be offending as a result of manipulation and coercion by perpetrators of sexual exploitation. When challenged about offending behaviour, they may not disclose exploitation, leading to criminalisation and a failure to address underlying exploitation. It has been determined that 55 % of boys and young men who had accessed the Safe and Sound service for sexually exploited children in Derbyshire have an offending history, compared with 35 % of girls and young women (Brayley and Cockbain, 2011).

Overall, an assumption from a practitioner or carer that a young man may be 'exploring sexuality' and 'acting out' through offending behaviour fails to take into account sexual exploitation. This approach implicitly blames the boy or young man for being drawn into exploitation as a result of their own behaviour, reinforcing feelings of guilt and complicity in the child and failing to recognise external factors which exacerbate vulnerability and cause lasting harm to the child. It is vital that the behaviour of boys and young men is considered in a wider context. Although professionals may feel more at ease dealing with youth offending, concerns over sexual exploitation should not be sidelined on account of their complexity and the difficulties associated with effective intervention. The NWG Boys and Young Men forum recommends careful use of language around sexually exploited young men that emphasises their vulnerability and experiences of exploitation (Taylor, pers. comm.).

5.5 Families

Child sexual exploitation is traumatising for families of victims (CROP, 2010). Many victims of sexual exploitation do not have a dysfunctional family life, though the grooming process and subsequent alterations to the behaviour of the victim can place families under significant stress. Offenders will encourage victims to distance themselves from families, and victims may be aggressive towards parents and siblings, causing stress, depression and other mental health issues. Parents are likely to experience extreme frustration in cases where law enforcement and other statutory authorities are unable to effectively intervene in exploitative relationships.

Overall, CROP (2009, 2010b) state that families of sexually exploited children are likely to experience a complete breakdown of relations with their child; strained relationships with extended family members; disruption of employment and relations at the workplace, owing to resentment for taking time off and a general lack of empathy among colleagues; financial difficulties owing to disruption to employment; judgement from others regarding a perceived deficit in parenting skills, leading to isolation in the community; and marriage or relationship breakdown owing to stress and disagreement over strategies for intervening in exploitation. Siblings may also be placed at higher risk of sexual exploitation through exposure to high risk offenders. Siblings may also face bullying at school and low self-esteem due to their association with a known victim of sexual exploitation in the community. Parents may be forced to expend all available time and energy on the behaviour of their child who is being sexually exploited, neglecting other children in the family. Some may engage in deviant behaviour to gain the attention of parents, or may feel alienated and excluded (CROP, 2005).

Families may also be threatened by exploiters as part of the grooming process. Offenders may tell victims that they will physically harm their parents or siblings should they ever report their experiences to law enforcement. Victims and families may be subject to intimidation during law enforcement investigation (CROP, 2008).

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5.6 Offending behaviour

There is a considerable body of research literature pertaining to victims of child sexual exploitation. However, the offending behaviours associated with 'localised grooming' have been subject to considerably less research than victim experiences.

Offending behaviour consistent with child sexual exploitation and the 'localised grooming' model of offending behaviour is occasionally addressed in research on victim experiences of grooming, and more often by research relating to offenders engaged in child sexual abuse.

Although there is a considerable body of literature relating to online grooming and familial child sexual abuse, very little research has been undertaken to establish the MO of offenders who groom and sexually exploit children in their local area. As child sexual exploitation often occurs within the context of a 'relationship', at least from a victim perspective, there are also parallels between offenders who sexually exploit children and the perpetrators of domestic abuse. Perpetrators of domestic abuse use violent, emotional and sexual abuse as a means of controlling their partner. Offenders who sexually exploit children may use similar tactics to exert control over their victims.

5.6.1 Models of offending

The original model of offending behaviour relevant to sexual grooming was outlined by Barnardo's (van Meeuwen et al, 1998). Although this model was based on offenders who abuse children through commercial sexual exploitation, the grooming component of the offending behaviour is likely to remain relevant in cases of 'localised grooming'. Four steps are recognised in grooming and exploitation.

- (i) 'Ensnaring', where a young man aged between 18 and 25 meets a girl, usually aged between 12 and 14, and impresses her with his maturity, good looks, car and money. Victims are likely to be flattered by the attention received, and perceive a relationship with the male as a route into adulthood. The male will groom the girl, leading her to believe that he is her 'boyfriend'. He may buy her gifts, including clothes, alcohol, drugs and a mobile phone. Supplying the victim with a mobile phone is particularly important to the grooming process, as it facilitates direct contact with the victim, enabling the offender to arrange meetings (Munro, 2004). The offender will instigate a sexual relationship with the girl, and she may believe that she is 'in love' with the offender.
- (ii) 'Creating dependency', where the offender becomes increasingly possessive over time. The girl is isolated from friends and family members, severing ties with sources of support and potential exit routes. The offender exerts increasing control of the girl, perhaps keeping her away from home or place of residence for increasing amounts of time. Offenders use specific locations for perpetrating abuse, including private residences, businesses, secluded public spaces and cars parked in remote locations.
- (iii) 'Taking control', where the offender will begin to control all aspects of the victim's life. Control can be exerted in a number of ways, including through the supply of alcohol and drugs.
- (iv) 'Total dominance', where the offender has established complete control over the victim. The victim may be coerced into sexual activity with the offender's associates, and they are likely to have difficulty in admitting that their 'boyfriend' is abusive (Cusick, 2002).

This model of offending in cases of child sexual exploitation may be relevant to 'localised grooming', though it is gender specific and omits the experiences of boys and young men.

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More recently, researchers at the Jill Dando Institute of University College London (UCL) have undertaken an analysis of offending in two cases of ‘internal child sex trafficking’, relevant to the ‘localised grooming’ model of sexual exploitation (Brayley and Cockbain, 2010a, 2010b and 2010c; Brayley et al, 2011; Cockbain et al, 2011). Both cases are considered within the framework of ‘internal child sex trafficking’, as in each case, victims were transported by the offender from their place of residence to the locus of abuse. Under section 58 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, moving the victim to the location of abuse can be considered ‘trafficking’, regardless of the triviality of the distance moved. In both cases subject to analysis by the Jill Dando Institute, it is evident that the victims were sexually exploited subsequent to grooming. Both cases therefore fall under the ‘localised grooming’ type of sexual exploitation, involving multiple offenders operating as a network, and multiple victims.

In combination, these cases comprised 25 male offenders and 36 female victims. Two techniques were used to analyse offending behaviour; ‘crime scripting’, where a criminal process is broken down into distinct stages; and ‘social network analysis’, where the overall structure of networked criminal behaviour is charted on the basis of known interactions between offenders.

Overall, five distinct approaches or tracks to sexual exploitation were identified, spanning three broad stages of offender behaviour (Brayley and Cockbain, 2010a). The five tracks describe the circumstances under which an offender abuses a victim: (i) “cruise”, where an offender searches for an unknown girl to abuse, either on foot or in a car; (ii) “abuse”, occurring in cases where an offender has already socialised with a potential victim without perpetrating abuse, then escalates interactions to sexual abuse; (iii) “recruit via girl”, where an offender grooms a new victim for abuse, recruited via another girl – the recruiter has usually been groomed by the offender to believe that he is her older ‘boyfriend’; (iv) “re-abuse”, where an offender re-abuses a previous victim; and (v) “pimp”, where an offender pimps out another girl to an associate or client, motivated by the desire to obtain power and respect from peers.

Each track spans three stages (Brayley and Cockbain, 2010c):

- (i) ‘Find’, where offenders search for a particular victim. Victims were approached at all times of the day, on all days of the week, and offenders did not target particular types of girls. Offenders concentrated searches on environments where children and young people were known to congregate or frequent; for example, in the vicinity of schools, shopping centres, public parks and under-18 discos. It is also noted that offenders rarely crossed barriers designed to protect children and young people at these locations; for example, they did not enter school premises.

After engaging potential victims in conversation, offenders would attempt to obtain personal details, such as their name, age and telephone number. These details would be passed amongst offenders in the wider group, and girls would be contacted by unknown men.

- (ii) ‘Groom’, where the offender would attempt to establish a relationship and gain control over a victim. Grooming varies substantially, and it appears that offenders will alter their grooming tactics according to the response of particular victims. The Jill Dando Institute note that offenders make girls feel special, validating their sense of adulthood and maturity; build trust with victims by positioning themselves as an older ‘boyfriend’; disconnect the victim from alternative sources of support by undermining family and friends; and normalise sexual activity by repeatedly talking about sex, or showing the victim graphic videos of sexual activity. This is consistent with victim experiences of grooming and sexual exploitation reported in section 6.3.1.

In the cases analysed, there was no consistent grooming period. Some victims were groomed over a relatively short period, perhaps owing to heightened vulnerability, and others were groomed over a more extended period. It is reported that in one of the operations subject to analysis, all victims had been abused by the fourth meeting,

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and 40 % were abused on the first meeting. Finally, grooming continues after the perpetration of abuse, facilitating repeated instances of abuse and diminishing the willingness of victims to report that they had been sexually abused.

Offenders in the networks subject to analysis shared the mobile phone numbers of victims. Consequently, if a victim gave her phone number to an offender, she would subsequently be inundated with calls and texts from multiple, unknown adult men. Repeated and frequent calls and texts would break down any initial resistance, and many victims reported meeting up with offenders simply because it was easier than rejecting repeated advances. There was little evidence of online grooming in the cases subject to analysis, though the increasing penetration of internet-enabled smartphones among children and young people may increase online grooming through handheld devices. One in five children aged 5 – 15 now has access to a smartphone (Ofcom, 2011).

- (iii) "Abuse", including vaginal, oral and anal rape, forced masturbation and sexually-inappropriate touching. Some girls were abused in one-on-one situations, though in most instances, multiple offenders were present. Abuse was occasionally filmed on mobile phones. Abuse occurred in a variety of locations, including private residences, hotels, playing fields, or in cars parked in isolated areas. Victims were frequently moved to the location of the abuse, or movement was otherwise facilitated through the purchase of train tickets. By moving victims to unfamiliar locations, any chance of escape from the situation is severely diminished.

Victims were also encouraged to drink or take drugs, causing confusion and disorientation, and reducing victims' capacity to resist or recall abuse. Victims may also have been locked in a room or building, been split up from friends or had their mobile phone taken away. Abuse would be accompanied by violence and coercion (Brayley and Cockbain, 2010b).

5.6.2 Behavioural profiles

The specific behavioural profile associated with offenders who engage in the 'localised grooming' model of sexual exploitation has not been subject to detailed research. However, some general comments can be made regarding the underlying behavioural profile of those who sexually abuse children.

Ward and Siegert (2002) have suggested that a range of 'pathways' may lead to sexual offending against children, associated with particular psychological and behavioural profiles. Offending behaviour is likely to be influenced by a number of these mechanisms, which can be summarised as follows: (i) 'intimacy deficit', relating to those offenders who have difficulty forming relationships with adults and use sex with children as a substitute; (ii) 'distorted sexual script', likely to be present in those who are prematurely sexualised, perhaps as a result of childhood sexual abuse, equating sex with intimacy and inappropriately using sex with children as a means of self reassurance; (iii) 'emotional dysregulation', including those offenders who use sex to feel powerful, perhaps exploiting children and young people or coercing adults into sex; (iv) 'anti-social cognitions', arising from a feeling of superiority over children and a general anti-social tendency, perhaps leading to the perpetration of sexual abuse, and (v) 'multiple dysfunctional deficits', likely to reflect deviant sexual preferences for children, where the abuse of children is believed to be a legitimate sexual behaviour.

Given the diversity of offending behaviour among those who sexually exploit children, it is not possible to assign those offenders who sexually exploit children according to the 'localised grooming' model to a single 'pathway'. However, those who groom, abuse and share vulnerable children among like-minded associates may use sex with children as a means of feeling powerful and achieving status and prestige within the group. Those on the periphery of the group may be characterised differently, where their offending behaviour is more opportunistic, and sex with a child or young person is used as a substitute for sex with an adult. Further research is necessary to determine underlying behavioural and psychological profiles of perpetrators.

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The Finkelhor model outlines the preconditions to perpetrating sexual abuse: (i) a motivation to sexually abuse children, (ii) overcoming internal inhibitors, (iii) overcoming external inhibitors, and (iv) overcoming the resistance of the child. Involvement in an offender network may normalise sex with children and young people as a legitimate behaviour, reinforced by peers or others in the network. Interaction with other offenders may therefore legitimise or encourage further offending, perhaps leading to the perpetration of sexual offences. Within the 'localised grooming' model of sexual exploitation, the motivation for abusing children and young people may concern personal affirmation, the need for power and control and/or sadistic tendencies. Some exploitative behaviour falling under 'localised grooming' may be related to personal affirmation, particularly in gaining status or a reputation within a group of offenders. The manner in which some victims are abused may also reveal issues of power and control, and in some cases, aspects of sadism. A number of aspects of offending behaviour evident within the 'localised grooming' model facilitates the overcoming of inhibitors.

For example, peer reinforcement in a group situation may convince an offender that sex with children and young people in exploitative situations is acceptable. The deviant behaviour is normalised and encouraged, and there is no risk of peer admonishment for abusing children. Where offenders, or others in the group known to a potential offender, have repeatedly evaded law enforcement despite repeated allegations of sexual exploitation, offending behaviour may be emboldened.

5.6.3 Networked offending

Offender networks can vary in organisation and structure, from diffuse networks where offending behaviour is broadly uniform across all actors, to well-defined networks based on a smaller number of key actors who possess particular roles in the commission of crimes and the function of the network. From a law enforcement perspective, social network analysis facilitates the identification of actors who possess key roles in the overall function of the network.

In both cases subject to analysis by researchers from the Jill Dando Institute (Brayley and Cockbain, 2010a, 2010b and 2010c), offender networks were based on pre-existing social networks. Networks comprised friends, associates and relatives. Offenders were not necessarily connected by a shared interest in the sexual abuse of young girls, but pre-existing social ties. Given that offender networks reflected social networks, it is expected that age, ethnic background, educational attainment level and socioeconomic class should be broadly uniform across offender networks. However, in some cases, offenders of a younger age may specialise in meeting and grooming victims, though they belong to networks with older offenders. Also, offender networks in some parts of the UK may be more diverse, reflecting a range of ethnic backgrounds.

It was found that not all offenders within the offender networks groomed potential victims. Rather, a subset of offenders within the network groomed and recruited girls for abuse. Other offenders in the network abused girls after they had been groomed by associates.

Finally, it was found that the offender network in one case was centralised, where two offenders perpetrated 69 % of the known sexual abuse perpetrated by the network as a whole, though the other offender network was more diffuse, with offending behaviour distributed more equally across network actors. Networks do not therefore appear to have a uniform structure. Their organisation appears to be more organic, arising from existing social networks. There may be considerable variety in the 'localised grooming' offending profile.

Groups of offenders, working in networks to abuse children, can generally be considered Organised Criminal Groups (OCGs). OCGs can vary in characteristics and level of organisation, though cases where two or more offenders have acted in concert to perpetrate sexual exploitation can be considered OCGs. Organised criminal activity is often motivated by commercial gain, though in cases of child sexual exploitation, OCGs are primarily motivated by sexual

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deviancy. OCGs involved in child sexual exploitation may be structured or hierarchical, with defined roles in the criminal enterprise, operating on a regional or national scale.

Overall, it appears that there are various features of ‘localised grooming’ which warrant classification as ‘organised crime’, though others would rule this out. It cannot be stated unequivocally whether ‘localised grooming’ is a form of organised crime on the basis of research literature alone. Variation in offender behaviour is discussed in full in section 6.3.2.

5.7 Investigating child sexual exploitation

Police forces are configured according to local needs and priorities. However, Guidance on Investigating Child Abuse and Safeguarding Children (NPIA, 2009) clearly states that “officers should recognise situations in which children are being sexually exploited or are at risk of sexual exploitation”. It also states that an internal referral should be made to the Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU).

A number of police teams may come into contact with sexually exploited children, including Neighbourhood Policing Teams, Public Protection Units, Community Safety Teams and specialist investigation units (e.g. trafficking and hi-tech teams). However, the CAIU leads child abuse investigation. The term CAIU refers to a variety of police officer teams whose primary responsibility is the investigation of child abuse. The terms of reference for CAIUs vary across police forces, where some are responsible for managing child sex offenders or investigating domestic abuse cases. However, some CAIUs may be limited in their terms of reference to familial abuse cases. Where terms of reference are more limited, child sexual exploitation may be outside the scope of CAIU’s remit for investigation. In such cases, internal referrals to CAIUs may be passed on to other investigation teams lacking in child protection expertise.

The Guidance on Investigating Child Abuse and Safeguarding Children (NPIA, 2009) also outlines the procedures underlying ‘complex child abuse’ investigation. Complex child abuse can be broadly defined as cases involving multiple victims and multiple offenders. Some cases of the ‘localised grooming’ model of child sexual exploitation are likely to fall under this definition. It is stated that “it is not always obvious when the original complaint is made that a single allegation may become part of a complex child abuse allegation. All officers should consider this when providing the first response to the child abuse allegations and responding operationally, so as to minimise any adverse impact on any potential future complex enquiry” (NPIA, 2009). It is recommended that police officers liaise with relevant local partners during the investigation; scope its potential size, complexity, impact and links with other investigations; and undertake risk assessments of suspects and their access to children, and the vulnerability of witnesses and victims. Should a major investigation be launched, Gold and Silver groups must be established. Investigative policy and strategy is agreed in the Gold Group, and members are responsible for securing the required resources for the investigation. The Gold Group should be chaired by a chief police officer, and should include the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO), the LSCB Chair or a suitable representative, the CPS unit head, NGO representatives as appropriate, and a senior representative of local children’s services. The Silver Group is the responsible for implementing the investigative strategy and policy of the Gold Group, and carrying out the operation.

Complex child abuse investigations are resource intensive. Although many complaints of child abuse relating to a broader pattern of ‘localised grooming’ or child sexual exploitation will lead to complex child abuse investigations, many are subject to No Further Action (NFA). Where the police are unable to substantiate an allegation during initial investigations, evidence is lacking, or victims are unable or unwilling to cooperate with police enquiries, a report may result in NFA. In complex cases, some complaints may be subject to investigation, though others are not. SIOs leading complex cases are required to agree an NFA policy with the CPS at an early stage of complex investigations, recognising that it will be necessary to perform a risk assessment even if there is a decision to NFA a case.

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5.7.1 Preventative measures

There are three principal tools available to police to prevent known offenders from sexually exploiting children:

➔ Risk of Sexual Harm Orders (RSHO)

Under sections 123 to 129 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 the police can apply for a RSHO. This is a civil order which can be applied for in respect of an adult over the age of 18, who has, on at least two occasions, engaged in one or more of the following acts: (i) engaged in sexual activity with a child or in the presence of a child; (ii) caused or incited a child to engage in sexual activity; (iii) given a child any material that relates to sexual activity, such as pornography; and (iv) communicated with a child where any part of that communication is sexual. An RSHO prohibits the offender from engaging in specific activity, and it is a criminal offence to breach an RSHO (NPIA, 2007), and does not require a previous criminal conviction.

➔ Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO)

A SOPO can be obtained where an offender is considered likely to perpetrate a sexual offence. In order to obtain a SOPO, the individual must be a known offender previously convicted for a relevant sexual offence, and they must have engaged in behaviour causing reasonable belief that an offender poses a danger to the public. A SOPO prohibits specified behaviours (NPIA, 2007).

➔ Child Abduction Notices

Under section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984, it is an offence for any individual unconnected to a child under the age of 16 to take the child away without legal authority. Where children are found in the company of risky adults and sexual exploitation is suspected, the police can issue a Child Abduction Notice to disrupt contact between an offender and victims. The Notice must be signed by the child's parent or guardian and the offender, requiring the offender to formally acknowledge the age of the child. If the child is later found in the company of the offender on another occasion, the offender will be unable to claim that s/he was unaware of the child's true age. Although the Child Abduction Notice does not address the underlying sexual behaviour, it may be a useful tool to prevent offenders grooming children over an extended period of time. Where a number of Abduction Notices are served against an individual, a body of evidence to demonstrate 'bad character' is constructed to mitigate against risk in future incidents, diminishing the credibility of claims that the offender was unaware of the age of a child and facilitating the likelihood of successful prosecution for crimes relating to the sexual exploitation of children.

5.8 Prosecuting offenders

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) plays an important role in addressing child sexual exploitation. Police forces can lead investigations and gather evidence, though the CPS is required to secure successful prosecutions (Jago and Pearce, 2008).

The CPS faces a considerable challenge in this regard. As noted previously, many victims of 'localised grooming' do not perceive that they have been sexually exploited. They may believe that an offender is an older 'boyfriend', and will consequently refuse to testify in court. Even in circumstances where they do appear in court to give evidence against their exploiter, there may be considerable difficulties in delivering a successful prosecution, and victims may be difficult to engage during the development of a prosecution case. Victims of 'localised grooming' and sexual exploitation should be subject to an Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview (CJS, 2007). All children aged 17 and under are eligible for special measures in court proceedings, including the ability to give video evidence, answering questions through a live link, giving evidence from behind a screen, and access to an intermediary to explain complex questions (CROP, 2008).

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However, it should be noted that many victims will be unable to recall the specific details of the abuse experienced over an extended time period, and it can be distressing for victims to recount their experience over the course of repeated investigative interviews. Conducting fewer interviews ensures that a consistent account of the young victim's experiences is established, and reduces the trauma of re-living abuse (Jago and Pearce, 2008).

Although victims of child sexual exploitation cannot consent to exploitation, they may be legally entitled to consent to sexual activity. Defence teams may attempt to undermine witness testimony by claiming that they consented to sexual activity, playing on the victim perception that the offender was their 'boyfriend'. Offenders groom children to feel complicit in the sexual activity, lending legitimacy to claims of 'consent' and increasing the difficulty of obtaining a conviction for rape. The subtleties of exploitative relationships may be difficult to communicate to the jury (CROP, 2010b). Furthermore, it has previously been noted that many victims of sexual exploitation are vulnerable, and many cases of exploitation will involve substance misuse as part of the grooming process. This can be used to undermine witness credibility; for example, substance misuse may be alleged to undermine witness ability to accurately recall events and portray the victim as deviant in the eyes of the jury, and victims who were sexually active outside the exploitative relationship with the offender may be portrayed as promiscuous. Witnesses may also be intimidated by offenders.

Victims of 'localised grooming' may be significantly traumatised by attempts to undermine their experiences of sexual abuse. In a study of the experiences of young witnesses in criminal proceedings, Plotnikoff and Woolfson (2009) found that around half of children and young people did not understand questions in court; 65 % had experienced problems of comprehension, complexity, questions that were too fast or having their answers talked over; 57 % were accused of lying; and two thirds reported feeling upset, scared, shaky, sick, intimidated, annoyed, angry, tired, frustrated, under pressure, or having fast heart rates.

In cases where children and young people were moved by the offender to the locus of abuse, it may be possible to pursue a prosecution in the absence of a victim complaint or statement through trafficking charges. Under s58 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, trafficking within the UK for sexual exploitation, it is an offence to arrange or facilitate the transportation of a child with the intention of sexually abusing that child, or permitting someone else to abuse that child, during or after the journey. This offence does not necessarily require victim testimony. The CPS would instead demonstrate that the offender had transported or planned to transport a victim to a location where exploitation occurred, using evidence gathered under surveillance, for example, and that there was an intention to perpetrate sexual abuse. This would circumvent issues associated with victims giving evidence in a court setting. However, such prosecutions are relatively rare, and only a fraction of victims of sexual exploitation are moved by the offender to the locus of abuse. Gathering the evidence necessary to demonstrate the intention to abuse a child following transportation may be extremely challenging.

Overall, the successful prosecution of offenders is hindered by attempts to undermine the credibility of witnesses and trauma experienced by victims during criminal proceedings. It is possible that some victims will refuse to cooperate with police enquiries in order to avoid giving evidence in court.

5.9 Multi-agency responses to 'localised grooming'

Statutory guidance clearly states that child sexual exploitation requires a multi-agency response based on "effective joint working between different agencies and professionals that work with children and young people, including education (e.g. schools and colleges), health services including sexual health services and therapeutic mental health services, youth services, Connexions and children's social care, together with criminal justice agencies and voluntary sector services supporting children and families. Their full involvement is vital if children and young people are to be effectively supported and action is to be taken against perpetrators of sexual exploitation. All agencies should be alert to the risks of sexual exploitation and be able to take action and work together when an issue is identified" (DCSF, 2009). This

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guidance delineates the role to be played by LSCBs in addressing child sexual exploitation. Briefly, it is stated that LSCBs should:

- (i) consider what types of structures both within the LSCB and in local agencies and partnerships will effectively support the implementation of the guidance, implying that structural reform should be made where necessary to enable relevant agencies to work together more effectively;
- (ii) identify a sub-group, reporting to the LSCB, to lead on the issue of sexual exploitation, drive work forward and ensure effective cooperation between agencies and professionals;
- (iii) ensure that there is a dedicated lead person in each partner organisation with responsibility for implementing the guidance on safeguarding child sexual exploitation; and
- (iv) LSCBs should ensure that specific procedures are in place covering the sexual exploitation of children and young people, clearly delineating roles and responsibilities of local agencies and professionals, including arrangements to cooperate with neighbouring areas where children and young people who have been sexually exploited are believed to have lived or temporarily been present in other areas.

Guidance states that LSCBs should (i) ensure that specific procedures are in place, setting out the roles and responsibilities of local agencies and professionals; (ii) identify a sub-group to lead on child sexual exploitation; and (iii) establish lead professionals in each agency. It also recommends the development of a multi agency team. However, research by Jago et al (2010), has demonstrated that a comparatively small number of LSCBs have been able to implement this guidance. Jago et al (2010) found that just over a quarter of LSCBs have a relevant sub-group and less than a third of LSCBs have a lead professional for child sexual exploitation. This research has also found that less than a quarter of LSCBs have up to date protocols to address child sexual exploitation; less than a third of LSCBs have appointed a child sexual exploitation strategy coordinator; and a significant number of LSCBs collect no data relating to child sexual exploitation at all, and data monitoring is problematic for all LSCBs (Jago et al, 2010). Where guidance has not been implemented, data is less likely to be collected and it is unlikely that the information can be easily obtained. Furthermore, it was found that almost a third of LSCBs had no plans for disrupting and prosecuting offenders, where some stated that this is 'a police matter'. The majority of the LSCBs actively pursuing this aspect of the guidance had also established a specialist service for sexually exploited children, suggesting that the operation of a specialist service is fundamental to the effective identification, investigation and prosecution of offenders.

Sexually exploitation demands a multi-faceted response, and as illustrated in section 5.3, victims may be identified by a number of different agencies, including specialist service providers in the community and voluntary sector, children's services and police forces. Each agency is likely to possess varying intelligence on individual cases and the wider picture of child sexual exploitation within the region, and each agency provides a particular aspect of the wider response to child sexual exploitation, from the investigation and prosecution of offenders, to the dispensation of therapeutic services for victims. It is therefore essential that these agencies are able to come together to share information and intelligence, and to respond to individual cases. No one agency can deliver a complete response. By working together, outcomes for victims are improved. For example, common thresholds for intervention in exploitative relationships can be established, evidence gathering and sharing is improved, intelligence is gathered proactively, all agencies are included in responses, and all agencies have a shared understanding of issues underlying child sexual exploitation.

It must be emphasised that child sexual exploitation is well understood in guidance and at a specialist practitioner level. It is also understood that good practice is known to have a substantial impact on child sexual exploitation within a local area. The value of a multi-agency response is demonstrated by various case studies in Appendix B. 6. Information a6.

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6 Information analysis

Intelligence submitted to CEOP following the intelligence request has been subject to quantitative and qualitative analysis. This analysis is presented below.

6.1 Limitations and issues undermining data

A key underlying difficulty in assessing the scale of 'localised grooming' is the inconsistent recognition of child sexual exploitation by frontline practitioners and the failure to record relevant information at a local level. This assessment predominantly addresses 'localised grooming' – the model of child sexual exploitation whereby one or more offenders meet a child in a public place, then groom and sexually abuse them in a variety of locations in the local area and potentially beyond it, over an extended period of time. However, as noted in section 5.1, child sexual exploitation is a complex spectrum of abuse, and many models of exploitation are known to exist. A more limited understanding of child sexual exploitation, based on a very narrow conception of offending behaviour, would exclude portions of the spectrum, leading to a failure to recognise and record cases of child sexual exploitation falling outside the limits of understanding. For example, it may be the case that some police forces, LSCBs and children's services only recognise child sexual exploitation where victims are commercially exploited, or where victims have been trafficked into and within the UK. Where a limited conception of child sexual exploitation is in place, many cases will fail to register.

There are several additional factors which undermine measurement of the scale of 'localised grooming':

(i) Data collection/integrity

Data relating to child sexual exploitation is often partial and incomplete, concealed in equivocal secondary indicator data, or simply unrecorded. As discussed in section 3.1, relevant data is collected by a number of relevant agencies, though particular difficulties in the collection and extraction of information relevant to 'localised grooming' are encountered by each. These difficulties must be made explicit in order to inform recommendations for improved data collection in the future. The difficulties associated with each relevant agency are outlined below.

a. Police forces

Child sexual exploitation refers to a large number of crimes (Appendix C contains a list of associated offences). Consequently, cases of 'localised grooming' are recorded as a variety of associated crime types. It is not possible to extract cases of 'localised grooming' from the wider pool of associated crimes. There is no simple procedure for locating and extracting pertinent cases from intelligence systems, and there is no single indicator or crime type which can be associated with all cases of 'localised grooming'. Identifying relevant information is therefore a significant challenge.

Furthermore, many victims of child sexual exploitation and their exploiters will be undetected by police. For example, it is possible that the police will locate a child reported missing from home in the company of unknown adults. It is possible that the child is at risk of sexual exploitation, or is being groomed. If the police do not ascertain the circumstances surrounding the child spending time in the company of adults whilst missing from home, they may fail to detect that the child is being sexually exploited. This information may not be entered onto police intelligence systems, so the exploitation is undetected.

Intelligence is often incomplete. For example, where a child makes an allegation of abuse, it may be disclosed during investigation and interview that a number of offenders are involved in exploitation, though only a small number could be identified. Although the principal offenders will be identified by police, the peripheral figures will not. There is a significant gap in the quality and quantity of intelligence available for principal and peripheral offenders. Whereas police

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will be able to ascertain the name, date of birth, nationality, ethnic background and offending history of principal offenders, they may be unable to discover any information about peripheral offenders, other than partial and uncorroborated information supplied by victims.

b. LSCBs

Data collection practices vary considerably across LSCBs. There is no single system used to record cases of child sexual exploitation. This variety undermines the possibility of collating a national picture of child sexual exploitation. LSCBs may have encountered difficulties in responding to CEOP's data request.

c. Local authority children's services

Children's services operate with clear thresholds for intervention in potentially exploitative relationships. Where a child is aged 16 and above, it may be perceived that the child can consent to sexual activity and it is not possible to intervene in the exploitative relationship. Even where children are aged under the age of 16, children's services may fail to successfully intervene in sexual exploitation. Where children's services do not make an intervention, data is not collected. Children's services may also have encountered difficulties in responding to CEOP's data request.

d. Specialist services and NGOs

Again, data collection practices are likely to vary considerably among specialist service providers and NGOs. These services are likely to collect detailed information on victims of sexual exploitation, though this may not be recorded in a format suitable for simple extraction. Furthermore, although specialist services are likely to collect rich data on children and young people, they are less likely to collect relevant information on offenders.

(ii) 'Hidden' crime

Child sexual exploitation may be 'hidden' from view, as many victims are unlikely to report their exploitation to the police, owing to a feeling of complicity or guilt, as a result of having been compelled to commit criminal activity and engage in sexual behaviours they wish to conceal from parents and carers, or as a result of threats and intimidation from their exploiters. Some victims may also feel a strong sense of loyalty toward their exploiters as a result of having been groomed to believe that they are in a romantic relationship. These victims may not feel that they have been sexually exploited.

In addition, many victims of child sexual exploitation are detected through referrals to specialist services. Although many victims will be unwilling to disclose exploitation to the police, it may be revealed to specialist project workers over a period of time. This intensive outreach, over an extended period, may lead to a victim coming to terms with their exploitation and recognising that they have been abused. However, specialist services are relatively scarce in the UK. Those areas where services are in place are likely to be more successful in identifying victims in the local area. However, across much of the UK, these services are absent, and many victims are not identified as a result. The data submitted to CEOP for this assessment, when broken down geographically, reflects the presence or absence of specialist services. It is evident that proactive intelligence gathering by police forces and other agencies, notably specialist voluntary sector services, has resulted in a significant improvement in the identification of cases of child sexual exploitation.

It has been noted that minority groups are particularly unlikely to report sexual exploitation to the authorities. For example, victims of a British Bangladeshi background may not wish to disclose sexual exploitation as this would reveal that they had engaged in sexual activity, perhaps leading to family rejection (Ward and Patel, 2006). Others may fear recrimination from peer group members (Firmin, 2011). As a result, some minority ethnic groups may be under-represented in the data collected for this assessment.

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6.2 Quantitative analysis

The quantitative analysis of data is presented below.

6.2.1 Assessing scale

It was aimed in this assessment to measure the scale of the 'localised grooming' form of sexual exploitation in the UK. In summary, data was gathered from 46 police forces, 22 children's services and LSCBs (including nine responses from children's services, 4 responses from LSCBs, and nine joint responses from children's services and LSCBs) and 12 specialist service providers from the voluntary sector. It must be noted that the data submitted refers only to the 'localised grooming' model of child sexual exploitation, and does not include online grooming, the trafficking of non-UK national children, peer on peer abuse or other forms of sexual exploitation. In the event it proved impossible however to clearly segment localised grooming from other forms due to the complexity and overlap within the offending behaviour².

This assessment cannot be seen as fully representative of the nature and scale of child sexual exploitation in the U.K., or indeed, of the 'localised grooming' model. Many of the cases submitted for assessment were incomplete with significant intelligence gaps. This was particularly apparent in information provided relating to offenders. In some cases, there was no information provided at all relating to offenders, and the respondent was only able to state that a child had disclosed that they had been groomed and sexually exploited.

The description of the offender can be based on a custody record where the accuracy of the description is more reliable, or on information provided by a victim where no offender has been identified. In some cases, this information was derived from PNC. Overall, there may be errors in the recording of nationality, ethnicity or the age of the offender.

Details of 1875 cases were received in relation to 'localised grooming' and sexual exploitation. Cases can be defined as specific investigations, intelligence logs, or submissions from NGO. The data demonstrates that child sexual exploitation is identified and understood only when agencies proactively endeavour to identify victims and offenders. The failure to identify cases of child sexual exploitation in many parts of the UK is a significant concern. Proactive intelligence gathering is not commonplace, and, as a result, it can be stated with confidence that the majority of incidents of child sexual exploitation in the UK are unrecognised and unknown. Consequently, the numbers of offenders and victims identified in the analysis below are likely to be a significant under-representation of the scale of the issue in the UK.

In all instances where police, LSCBs and specialist services work together to proactively identify and address cases of child sexual exploitation, a significant number of cases have come to light. For example, Lancashire Constabulary works in partnership with relevant agencies to gather and develop intelligence on child sexual exploitation, thereby proactively identifying victims and offenders, with 575 new victims of child sexual exploitation and 254 offenders/suspects identified over the period 1 September 2010 – 28 February 2011. Conversely, very few cases are known to areas which do not feature proactive police forces, LSCBs and specialist services which routinely collect data and engage victims, where some police forces were unable to identify any cases since 1 January 2008.

The 1875 cases identified during this assessment come from those areas where proactive intelligence gathering and multi-agency working takes place. Child sexual exploitation happens across the country, is found wherever it is looked for, and is a national problem. The 1875 cases are therefore a substantial under-representation of the true scale of child sexual exploitation in the UK.

² Where there was substantial overlap all data was included

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6.2.2 Offender group

2379 nominals were reported to CEOP as being possible offenders in relation to street grooming and child sexual exploitation. A range of judicial outcomes are associated with these nominals, including convictions for criminal offences. Of these 2379 offenders:

- ➔ 940 had a full name or initials provided
- ➔ 277 had only a given name with no family name, or an alias name provided
- ➔ 1162 had no name or initials provided

These offenders were identified by police during investigations and intelligence gathering. Many of the details relating to offenders are derived from witness statements. In addition to the 2379 individuals, information was also provided relating to 97 cases in which there were reported to have been multiple offenders, but no further details were provided to state how many.

Nominals have been divided into four groups, according to the level of information available:

- ➔ **Group 1** consisted of nominals for whom a full name or initials were recorded. The level of detailed information associated with nominals in group 1 is fairly high.
- ➔ **Group 2** consisted of nominals for whom only a given name or alias was available. Information associated with nominals in group 2 is more limited.
- ➔ **Group 3** consisted of those nominals for whom no name or initials were available. Very little information is available concerning nominals in this group.
- ➔ **Group 4** consists of multiple nominals associated with cases, where no information relating to individual nominals is available. Consequently, nominals in this group have been excluded from further analysis.

Given that little information is available to identify offenders in groups 3, it is possible that some offenders in this group are duplicates of offenders in group 1 and 2. Groups 3 and 4 were disregarded from the following analysis, as gaps in the data rule out the identification of duplicate entries and preclude a meaningful analysis of gender, age, ethnicity and other aspects of offender profile.

Data quality

It should be recognised that the remaining data in group 1 and 2 still may not be accurate or reliable. It should also be understood that the quality of the data diminishes greatly from group 1 to group 2. The data associated with group 1 has generally been derived from PNC checks and police force investigations where the ethnicity of nominals has been verified, whereas the data relating to nominals in group 2 is likely to have been derived from less reliable sources, such as witness statements. It is for this reason that the statistical breakdowns for both groups 1 and groups 2 are shown in full.

B – FINDINGS

Gender

Table 1

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Total</i>
Male	805	254	1059
Female	44	1	45
Unknown	91	22	113
Total	940	277	1217

The offender group is overwhelmingly male. There are a small number of nominals for whom gender is 'unknown' – this information has not been recorded at the point of data capture, and is therefore not included in the submitted data. A small number of females have been recorded as nominals associated with the 'localised grooming' model of child sexual exploitation. It has been noted that some victims of sexual exploitation are coerced or groomed to recruit other victims for offenders or offender networks. It is therefore possible that the female nominals in the dataset relate to offences associated with the facilitation of sexual exploitation, though the available data cannot substantiate this interpretation. Overall, it is evident that perpetrators of the 'localised grooming' model of sexual exploitation are overwhelmingly male, though some females may be drawn into offending as a result of exploitation.

Age

Table 2

<i>Age</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Total</i>
<17	56	15	71
18-24	219	31	250
25-30	75	15	90
30-34	52	8	60
35-40	50	4	54
40-44	36	2	38
45-50	16	1	17
50-54	12	1	13
55-60	17	1	18
60-64	16	-	16
65-70	5	-	5
70+ 7	-	7	
unknown	379	199	578
Total	940	277	1217

B – FINDINGS

It is notable that the largest category of nominals are aged 18 -24. There are a large number of nominals for whom age is unknown. Again, this information was not recorded at the point of data capture and is not therefore available in the dataset. The perpetrators of the 'localised grooming' model of child sexual exploitation are therefore most commonly young adults, who may appear attractive to vulnerable children and young people, and for whom the pretence of being involved in a romantic relationship with the victim is more plausible. This appears to be a distinctive feature of the nominals associated with the 'localised grooming' model of sexual exploitation.

Nationality

Table 3

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>
Afghan	6	0
Bangladeshi	1	0
Bosnian	1	0
Brazilian	1	0
British	438	21
Canadian	1	0
Chinese	1	0
Congolese	0	1
Cypriot	1	0
Czech	1	0
German	2	0
Indian	3	0
Iranian	4	0
Iraqi 31	12	
Irish 2	1	
Jamaican	3	0
Kenyan	1	0
Liberian	1	0
Libyan	1	0
Nigerian	2	0
Pakistani	36	5
Polish	2	2
Portuguese	1	0
Somali	1	1
Sri Lankan	1	1
Sudanese	2	0
Turkish	7	1
Ugandan	1	0
Unknown	386	232
Vietnamese	1	0
Yemeni	1	0
Total	940	277

B – FINDINGS

In the majority of cases, where nominal nationality was not recorded at the point of data capture, nominal nationality is unknown. In order to establish nationality conclusively, nominal identity must be verified through investigation. As many nominals in the dataset, particularly those in group 2, are known only through intelligence logs, nationalities are not known in many cases. In some cases, an invalid nationality was recorded for a nominal. For example, a small number of nominals were recorded as being 'African'. Invalid nationalities have been amalgamated in the 'unknown' category. Where nationality is known, the majority of nominals have been recorded as British. The top three recorded nationalities of nominals are British, Pakistani and Iraqi.

Ethnicity

The ethnicity data is presented to the highest possible level of detail, based on the data submitted by police forces and other agencies. In relation to ethnicity the data was often recorded to a particularly poor standard at the point of capture. 'Ethnicity' was often conflated with 'nationality'. Neither factor is captured according to a standardised or conventional classification scheme. For example, in many circumstances, a single entry for both 'ethnicity' and 'nationality' may have been recorded as 'British Asian' by a police force or other agency. Clearly, this entry is inadequate for the classification of ethnicity according to conventional schemes.

The analysis of ethnicity data submitted as part of this assessment is therefore constrained by the way in which data was initially captured by frontline agencies, and, as a result, many entries have been necessarily logged as 'unknown'. Where an entry has been 'logged' as unknown it indicates that there was no credible record giving any indication of ethnicity.

Table 4

<i>Ethnicity</i>		<i>Group 1</i>			<i>Group 2</i>		<i>Total</i>		
		<i>no.</i>	<i>% total</i>	<i>no. total</i>	<i>no.</i>	<i>total</i>	<i>no.</i>	<i>% total</i>	<i>no. total</i>
White	White British	346	38	360	7	7	353	30	367
	White Other	14			-		14		
Black	Black African	6	3	31	-	7	6	3	38
	Black Caribbean	3			1		4		
	Black – Other	22			6		28		
Chinese	Chinese	2	<1	2	-	-	2	<1	2
Asian	Bangladeshi	1	26	248	10	98	11	28	346
	Pakistani	30			15		45		
	Asian – Other	217			73		290		
Unknown		299	32	299	165	165	464	38	464
Total				940		277			1217

We do not draw national conclusions about ethnicity from the data available at this time because it is too inconsistent. It is also significantly reliant on a relatively limited number of areas where agencies have been proactive and where there have been substantial police investigations. Further research would be needed to examine whether the ethnic breakdown reflects issues that need to be addressed within a community context, local demographics of the areas from which data is drawn, an unconscious bias among agency responses or other factors that need to be explored.

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Groups of offenders

Table 5

	<i>Number of nominals in group</i>	<i>Number of groups</i>
	8+	18
	7	6
	6	10
	5	20
	4	37
	3	57
	2	82
Total		230

Ethnic backgrounds of offender groups

Table 6

	<i>Number</i>
All nominals of White background	36
All nominals of Black background	1
All nominals of Asian background	41
Nominals of more than one ethnic background	15
Ethnic background unknown for some/all nominals in group	137
Total	230

Overall, 230 groups of nominals have been identified. These OCGs vary in size, from two nominals offending together, to large groups of over eight nominals. Some nominals were implicated in several OCGs. It is noticeable that the majority of groups of nominals appear to have a shared ethnicity.

From the data received for this assessment, 1645 nominals offended alone. However, it is possible that these nominals have perpetrated sexual exploitation in association with others, though the connection with other nominals has not been recorded.

Sexual offending histories

In total, 87 nominals in the dataset were reported as being previously known to law enforcement for sexual offences, as a result of previous allegations of sexual offences, arrests and convictions.

Sexual offences listed included (but were not limited to) sexual exploitation, causing/inciting a child to engage in sexual activity, sexual assault, rape of a child, and grooming. Seventeen nominals were or had been Registered Sex Offenders, and one nominal had been issued with a SOPO.

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6.2.3 Victim group

CEOP received information relating to 2083 children and vulnerable young people who were believed to have been groomed, sexually exploited, or both. Victim data is more consistent than that for nominals, with fewer 'unknowns'.

Gender

Table 7

	<i>Number</i>
Female	1264
Male	182
Unknown	637
Total	2083

The vast majority of victims in the dataset are female. In 31% of cases, the gender of the victim was unknown. Reasons for which the sexual exploitation of boys and young men is likely to be under-represented in this dataset are outlined in section 5.4. There are a large number of victims for whom gender is unknown. Many of the responses to the data request neglected to include details of the victim gender.

Age

Table 8

	<i>Number</i>
10	28
11	18
12	98
13	195
14	322
15	318
16	162
17	62
vulnerable adult	6
unknown	874
Total	2083

B – FINDINGS

The most common ages at which a child comes to the attention of statutory or non-statutory agencies are 14 and 15. However, in many cases, it is not possible to ascertain the duration of a child's exploitation. The ages in the table above may not represent the age at which the victims was initially targeted and groomed. Again, there are a large number of victims in the dataset for whom age is unknown. This information was not included in responses to the data request.

Nationality

Table 9

	<i>Number</i>
Americam	1
Angolan	1
Bangaladeshi	2
British	1091
Cameroon	1
Chinese	1
Czech	4
Ethiopian	1
Iranian	2
Irish	1
Isreali	1
Pakistani	4
Polish	3
Unknown	969
Vietnamese	1
Total	2083

Whilst the table above shows nationalities other than British, there was no evidence to suggest that the children of these nationalities had been trafficked into the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation. In a very large number of cases, victim nationality is unknown. This information was not included in data returned to CEOP.

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Ethnicity

Table 10

		<i>Total</i>
WHITE	White British	973
	White Other	58
	White Unknown	241
Total		1272
BLACK	Black African	5
	Black Caribbean	10
	Black Other	13
Total		28
ASIAN	Bangladeshi	18
	Indian	1
	Pakistani	19
	Asian Other	17
Total		55
MIXED		41
UNKNOWN		687
Total		2083

The table above shows that victims of this criminality were of a range of ethnicities. Most victims were recorded as white. However, in 687 cases, the child's ethnicity is unknown. Where victim ethnicity is classified as 'unknown', this information was not included in responses to the data request, and is therefore unknown to CEOP. As noted in section 5.2.4, it is likely that the sexual exploitation of victims of a minority ethnic background are under-represented in the data, owing to difficulties in accessing services. This may be on account of difficulties experienced by many agencies in identifying and engaging victims of a minority ethnic background.

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Ethnicity

Table 11

Number of victims linked to offender or group of offenders

<i>No. of victims</i>	<i>Number</i>
8+	12
7	4
6	3
5	11
4	12
3	29
2	64
1	1727
Total	1862

This table shows that in 1727 cases, the individual or group was believed to have exploited one child, and in 64 cases, the individual or group exploited two children. The highest number of children believed to have been groomed or exploited by one group was 41. In many cases, a child was exploited by more than one group. For example, in one case, a child appeared to have been sexually exploited by nine groups of nominals, where all groups were known to one particular police force.

It should be noted that there are intelligence gaps surrounding groups which carry out grooming and sexual exploitation, and that groups which appear to be discrete may in fact be linked. Furthermore, there are intelligence gaps relating to the organisation of offender groups. It is difficult to determine whether such groups are organised or opportunistic. The roles played by different group members cannot be ascertained in many cases. However, in some cases, it appears that members of groups have particular functions. For example, a nominal may allow others to use his property as a location in which sexual exploitation will occur, or particular group members will groom victims before introducing the child to other members of the group who will also sexually exploit him or her.

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Missing and runaway victims

Table 12

	<i>Missing</i>
Yes	842
No	172
Unknown	1069
Total	2083

Although information was not available for victim experiences of running away or going missing from home in slightly over half of cases in the dataset, 842 children were known to have been reported missing. In 34 cases, victims began running away or going missing from home after exploitation commenced. Of the other 808 children, it is not known whether they started going missing prior to, or as a result of, their exploitation. It is not possible to state conclusively whether victims were exploited during missing episodes on the basis of the available data. However, the overall coincidence of children and young people going missing or running away from home and experiencing sexual exploitation is striking. Although there is a significant gap in the available information, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of victims of 'localised grooming' are known to have been reported missing at some point before or during the exploitation.

Children and young people who repeatedly go missing from home are clearly at a high risk of sexual exploitation.

Location of exploitation

The location of grooming and exploitation was not known in 1405 cases. However, it can be stated that:

- ➔ 398 victims were groomed or exploited in a flat or a house
- ➔ 141 victims were groomed or exploited in a public place, including town centres, shopping centres, car parks and bus stations
- ➔ 70 victims were groomed or exploited in a vehicle (of which 3 were taxis)
- ➔ 67 victims were groomed or exploited in a park
- ➔ 49 victims were groomed or exploited in a hotel or a bed and breakfast
- ➔ 24 victims were groomed or exploited in a location linked to a business
- ➔ 7 victims were groomed or exploited in a pub or nightclub
- ➔ 2 victims were exploited in premises believed to have been used as a brothel
- ➔ 2 victims were groomed or exploited in a hostel

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- ➔ 1 child was groomed or exploited in a bail hostel
- ➔ 26 children were reported to have been groomed or exploited in various locations, with no further details provided
- ➔ 106 children were reported to have been groomed or exploited in a named town or towns, with no further details provided relating to specific locations within those towns.

Furthermore, 100 children were reported to have been moved to other cities within the UK whereupon they were groomed or sexually exploited.

Victim living circumstances

Table 13

<i>Victim Accommodation</i>	<i>Missing</i>
Family or friends	507
In the care system	311
Not in care (no further details available)	70
Other	8
Unknown	1187
Total	2083

Of the 2083 victims in the dataset, 489 were living in the family home at the time their exploitation commenced and 18 lived with extended family or friends. Of these, 43 children were moved into local authority care following intervention in exploitation, due to either a breakdown in the relationship between the child and his/ her parents, or in order to safeguard the child from their abusers. Overall, it is evident that less than half of the victims in the dataset, for whom relevant information is available, were in the care system at the time of exploitation.

6.3 Qualitative analysis

Data submitted to CEOP has also been subject to qualitative analysis in order to shed light on victim experiences of sexual exploitation, and to develop an offender profile.

6.3.1 Victim experience

Data gathered for the purposes of this assessment has been analysed in order to identify prominent themes and trends underlying victim experiences of 'localised grooming'. Much of the data submitted to CEOP was very detailed, permitting a qualitative analysis of victim experiences on the basis of case data. The diversity of victim experience is extensive, encompassing young people from all backgrounds and from all parts of the country. A number of themes emerged from this qualitative analysis. These themes are based on case data, and are discussed below in detail.

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Vulnerability

It was previously noted that boys/young men and girls/young women can fall victim to sexual exploitation. The majority of victims in the dataset are female, though difficulties in recognising sexual exploitation among boys and young men are likely to have led to an under-representation of male victims. The age of victims ranges from 10 years upwards. However, many victims come to the attention of authorities only after having been sexually exploited for a significant period of time, and it cannot be stated with certainty the age at which victims in the dataset were first sexually exploited. Indeed, some were sexually abused from an early age, prior to experiencing and disclosing sexual exploitation.

The available evidence gathered for this study supports pre-existing research reviewed in section 5.2 which identifies those children most at risk of sexual exploitation.

Missing/Runaways

Sexually exploited children frequently go missing from home or run away for varying periods of time. The majority of victims in the dataset had a history of running away from home and being reported missing on multiple occasions. Some children and young people in the dataset began running away from home after having been groomed by an offender, whilst others were already engaged in a pattern of repeatedly running away prior to experiencing sexual exploitation. In the latter case, these children spent their time on the streets, where they met other vulnerable young people and encountered high risk males who went on to sexually exploit them.

Many victims in the dataset who do not appear to have had a history of going missing may have run away from home on multiple occasions, though they were not reported as missing by their parent or carer. Missing reports are generally lodged by a parent or carer. Where victims had neglectful parents, it is possible that they would not be reported missing despite running away from home on multiple occasions and for extended periods of time. Some perpetrators deliberately returned victims home before their curfew in an attempt to evade detection, avoid rousing the suspicions of parents and carers, and avert the intervention of the police, social services or the voluntary sector in the exploitative relationship. However, in one case it was evident that a perpetrator deliberately harboured a victim beyond their curfew in the knowledge that this would ultimately increase tension between parent and child, creating an atmosphere at home which would encourage the victim to run away on future occasions. Although the coincidence of children and young people going missing from home and experiencing sexual exploitation is very high, going missing or running away may not be present in all cases, nor may it be reported and recorded in all of the cases where it has occurred.

Finally, it should be noted that some service providers and police officers have stated that it is sometimes perceived that children and young people who repeatedly go missing from home are perhaps at less risk of harm, as they are more likely to be 'streetwise'. It is particularly evident from data relating to male victims that boys and young men may not be perceived to be 'at risk' if they go missing from home repeatedly. However, this assumption cannot be sustained by the available evidence. The coincidence of children going missing from home and experiencing sexual exploitation suggests that repeat missing persons are at a very high risk of exploitation.

Looked-after children

Some victims were reported to be in the looked after-system. Children and young people were generally in local authority care prior to experiencing exploitation, though some victims were taken into care following social services intervention in their exploitation. Involvement of victims with social services prior to experiencing sexual exploitation can be taken as a broad indicator of pre-existing vulnerability. It is evident in the dataset that a number of victims had grown up in a chaotic or dysfunctional household, where a parent or carer has subjected them to sexual, physical or emotional abuse. Some parents or carers of these young people also had chaotic lives, involving substance misuse, mental

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health problems or the experience of domestic abuse from a spouse or partner. Social care interventions included child protection plans, or being removed from home and placed in local authority care. It should be noted that a substantial number of victims in the dataset are from stable families and have no prior involvement with social services, and the incidence of child sexual exploitation cannot be exclusively correlated with vulnerable children in care. In some cases, victims were taken into care for their own protection and/or because parents found it increasing difficult to cope with their behaviour whilst they lived at home.

It is also evident that some children in the looked-after system were accommodated in an alternative local authority area. In some instances, it may have been felt that sexually exploited children should be moved to another area to break the bond with their exploiter and peers also involved in exploitation. Although this decision may have been taken for the safety and welfare of the victim, vulnerable children and young people, when moved to another area, may engage in similar risk-taking behaviours and fall back into exploitation. Indeed, in some cases, it appears that perpetrators have deliberately targeted children and young people residing in care homes in their local area.

School engagement

The overwhelmingly majority of victims in the dataset, for whom information relating to school engagement was available, were disengaged from education. This was manifested in truanting, where victims would play truant from school in order to spend time with offenders; a lack of interest and lethargy, where children and young people who had spent previous evenings with offenders; and frequent disruptive behaviour, where children would bully peers. Some children were also bullied by peers, compounding their vulnerability.

Victim engagement with police and other authorities

The majority of victims were reported to be hostile to authorities and difficult to engage. This may be in response to the grooming process, whereby victims believe that they are 'in love' with their older 'boyfriend', or it may be as a result of intimidation and fear of retribution. In some cases, perpetrators compelled victims to commit criminal acts, such as theft, and then told them that any complaint to the police would be ignored as they were criminals. Any feelings of fear or loyalty to the perpetrator will obstruct police engagement and disclosure of exploitation. It is evident that in many cases, victims are extremely hostile to police intervention, particularly where victims have been removed from risky situations and prevented from meeting their 'boyfriend'. Victims were occasionally reported to have threatened to or actually engaged in self-harm following efforts from police and social services to intervene in exploitative relationships.

Identity

Victims from ethnic minorities may be under-represented in the dataset, as they are less likely to be identified and engaged by statutory and voluntary sector agencies. Nevertheless, the data demonstrates that vulnerable children and young people of all ethnic backgrounds are known to be victimised. It is notable that some victims in the dataset were new immigrants to the UK. Perpetrators may regard these young people as being vulnerable, as they may be naïve and unfamiliar with the local area.

Grooming

All victims in the dataset had been groomed to some extent by their exploiter. A variety of grooming tactics were used by offenders, described in greater detail in section 6.3.2. The experience of grooming, from a victim perspective, is examined below. The vulnerability of many victims renders them particularly susceptible to many of the grooming tactics employed by perpetrators.

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Many offenders offer the victim a ride in their car. Victims report being impressed by offenders' cars and their apparent economic independence. It is possible that victims believe that they can gain prestige in their peer group by associating with offenders who are perceived to be attractive. From a victim perspective, offenders can be glamorous and exciting. They offer gifts, including cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, food, mobile phones and top-ups, and occasionally a place to stay. Victims feel that they are treated as an adult and a friend by offenders, and in some cases, it may be their only source of affection. As a result, victims may believe that offenders are their 'boyfriend'. This sense of loyalty is often significant, where victims refuse to believe that they have been exploited even after the perpetrator has been charged by the police with sexual offences against other children and young people. It should be noted that without external intervention, this bond between abused child and exploiter may never be broken – exploitation continues beyond the age of 18. In some cases, victims have gone into formal prostitution following years of exploitation as children.

Indeed, some children are groomed by other children and young people, at the behest of exploiters. In many cases, when victims reach the age of 16 –18, perpetrators will begin to exert additional control over the victim. Many victims have been compelled to introduce other children and young people to the network. Victims would tell their friends and associates that they should come out and meet their 'boyfriend' and his friends, telling other girls that they will take them for rides in their car or give them a place where they can 'chill out'. In one case at least, a victim introduced other girls to a group of offenders explicitly to avoid being raped herself. This may have been a motivation in introducing other girls to the network in a number of cases.

Control and coercion

Following the establishment of an exploitative relationship, victims experienced a number of measures intended to control their behaviour and keep them in an exploitative situation. For example, in one case, victims were given a mobile phone by the offender. When they became reliant upon the offender and the mobile phone for communication, he would take the phone away, placing them in a vulnerable position. In other cases, victims have reported that offenders filmed their abuse on a mobile telephone. Victims reported that these images would be shared with other perpetrators. The circulation of these images was accompanied by an implicit threat to share them more widely should the victim fail to comply with the demands of the exploiter.

Victims were often present when peers were abused by the offender group, either in the same room or somewhere else in the house or premises. The knowledge of violent abuse perpetrated against peers may have reinforced the fear of offenders. This type of group perpetration and victimisation normalises the abuse among the victim group and escalates peer pressure to participate and share the load of victimisation.

A common experience among victims was the disorientating affect of having been moved by the offender around and between large towns. When taken to a strange location in an unknown town, victims are placed in a highly vulnerable position where they are reliant upon offenders to take them home. This amplifies the control of the offender over the victim. In some cases, victims were locked in houses or premises.

Finally, many victims feared that their exploiter would be violent towards them should they fail to comply with their demands or cooperate with the police. Many victims reported being told by offenders to lie to the police about their age, should they arouse suspicion. Offenders often threatened victims to keep them in exploitation; for example, in some cases offenders stated that they would harm their family, friends or pets if they disclosed their exploitation to the police. These threats were rarely enacted, though victims perceived them to be serious. Victims often appear to share their stories of threats and intimidation among their peers, amplifying the threat of violence within the peer group.

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Peer groups

The dataset attests to a variety of victim experiences, from being exploited individually, to exploitation as part of a wider group of victims. The dynamics of the peer group is highly important to the grooming process where a group of victims is involved.

Offenders use one victim to gain access to others, asking victims about their friends and encouraging them to bring their friends to pre-arranged meetings. For example, in one case, an offender had a reputation in the local area for forcing girls to do things they didn't want to. However, victims were also aware of girls who would take lifts from this individual in his car. This was an implicit peer endorsement, undermining any prior perception of risk. Victims' desire to belong and fit into their peer group can therefore lead them into exploitative situations. For example, if a girl expresses a reluctance to engage in sexual activity, peer pressure may override these instincts. Association with vulnerable peers can lead others into exploitation.

It is also evident that in some cases, victims are motivated to accept lifts from men in cars in order to gain status within the peer group. Some victims believe that being seen 'cruising' with adult males in town centres is a source of prestige. It is therefore possible that attempts to impress peers and acquire status can lead to associating with risky males.

Although many victim groups knew each other prior to being sexually exploited, either through school, friendship or family ties, many other victims meet each other through their shared experience of exploitation. For example, some victims in the dataset met each other as a consequence of their vulnerability, where they would run away from home and meet each other on the street. The development of a peer group on the basis of a shared set of vulnerabilities gives the victims a sense of 'safety in numbers'.

In a number of cases, it has been suggested that the older sibling of a victim was also involved in exploitation, either as a victim of an offender group, or as a perpetrator. In the former case, it is evident that vulnerabilities in one child or young person can be mirrored in their siblings, and in the latter, it is evident that perpetrators pose a risk to children and young people in their families.

Location

Victims were generally targeted by perpetrators in public places, including town or city centres and local parks. Vulnerable young people who spend a long time on the street in town centres generally congregate in specific places. Some victims reported encountering offenders in shops, restaurants, takeaways, and other business premises. Others reported that offenders would wait outside school gates to meet potential victims.

After initial meetings with offenders, a number of different types of location were used for sexual exploitation. These ranged from public places, such as parks, fields and the grounds of leisure facilities, to the back seats of cars, flats and sometimes hotel rooms. Taxi firms have been implicated in a number of cases and offenders were reported to have picked the victims up from near their homes, on the street or from parks and driven them to other locations. In a number of cases, the taxi itself was the location of the exploitation, or used to move the victim to the locus of abuse. Many victims have reported being taken to 'party' or 'chill houses' in their local area. These are generally sparsely furnished flats or houses, often featuring only a mattress or sofa. Occasionally, police have been able to establish that these houses are owned by perpetrators in the network or are associated with businesses owned by perpetrators.

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Indicators

Victims in the dataset exhibited a number of signs of having been exploited which were picked up by parents/carers, the police, social services and voluntary sector service providers. For example, in many cases, victims were injured as a result of exploitation. Injuries resulted from physical and/or sexual assault, and were generally concealed by the victim. It is evident that many victims would conceal their injuries to prevent their exploitation being discovered.

In some cases, children and young people experiencing sexual exploitation were perceived by the police and social services to be a risk to other children. In these cases, authorities were aware of the ongoing risk of sexual exploitation and the suggestion that these children were introducing peers to risky adults, and as a result, believed that their behaviour was potentially harmful to others.

Many victims exhibited signs of problematic sexual behaviour, including unwanted pregnancies and STIs.

Our analysis supports the risk assessment tools contained in statutory guidance³. These should be used by front line services to identify children who are being exploited. A range of different factors are highlighted as potential indicators. For example:

- ➔ adults or older youths loitering outside the child's usual place of residence;
- ➔ persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation;
- ➔ leaving home/care setting in clothing unusual for the individual child (inappropriate for age, borrowing clothing from older young people);
- ➔ acquisition of expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions without plausible explanation;
- ➔ truancy/disengagement with education or considerable change in performance at school;
- ➔ volatile behaviour exhibiting extreme array of mood swings or use of abusive language;
- ➔ getting involved in petty crime such as shoplifting, stealing;
- ➔ entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults;
- ➔ hostility in relationship with parents/carers and other family members; and
- ➔ returning after having been missing, looking well cared for in spite of having no known home base.

Summary

Overall, it is notable that victims are unlikely to disclose exploitation voluntarily, as a result of fear of exploiters, loyalty to perpetrators, a failure to recognise that they have been exploited, and a negative perception or fear of authorities. Agencies involved in identifying and safeguarding sexually exploited children and young people, including the police, must recognise that victims are unlikely to present as victims of a sexual offence, and are likely to be hostile to engagement.

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Consequently, all agencies involved in the investigation and prosecution of cases of child sexual exploitation must be aware that the length of time between incidents of exploitation and disclosure to the authorities is not a symptom of unreliability, but a direct result of exploitation.

6.3.2 Offender profile

Intelligence gathered for the purposes of this assessment has been analysed in order to profile offenders in cases of 'localised grooming'.

Offender identity

In many cases, information relating to the offenders was either unknown or very limited. In many cases, offender details are known only through victim accounts. Details are therefore patchy, incomplete and sometimes inaccurate. Perpetrators were frequently known to the victim by a given name with no family name, or by a nickname only. Formal verification of offender identity is therefore difficult, and in many cases, age, nationality and ethnicity cannot be clearly established. The inability of victims to recall aspects of offender identity compromises law enforcement response, and offenders may deliberately confuse victim accounts through the use of nicknames, drugs and alcohol in order to evade law enforcement.

In one case, an offender used a particular nickname when in a town and another when in a neighbouring town in a different police force area. It is possible that the use of multiple street names was a deliberate measure for frustrating law enforcement, preventing simple identification and undermining attempts to link offending in the two towns.

Although there were many information gaps relating to offenders' living situations, a range of living arrangements are evident among the offender group, including living at home with parents or other family members, being married with children and living alone. There were also information gaps relating to the nationality and ethnicity of offenders. These fields were incomplete in many cases and overall the quality of much of the data was extremely poor. As such, it is not possible to substantiate any correlation between offending behaviour and nationality or ethnicity, though it can be stated that offenders of all ethnic backgrounds feature in the dataset. The offender profile is therefore diverse.

Offending history

In some cases, offenders were not known to law enforcement prior to implication in cases of child sexual exploitation. This cannot be taken to suggest that these offenders had no offending history prior to becoming involved in sexual exploitation. Rather, they may have been involved in previous offending behaviour, including the sexual exploitation or abuse of children, but may not have come to the attention of or been apprehended by law enforcement.

Where offenders were known to law enforcement, they had committed a range of criminal offences, including:

- (i) acquisitive crimes; such as theft, shoplifting, vehicle theft, robbery and burglary;
- (ii) violent crimes; such as assault, battery and domestic violence;
- (iii) sexual offences; including possession of child abuse images, causing or inciting prostitution, exposure, voyeurism, rape, breach of SOPO, and the sexual assault of a child;
- (iv) offences against children, including cruelty, neglect and abduction; and

³ A full risk assessment tool can be found in guidance '*Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation*' (DCSF, 2009).

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- (v) miscellaneous offences, including the supply and possession of drugs, public order offences, perverting the course of justice, harassment, threats to kill, driving offences, possession of offensive weapons, criminal damage, arson and breach of probation.

Many of the offenders for whom information is available have criminal records relating to sexual offences, with many of these offences committed against children. Offences included rape, sexual assault, meeting a child following sexual grooming and making/possessing/distributing child abuse images. Some offenders also had previous convictions for breaching a SOPO. Many perpetrators of child sexual exploitation have demonstrated a deviant sexual interest in children. It is also notable that in some cases, offenders were reported to have been the perpetrators of domestic abuse against their partners. Domestic abuse includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and is motivated by a desire to exert control over others. The coincidence of domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation among a subset of offenders points to similarities between domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation. Offenders who exploit children through control and coercion and the perpetrators of domestic abuse exploit a position of power, and may have a similar psychological profile.

In one case, an offender was convicted of voyeurism prior to sexually exploiting young people. In another case, the offender was believed to have been responsible for a series of suspicious sightings in the vicinity of a local school and was later arrested for exposure. In each of these cases, escalation of criminal behaviour is evident. Offenders overcame inhibitors to perpetrate contact abuse.

Overall, nominals in the dataset had a diverse offending history.

Relationships between offenders

The extent to which the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation operate alone or in networks is a key concern for law enforcement. In the majority of cases, it appears that offenders operate in isolation, though many perpetrator networks have been identified. Where offender details have been derived from victim accounts, in general, it is not possible to establish the size and structure of the network.

However, in many cases in the dataset, it is evident that a number of perpetrators have acted in concert to sexually exploit children. There remains an intelligence gap regarding the relationships between offenders who operate as an Organised Criminal Group (OCG). Broadly defined, an OCG can be defined as any enterprise, or group of persons, engaged in continuing illegal activities, irrespective of national boundaries. In cases identified during this assessment, networked offending behaviour is not motivated by financial gain, but the sexual abuse of children. In a very small number of cases involving networks, it has been suggested that the perpetrators also belong to OCGs involved in other areas of organised crime, such as vehicle theft and fraud, and drug distribution. The sexual exploitation of children perpetrated by these individuals appears to be opportunistic in comparison with the other aspects of their criminal behaviour. The OCGs evident in the data were sexually motivated. The level of organisation varied considerably, from two offenders acting in concert and offending opportunistically, to larger groups of offenders with specific roles in the commission of sexual offences. For example, some perpetrators in a network appeared to specialise in the grooming of victims.

In most cases, offenders operating as an OCG were related to one another in some way, either as friends, family members or work colleagues, prior to the commissioning of the sexual offences. In some cases, offenders were reported to be cousins. It is possible that such familial relationships are not always accurate, as 'cousin' and 'brother' can sometimes be used as a term of affection between people with no familial relationship. In cases where offenders worked together, the place of work was either a takeaway restaurant or a taxi firm. It is not always possible to establish whether offenders reported to be friends or associates were acquainted prior to engaging in sexual exploitation, or if they may met through offending behaviour, for example, attending a location at which a child was sexually exploited.

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Networks generally consist of a core group of offenders who groom victims and are responsible for the majority of the offending behaviour. These offenders 'share' victims with associates on the periphery of the network. These peripheral figures may be difficult to identify, as they do not play a role in grooming victims, but are involved in exploitation. As a result, it is difficult to clearly establish the overall size and structure of networks. Furthermore, there may be considerable overlap between networks, where peripheral figures connect seemingly independent networks. In some cases, it was evident that small, independent networks were involved in the simultaneous exploitation of a group of vulnerable girls. These offenders were connected only through their victimisation of a particular group of vulnerable children.

There were few cases in the dataset attesting to commercial sexual exploitation. Victims were frequently given gifts as part of the grooming process, though in very few cases was it clearly established that victims were given money in exchange for sexual favours. Where a network or group of offenders were involved in sexual exploitation, it is possible that the core group of perpetrators received money in exchange for allowing associates to abuse victims. However, this exchange is unlikely to be witnessed by victims, and offenders are unlikely to reveal that sexual exploitation was in any way motivated by financial gain during police interview. As a result, any possible commercial element of exploitation is concealed. In one case, offenders appear to have shared the phone numbers of victims by writing them on lampposts and in other public places. In this case, offenders are likely to be connected only through the exploitation of particular victims.

Recruitment

Recruitment takes place in a variety of locations, where offenders encounter victims in a number of ways and in a number of locations.

Public places

Offenders or groups of offenders often approach victims in public places. Locations included pubs and nightclubs, including under-18 discos; places where offenders worked, including a petrol station, car wash, newsagent shop, and various takeaways and fast food outlets; outside school gates; local shopping areas and city centre streets, including bus stops, bus stations and railway stations; areas frequented by young people, for example, public parks; public sex environments, including red light districts and public toilets; places of worship, including a Sunday school and a mosque; and youth clubs.

In some cases, it has been suggested that the victim was engaging in risky behaviour at the time of encountering the perpetrator. This includes drinking alcohol, smoking cannabis, going missing or running away from home and frequenting risky areas, such as the local red light district. Other young persons were described as placing themselves at risk by meeting older males who would supply them with drugs and alcohol. It is likely that perpetrators have deliberately targeted vulnerable children engaging in risky behaviours.

In two cases, victims were approached in their local town centre and offered jobs by offenders. In one such case, the victim was recruited deceptively whereupon she was offered a job by a male involving the distribution of advertising flyers. However, she was instead made to work in a local lap dancing club and was commercially sexually exploited.

In one case, a 28 year old female befriended vulnerable young people in town centres and took them to her house whereupon they were sexually exploited by her male friends. In this case, police believed that this female had been

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previously sexually exploited. No further information is known regarding how the female had come to be involved in this behaviour, though this case may demonstrate that children who do not exit exploitation may be groomed to recruit other victims as adults.

Online or via mobile

Some offenders meet children and young people online, grooming them for offline exploitation. Online environments included Bebo, Facebook, a chatroom for gay men, various Internet gaming sites and MSN Messenger. Contact was often made online to continue grooming following initial offline contact. Victims have also reported that they initially encountered offenders after receiving telephone calls and text messages from unknown males requesting meetings. It is suspected in these cases that the victim's telephone number had been passed to perpetrators by either the victim's friends, or a 'boyfriend' or other male known to the victim and with whom they had previously shared their telephone number. In such cases, victims reported being asked to meet these males at various locations.

Even in cases where initial contact was offline, grooming may continue in online environments. In some cases, it is suspected that offenders have used Facebook and other social networking site friend lists to identify and target other children and young people within the peer group.

Through friends and family members

In some cases, the victim met the offender through a family member. Some victims were introduced to an offender or a group of offenders by an older sibling or relative who was already being sexually exploited. In a small number of cases, the victim met the offender through a parent. For example, in one case, an offender groomed the vulnerable mother of a child to take her child with her on visits to his house. The mother of the victim was substance dependent and had learning difficulties. The offender preyed on the parent's vulnerability to gain access to the victim.

In many cases, victims met offenders through a friend, usually when the victim's friend was already being sexually exploited by the offender. It is important to note that the 'recruiting' friend may not be complicit in the offences committed against the victim. The 'recruiting' victim may be genuinely unaware that their friend will be sexually exploited, though in others, offenders have coerced the 'recruiting' victim to take other young people when they go to meet offenders. In one case, a victim who had learning difficulties believed the offender to be her boyfriend. The offender told the victim he would not see her any more if she did not bring other young people to his house. Emotional abuse was used to gain access to other children. A number of cases involved threats of violence in order to coerce the victim into bringing other young people to locations where they would then be groomed or sexually exploited. In one case, a victim reported that she had been bullied into sexual activity with a male by her female friend. Some victims appeared to believe that the exploitation they are experiencing will stop or decrease if they introduce other young people to the offender.

Overall, it appears that some offenders encounter victims through their position in the local community. Vulnerable children, out on the streets late at night, perhaps drinking alcohol or taking drugs, encounter offenders working in takeaways, taxi firms and local shops. These encounters are opportunistic, where an offender with a deviant sexual interest in children takes advantage of their position of power over vulnerable children to groom and abuse them. In this respect, some cases of child sexual exploitation are similar to cases of child abuse where professionals abuse a position of trust to gain access to children. In other cases, it appears that offenders target children and young people, deliberately 'cruising' town centres in cars in order to identify and make contact with vulnerable children and young people.

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Grooming Modus Operandi

The precise details of the grooming methods used by offenders are unclear in many cases, though it is evident that grooming is a fairly constant feature of sexual exploitation. In some cases, it appears that substantial, long-term grooming of the victim took place, though in others, a victim would meet an offender and then be immediately sexually exploited. Broadly defined, grooming is a process of manipulation embarked upon by perpetrators for ensnaring victims. Grooming begins with the establishment of a romantic 'relationship', often predicated upon the exchange of gifts, food, cigarettes and alcohol. This is followed by an escalation and sexualisation of interactions, culminating in the offender establishing total control over the victim, where the victim is powerless and has no control whatsoever over the relationship.

Grooming can also be subtle, taking on particular characteristics within the dynamics of a network. For example, in some cases, it is evident that a victim is frightened of one or more perpetrators in a network. Other perpetrators may attempt to befriend these victims, offering them reassurance and comfort. However, this is simply another grooming tactic, whereby the offender gains the trust of the victim by offering solace following abuse by others in the network.

'Boyfriends'

Offenders frequently groom victims into believing that they are their 'boyfriend'. The establishment of the relationship takes time, and often begins with the victims being paid compliments to gain their interest. As outlined in section 6.3.1, victims are often vulnerable, and highly responsive to the attention and affection absent from their family life. Offenders fill this void, hooking vulnerable victims with affection and gifts to convince victims of the legitimacy of their romantic 'relationship'. Offenders quickly sexualise the relationship. Offenders then introduce the victim to friends and associates who also sexually exploit the child. It appears that in these cases, the 'boyfriend' figure acts as a recruiter for a network of perpetrators responsible for the exploitation of a number of children. Alcohol and drugs frequently play a role in this grooming behaviour, where victims are offered drugs and alcohol during grooming to (i) lower inhibitions, (ii) reduce resistance, (iii) suppress recall of events, and (iv) appeal to the desire of victims to be treated as an adult.

In some cases, the 'boyfriend' figure may have attended school with the victim. The initial targeting and grooming occurred within the boundaries of a relationship between two school children, though the 'boyfriend' later passed the victim on to a wider group of older adult males outside of school. In this scenario, there may be some overlap between the 'localised grooming' model of sexual exploitation and peer-on-peer exploitation.

Gifts

It is evident that many victims are offered material gifts prior to exploitation. Most frequently, alcohol or drugs (often, but not limited to, cannabis) are given to victims, though in other cases, offenders offer victims cheap jewellery, clothes and mobile phones. Victims were occasionally given a mobile telephone 'top up' voucher or a new mobile telephone by offenders. Mobile phones offer a direct line between offender and victim. In one case, an offender bought a mobile telephone and entered his associates' telephone numbers into the phone memory before giving it to the victim. He also shared the number for this mobile telephone among his associates. His associates then contacted the girl using this mobile telephone although they had not met her in person. They then went on to sexually exploit the girl.

Some victims were offered food and shelter as part of the grooming process. In most cases, where food was provided, the offender worked in a takeaway restaurant. By inviting vulnerable children and young people to 'parties' at which drugs and alcohol were available, offenders offer victims a place to escape any problems at home, school and elsewhere. It also places victims in a highly vulnerable position from which it may be difficult to escape.

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The provision of gifts during the grooming process may be used to leverage victims into sexual activity. For example, an offender may offer a victim cigarettes and alcohol for an extended period of time. If the victim is unwilling to engage in sexual activity with the offender, the 'debt' incurred by accepting gifts may be used as a means of coercing the victim to engage in sexual activity.

Length of grooming process

Although it is difficult to extract from the dataset the length of time over which grooming occurred in each case, it is evident that there is considerable diversity. Although some victims are groomed over a longer period of time, where the offender establishes a romantic 'relationship' with the victim, in other cases, the grooming process is very short.

For example, in one case, a victim met a male who then took her to a house and raped her upon their first meeting. The offender was aware that the victim was vulnerable, as she had been abused by one of his associates. After this incident, the victim was afraid of the offender. For approximately one month, the offender phoned the victim and sent her messages to apologise for the rape, asking for forgiveness and declaring that he was in love with her. The victim was convinced by these entreaties, agreeing to meet the offender again. For a few weeks, the offender took the victim to his house, supplying her with alcohol and cannabis, and eventually sexually exploiting her. It is evident that there was little to no grooming prior to the initial rape, though the offender subsequently embarked upon an intensive campaign of grooming. The offender may have been motivated by a fear that the victim would report him to the authorities, and sought to mitigate this risk, and/or he groomed the victim so that he could continue to abuse the victim.

Overall, there is considerable diversity in grooming processes. A number of steps in the grooming process can be identified, including targeting a victim, initiating contact, obtaining a telephone number, establishing a romantic 'relationship', escalating the relationship to involve sex, exerting control over the victim and perhaps introducing the victim to a number of associates who also sexually abuse the victim. However, offenders may follow all of these steps, skip through various steps or pass over the grooming process altogether and sexually exploit the victim immediately. It appears that offenders will sexually exploit victims at the earliest possible opportunity, though they wish to retain control over the victim after the initial abusive episode. For some victims, extensive grooming is necessary to reach this stage, though offenders may perceive that others can be sexually exploited and controlled with comparatively little grooming.

Offenders appear to target young people and utilise whichever approach is judged to be necessary according to the situation and their perception of the child or young person.

Coercion

In the majority of cases, offenders coerced victims to (i) engage in sexual activity with them or others in the network, (ii) lie to the police, and/or (iii) commit criminal activity on their behalf. Coercion tactics vary, including physical abuse, overt violent threats against the victim, their family, friends and pets, to emotional and psychological coercion.

Emotional coercion is closely associated with the use of the 'boyfriend' MO, where an offender takes advantage of the victim's feelings of loyalty to coerce him/her into sexual activity. In many cases, case information in the dataset demonstrates that the victim's 'boyfriend' coerced him or her to engage in sexual activity with other offenders. No further information was available to describe the way in which this request was conveyed, whether accompanied by physical force or violent threats.

Offenders would also reinforce the perception among victims of owing a debt as a means of psychological coercion. In some cases, a victim is told that they owe a debt to the offender for items received during grooming. It appears

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that this is most common in cases in which the offender has supplied drugs to the victim. In one case, the victim was groomed when she frequented a takeaway restaurant. She was given cigarettes by the owner of the restaurant. After approximately a month, the offender told her that it wasn't fair that he was giving her cigarettes and he wasn't getting anything in return, whereupon he sexually exploited her. In another case, victim was reported to use cocaine regularly. Due to this, she was alleged to have accrued a debt of over £1000 to the person who supplied her cocaine. As a result of this debt, she was sexually exploited. It is not known whether the offender provided her with cocaine with the intention of sexually exploiting her.

In some cases, victims were threatened with violence or threatened that their families would be harmed if they did not comply with offender demands. Some victims reported that images of their abuse were captured by offenders on mobile phones and threats were made that others would be shown the images if they did not carry out what was being asked of them. Offenders often demonstrate an interest in victims' families, particularly in cases where victims are groomed to believe that the offender is their older 'boyfriend'. This information is used by the offender to manipulate and control victims, preventing their exit from exploitation. Offender knowledge of victims' families can result in threats and intimidation. In some cases, victims were told that if they failed to comply with offender demands, their family would be assaulted and their home vandalised. In some cases, offenders have threatened to sexually assault and rape family members of victims. In one case, a victim was told that if she did not comply with the demands of her exploiters, the offender would sexually exploit her sister instead.

Coercion may also take the form of physical coercion, in which the victim is assaulted if he or she does not comply with what is being asked of him or her. In some cases, victims were locked in premises and were sexually exploited. Some victims reported that they had been held down and raped.

Exploitation

Information was received which reported that children had experienced a range of types of sexual exploitation. Offences included rape, sexual assault, false imprisonment, assault, child abuse images being made of the child and administering a substance with intent as a precursor to perpetrating abuse.

Where the 'boyfriend' grooming method was used, victims reported that they had been introduced to other males by their boyfriend or taken to houses at which other males were present, and that the other males had sexually assaulted or raped them. Offenders supplied drugs to victims prior to exploitation, though in some cases, victims stated they believed their drinks had been spiked. In these cases, victims reported feeling strange after having had a drink and in some cases victims believed they had been sexually assaulted or raped but had no recollection of what had happened. It is therefore evident that some offenders spike victims' drinks with drugs to reduce their resistance and facilitate exploitation.

In some cases, victims reported that they had been offered a 'choice' by the males who exploited them – they could either be orally or vaginally raped. Victims were not able to refuse but were told that they had to 'choose' one of these options. When a victim tried to refuse, she was threatened and orally raped. It was often reported that victims were compelled to carry out the sexual activity requested of them by the offender; otherwise, they would be forced to do it with an underlying threat of physical violence. Some victims did not always equate this experience with rape.

In the majority of cases where sufficient information is available, an implicit threat of physical violence underlies the sexual exploitation.

Location of exploitation

Victims reported being sexually exploited in a variety of locations which included private residences, public areas such

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as parks, in vehicles and in hotel rooms. In many such cases, victims were transported to the locus of abuse. Victims were reported to have been moved by offenders within the same town, to other towns in the police force area and further afield.

In cases in which victims were taken to other towns or areas, victims reported being taken to houses and to hotel rooms. In some cases, victims were informed that they were going to attend a party, but on arrival at the location they were sexually exploited. When victims reported being taken to houses, links between the offender and the address to which the child was taken were not clear in most cases.

Taking a child to a different town or city with which they are unfamiliar is, in some cases, a deliberate tactic used by the offender to disorientate the child. Offenders place the victim into a situation from which they cannot escape, as they do not know where they are or how to find their way home. In addition, if the victim is unfamiliar with their surroundings, they may find it difficult to recall details of the location of exploitation, impeding law enforcement investigation. In cases where victims were taken to a location with which they were unfamiliar, some victims were told that if they did not engage in sexual activities with the offender, they would be left in the unfamiliar location. Moving a child between towns in neighbouring police force areas may be a deliberate strategy to prevent any single police force obtaining a picture of the complete pattern of offending behaviour.

Offender outcome

In many cases, the offender outcome was not known. Some convictions were obtained for offences relating to sexual exploitation, others were acquitted following a trial and in some cases the CPS stated that there was not enough evidence against the offender to proceed with a court case.

In some cases, the CPS advised that a court case should not be proceeded with as the victim was considered to be unreliable. The reasons underlying this assessment of victim reliability is unclear. It is possible that a child may be considered to be unreliable due to inconsistencies in their account of the exploitation experienced. It is possible that the trauma could lead to difficulties in recalling events clearly or describing them consistently. The use of drugs immediately prior to exploitation may also affect their ability to clearly recall their exploitation.

In many cases, the victim did not wish to support a police investigation or court case following the initial disclosure. This reluctance to discuss experiences of exploitation appears to stem from (i) not wanting friends or family members to be aware of what has happened to them, and (ii) fear of repercussions from the offenders. In some cases, it appears that victims have been threatened by offenders, their associates and other victims into withdrawing their complaint. It is also evident that in some cases, perpetrators have deliberately instructed victims to tell police they are over 16, should they encounter police together. This suggests that offenders are, in many cases, fully aware of victim age, perhaps deliberately targeting younger girls due to their greater vulnerability as well as to satisfy a sexual interest in younger children. It also demonstrates that offenders are generally equipped with tactics to evade law enforcement and excuse their behaviour.

Summary

Offending behaviour is diverse. Some offenders operate in networks, either as a core figure responsible for identifying and grooming victims for exploitation by a group of their friends and associates, or acting on the periphery of the network, where they play little role in grooming, but will sexually exploit children and young people when given the opportunity by an associate at the core of the network. Other offenders operate in isolation, independently from the influence of a group of friends and associates. There is considerable variability within the offender profile.

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The motivation of offenders engaged in child sexual exploitation appear to be diverse, and the pathways to perpetrating contact abuse are variable. It is recommended that a range of offenders are subject to a thorough debrief for the development of a detailed psychological profile. This would enable researchers to gain an insight into the motivations underlying the exploitative behaviour. The desire to exert control over victims through sexual abuse bears some similarities with offenders who perpetrate domestic abuse, and many offenders clearly demonstrate a deviant sexual interest in children. It is possible that offender psychology bears some resemblance to that of other child sex offenders and domestic abusers, though this possibility should be subject to further research.

6.3.3 Case Studies

Case studies are presented to illustrate the diversity of offending behaviour associated with child sexual exploitation and various aspects of victim experience and offender profile. These case studies are derived from a variety of sources, including police investigations and NGO/specialist service provider case notes. Although the quantity and quality of available data varies, these case studies have been selected to illustrate key themes. It should be noted that case studies were selected on the basis of available data, and to illustrate a wide range of offending behaviour and victim experience.

Case studies have been anonymised, and in some cases, composites have been created from data pertaining to various cases.

Case study no.1

This case study involves a 14 year old male of White British background, Victim X, who was sexually exploited by a number of male offenders. The principal offender, Offender Y, was in his thirties and of a white British background.

- ➔ Victim X lived in a stable family environment. He had come out as gay a year earlier and his family were supportive. He did not have a history of going missing, though his behaviour began to change and he started returning home late at night. On some occasions, he did not return home at all, telling his family that he was staying overnight with friends.
- ➔ Victim X suffered from low self esteem and was experimenting with drugs and alcohol. One of Victim X's friends introduced him to Offender Y. Initially, the victim perceived Offender Y to be his boyfriend. Offender Y took advantage of Victim X's vulnerability, giving him affection and gifts. In particular, Offender Y supplied the victim with drugs and alcohol and took Victim X out to nightclubs. Victim X felt that he was being treated as an adult. Victim X was also given a mobile telephone by the offender, enabling Offender Y to contact Victim X privately and at any time.
- ➔ Offender Y held parties at his home address and invited various other males. Victim X initially regarded these men as Offender Y's friends. Victim X was sexually abused by the males who attended these 'parties'. Victim X has since stated that other young people were sexually exploited by Offender Y and other unknown males, and that there was rivalry between the young people regarding who was the most 'popular' or 'special' to the abusers.
- ➔ Victim X began to use drugs as a coping mechanism to deal with the exploitation. After a period of time, Victim X was taken to a variety of locations where he was sexually exploited. These locations included other houses, hotels and nightclubs. Victim X was also exploited in public sex environments. In total, Victim X was sexually exploited for two and a half years. When he tried to leave the exploitative situation, threats of violence were made to Victim X and his family by Offender Y. Victim X was also violently raped by two males.

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- ➔ As a result of the exploitation, Victim X's use of drugs and alcohol became problematic and he suffered from depression and developed an eating disorder. Victim X received counselling for these problems, but the exploitation he experienced was not identified. Eventually, Victim X self-referred to a specialist service provider for sexually exploited children.

Emerging themes

- ➔ The information associated with Offender Y reveals only his given name, with no family name and only an approximate age range. Victim X was unable to give any further details of Offender Y or his associates to police or the specialist service provider owing to difficulty recalling events, and the lack of information revealed to him by offenders. In many cases of sexual exploitation, victims only know the offenders by a given name or a nickname. Offenders may also give victims a false name. This impedes identification of offenders and hinders law enforcement investigation.
- ➔ It appears that the offending behaviour was organised to some extent in that abusers attended parties at the home address of Offender Y where boys and young men were sexually exploited. The presence of other offenders at these 'parties' perhaps indicates a network of perpetrators. Offender Y appears to be a recruiter or facilitator for the network, responsible for the recruitment of victims for the group. Overall, this case study is a strong demonstration of exploitation from a victim perspective, where the victim is unable to recall the details or names of most offenders in the network, and despite being familiar with the recruiter, is nevertheless unable to recall their precise name.
- ➔ In addition to organised exploitation at parties, it appears that opportunistic exploitation of the victim also occurred as Victim X stated that he was exploited on the street and in public sex environments. This demonstrates that vulnerable children may experience multiple forms of exploitation simultaneously.
- ➔ Offender Y and his associates were engaged in the exploitation of various other boys and young men. Victim X stated that these boys and young men were in 'competition' to be the most popular among the group of abusers, where popularity was measured in attention and gifts received. This aspect of Victim X's experience echoes other case studies, where young people may feel a sense of rivalry with others in their peer group to be popular with individuals in the offender group. This sense of 'competition' is exploited by the offenders during grooming and abuse.
- ➔ In this case, Victim X began abusing drugs and alcohol, suffered from depression and developed an eating disorder. In cases of sexual exploitation, victims can develop psychological or behavioural problems as a result of abuse. Such victims may be regarded as challenging by law enforcement, healthcare professionals, education professionals or other agencies as a result of these symptoms of exploitation. In some cases, the underlying causes of these problems may not be identified owing to a lack of awareness.

Case study no.2

This case involves a lone offender, aged 21 and of a white British background, Offender X. Offender X lived with a family member, attended college and worked part-time in a local shop.

- ➔ Prior to law enforcement investigation, Offender X was not known to law enforcement for sexual offending against children, though it is believed that he had sexually abused over 100 victims. The youngest victim was 12 years old. The majority of victims lived with their parents, though one victim lived in a care home.

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- ➔ Some victims met Offender X in the shop in which he worked. This shop was located near a location frequented by young females in the evenings. One victim stated that she had attended the same school as Offender X, although they were in different year groups.
- ➔ Victims were befriended by Offender X and were invited to parties at his house. On attending, they were given alcohol. It appears that alcohol was used to reduce the resistance of victims and facilitate sexual offences. Offender X raped the females when they were inebriated. In some cases, the rape would be filmed and shared with others online, and in one case, the victim was given money after being raped.

Emerging themes

- ➔ The duration of Offender X's offending behaviour is not known but it is believed that he offended against up to 100 young females. The victims' experiences were discovered when parents and carers noticed changes in the behaviour of the victims. It is therefore evident that parents and carers should be alert to changes in the behaviour of children which might indicate sexual exploitation.
- ➔ It appears that the exploitation carried out by Offender X was opportunistic rather than organised. Victims were encountered during his work at a local shop. Offender X used his position in the local community to meet vulnerable girls. This echoes the pattern presented in other case studies, where offenders occupy a position in the community which puts them in contact with potential victims. In this respect, the offending behaviour is not dissimilar to that of other child sex offenders who take advantage of a particular form of employment to contact children and young people.
- ➔ The recording of the abuse and use of the internet to distribute images demonstrates that even where offending behaviour does not appear at first glance to be situated within a network, lone offenders can use a 'virtual' network of like-minded individuals to distribute images of victims for the sexual gratification of others. In this sense, online networks are similar to offline networks in that they allow offenders to legitimise their offending behaviour through peer reinforcement. It is also notable that there was no financial motivation for sharing images. Instead, it seems that sharing the images served two purposes: (i) to reinforce and legitimate offending behaviour through peer validation, and (ii) as a means of achieving status and prestige within the offender network.

Case study no.3

This case involved four female victims: V1 (13), V2 (17), V3 (13) and V4 (13). All victims in this case are from a small local area. V1 and V2 are related. V1, V3 and V4 were all friends. At least two further victims were alluded to in police interviews.

Eight offenders were prosecuted for offences against these victims – O1 (22), O2 (21), O3 (20), O4 (20), O5 (19), O6 (28), O7 (20) and O8 (26). However, a number of additional offenders are mentioned during victim accounts, none of whom were identified during investigations. All were of a British Pakistani background. There are various other offenders also mentioned in victim accounts. There were three distinct strands to the offender group: (i) O1, O4, O5, O6 and O7 were friends, (ii) O2 and O3 were friends, and (iii) O8 exploited the girls independently of the other offenders, but was connected to various unknown males.

This case study involves multiple instances of rape, and illustrates a complex web of relationships between offenders and victims.

B – FINDINGS

- ➔ V1 is a younger relation of V2. V1 was exploited by numerous offenders. V1 met O1 first. V1 was then bombarded with phone calls from all offenders in the offender group. O1 had bought V1 a mobile phone, and it is possible he had already shared her number with other offenders known to him before giving it to her. On one occasion, O1 physically assaulted V1 in an attempt to exert control over her behaviour and force her to stop associating with other males in the offender group. V1 reported this assault to the police. O1 later threatened V1 and various family members over MSN and Facebook. During exploitation, V1 was taken into care. V1 reacted against familial and social worker attempts to control her behaviour and mediate the exploitative relationships. V1 was deliberately kept out late at night by various offenders, increasing the tension between V1 and her carers. This appears to have been a deliberate tactic for the reinforcement of relationships between the offenders and V1. Offenders also arranged meetings after dark to avoid being seen in the local area. They later encouraged her to leave the respite unit in which she had been accommodated, and threatened V2 when V1 was taken into care.
- ➔ V2 is the older relative of V1. On one occasion, V2 was taken to a party far away. O1 facilitated travel through the provision of a taxi. It has been suggested that the offenders were connected with the taxi firm in some way, though this has not been evidenced. V2 was exploited on various occasions by O1, O2 and O3. On several occasions following the disclosure of exploitation to the police, V2 was threatened over the phone and disturbed at her place of residence by offenders.
- ➔ V3 was a friend of V1. V3 also socialised with a peer who introduced her to O8. V3 reported spending time on the streets drinking alcohol outside a retailer's premises. O8 facilitated the exploitation of V3 on several occasions. O8 appears to have been uninvolved in contact sexual abuse. He 'provided' the girls to other offenders. There is no evidence to suggest that he targeted particular girls. On the contrary, it appears that O8 exploited vulnerable children available to him through his work in a takeaway. Victims were on the street and consuming alcohol. He asked girls about their friends, perhaps because he believed that they will be vulnerable by association with other vulnerable girls. He obtained the phone numbers of girls through their friends, using peer pressure and legitimisation through others to gain trust and very quickly escalate interactions to sexual abuse.
- ➔ V4 was introduced to various offenders by V3. V4 was wary of the reputation of these men in the area, and was reluctant to spend time with V3 in their presence. V3 was already engaged in risky behaviour, and V4 believed that V3 was swapping sex for favours with various males. V4 was also friends with V1, who was also being sexually exploited. V4 therefore had a number of peers who were being exploited, and was drawn into exploitation from the periphery of her peer group.

Emerging themes – victim experiences

Peer group dynamic

- ➔ The 'peer group' is highly important to grooming. Offenders use one girl to gain access to others, asking victims about their friends and encouraging them to bring their friends to pre-arranged meetings. In this case study, one offender had a reputation in the local area for forcing girls to do things against their will. However, victims were also aware of girls who would take lifts from this individual in his car. This was an implicit peer endorsement, undermining any prior perception of risk.
- ➔ Offenders also use the girls' desire to belong and fit into their peer group to push them into exploitative situations. For example, if a girl expresses a reluctance to engage in sexual activity, offenders argue that 'your friend does it'. This puts pressure on the girls to engage in sexual risk taking to fit in.

B – FINDINGS

- ➔ If a victim attempts to steer away from risky situations, peers can pull them back in. For example, one victim fell out with a friend who had been groomed to believe that one offender was a boyfriend and the others were friendly and trustworthy. The victim warned her friend that she was being used for sex, causing conflict and breakdown in their friendship. The victim was ostracised. Weeks later she wished to return to the peer group for friendship, immediately placing her in the company of risky individuals, and she was orally raped again.
- ➔ Where victims are heavily groomed, they may also be coerced by offenders to persuade peers to engage in sexual activity. For example, in this case, one victim expressed reluctance to engage in sexual activity with an offender. The offender was observed instructing another victim, who perceived this offender to be her 'boyfriend', to persuade the girl to engage in sexual activity. This puts an additional pressure on the victim, as their peer leads them to believe that they are undermining their friendship by failing to also engage in sexual activity.

Grooming

- ➔ Some girls were coerced into sexual activity almost immediately. For example, one offender would ask victims if they wanted a lift in his car. He would take them a very short distance up the road to the local park, stopping to pick up an associate on the way. He would then coerce the victim to engage in a sexual act with his associate. On each occasion, the offender would proceed through a process of coercion, first arguing 'your friend does it', then issuing threats to the victim and their family, then ignoring the victims' objections whilst allowing his associate to orally rape the victim. In this case, the grooming is minimal. It is likely that offenders will skip grooming and proceed directly to sexual activity if they perceive the victim to be sufficiently vulnerable.
- ➔ Some girls appear to be more vulnerable to grooming than others. For example, in this case, V1 had a number of 'boyfriends' in the offender group. She had a chaotic lifestyle, which was exacerbated following exploitation. V1 also frequently lied about her age, stating that she was 15 when she was in fact 13. This may be taken to suggest that V1 wanted to appear older than she was in order to enter into a relationship with the offender, probably to emulate her older relative V2 who was also exploited.
- ➔ Victims frequently report that rape occurred following constant persuasion, harassment and coercion. For example, an offender would ask repeatedly for the victim to perform a sexual act. Constant harassment causes victims to submit to the exploitation.

Emerging themes – offender profile

Targeting

- ➔ One offender worked in a town centre location late at night, causing them to come into contact with victims when they were on the street. For example, in this case, the victims often reported purchasing alcohol from a retail outlet in the town centre. They would often frequent a takeaway restaurant located nearby, where they encountered O8.
- ➔ When an offender had obtained a victim's phone number, it appears to have been shared with their peers. Victims reported receiving texts and phone calls, often from unknown or concealed phone numbers. For example, V1 reported receiving a high volume of calls and texts from unknown individuals. It was also reported that a local taxi firm was used by offenders to facilitate the movement of victims to local addresses where they would be sexually exploited. The victims reported that some offenders worked for the taxi firm. In some cases, victims reported being targeted on the street by offenders in cars, despite having had no prior contact with them or their associates.

B – FINDINGS

Grooming

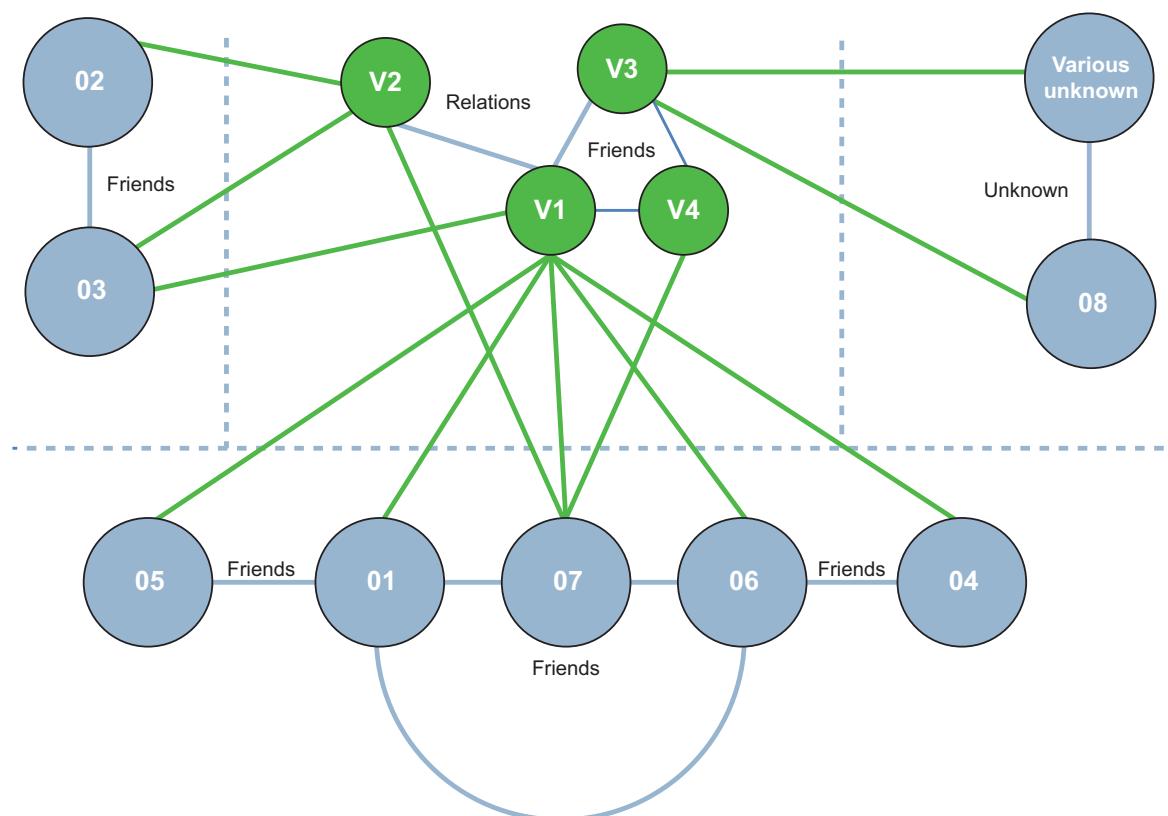
- Offenders would often ask victims to engage in oral sex. Victims would frequently refuse. When the refusal was made, offenders would either continue to harass the victim until they were coerced into performing oral sex, or alternatively, provide the victim with a choice: engage in oral sex, or submit to full sex. Victims felt compelled to choose one of the options. In these cases, the grooming period appears to have been very short, lasting perhaps only a few hours. These appear to be commonplace grooming tactics – offenders were aware that victims would eventually submit to sexual activity if they harassed them sufficiently. Should they refuse, offenders were aware that presenting a choice between oral sex and full sex would compel victims to submit to some form of sexual activity.
- Victims were deliberately kept out late at night by offenders. This appears to have been a deliberate ploy to destabilise families by keeping girls out late at night/breaking curfews. Offenders appear to be aware that this is a risky tactic. For example, V1 was given a curfew by police to return to her family home each night following repeat missing episodes and the intervention of children's services. However, offenders deliberately drove her around late at night, breaking her curfew. V1 believed that one of these offenders was her boyfriend, creating conflict in the home and ultimately leading to her being taken into care.
- Some victims were occasionally driven to neighbouring towns and addresses in the same town in order to prevent victims from easily fleeing the address. By forcing victims to rely on the offender for a lift back to their place of residence, the victim is placed in a heightened state of vulnerability, impeding their ability to flee the situation and return to a place of safety.
- Offenders may also record abuse on mobile phones. This is a method for coercion. There is an implicit threat that the material will be shared, though in this case, victims reported being only vaguely aware of the existence of these recordings.

Offender network

- Power and status appears to be a factor in offending behaviour. For example, in this case, one particular offender facilitates the exploitation of victims. He does not sexually abuse them himself. It is possible that he is engaged in commercial sexual exploitation and receives some form of payment for providing a victim to an abuser; however, this cannot be substantiated. Any exchange between facilitator and abuser would not necessarily be witnessed by the victim. It is therefore extremely difficult to prove commercial sexual exploitation conclusively.
- Competition between offenders may also suggest that status within the offending group was important. For example, in this case, an offender had previously been involved in the exploitation of a victim. Their 'relationship' ended, and the victim found a new 'boyfriend' within the wider offending group. A conflict over this resulted in the two offenders physically fighting over access to the victim.
- Offending behaviour was distributed fairly equally across all offenders in the group as a whole, though there appears to be three elements to this group, each of which is quite distinct:
 - O8 was exclusively involved in the facilitation of sexual abuse, and this may have been commercial sexual exploitation. O8 was a 'specialist', and he used various assets to facilitate offending (car, drugs for spiking drinks, and a mobile phone for facilitation). However, he cannot be connected with any other offenders in the group.

B – FINDINGS

- O2 and O3 appear to have been fairly distinct from the other offenders. They do not appear to know the others in the group, their offences were committed together and in isolation, and they came from a neighbouring town.
- O1, O4, O5, O6 and O7 all knew each other through family and social ties prior to offending. Offences were often committed in pairs, and they appear to have been broadly aware of the offending committed by others in the group. However, O4 is a more peripheral figure in this group, and he physically fought O1 over access to V1.



Case study no.4

This case study is based on the offending behaviour of a British male of Black Caribbean background who is suspected of having sexually exploited more than 30 young females, referred to as Offender X.

- Offender X was already known to the police for a range of criminal offences prior to investigation for child sexual exploitation, including perverting the course of justice, possession of a firearm and causing/inciting prostitution.
- Offender X recruited victims by approaching young females in the town centre, usually approximately 14 to 15 years old, and offering them supposedly lucrative employment selling goods on the street. Some victims were introduced to Offender X by other victims. The conditions of 'employment' were arranged to place the victims in debt bondage to the offender.
- During the first week of 'employment' in which the females were not receiving any salary, Offender X would purchase expensive items for them such as clothing and would keep a record of how much money he had spent on each victim.

B – FINDINGS

- ➔ The females inevitably ended up in debt to Offender X. He would then inform the females that they had to earn more money for him in order to repay their debt. Offender X advised them that they could repay their debt through either sexual or criminal exploitation (selling crack cocaine on his behalf). If females refused to engage in sexual exploitation, they or their families were threatened with violence. At least two victims stated they were physically assaulted by Offender X.

Emerging themes

- ➔ Offender X used debt bondage as a means of coercing victims into exploitative acts. This tactic appears to have been pursued quite aggressively as a means of forcing the girls into sexual exploitation. This tactic appears to have been used as a means of establishing control over victims, equivalent to the use of the 'boyfriend' MO.
- ➔ This offender operated alone rather than in a group. The group dynamic may be quite different, as the actions of other perpetrators may legitimise and reinforce offending behaviour, breaking down inhibitors. In this case, the offender's inhibitors were perhaps overcome after having been charged and convicted of previous offences. The fear of law enforcement action was perhaps diminished.

Case study no.5

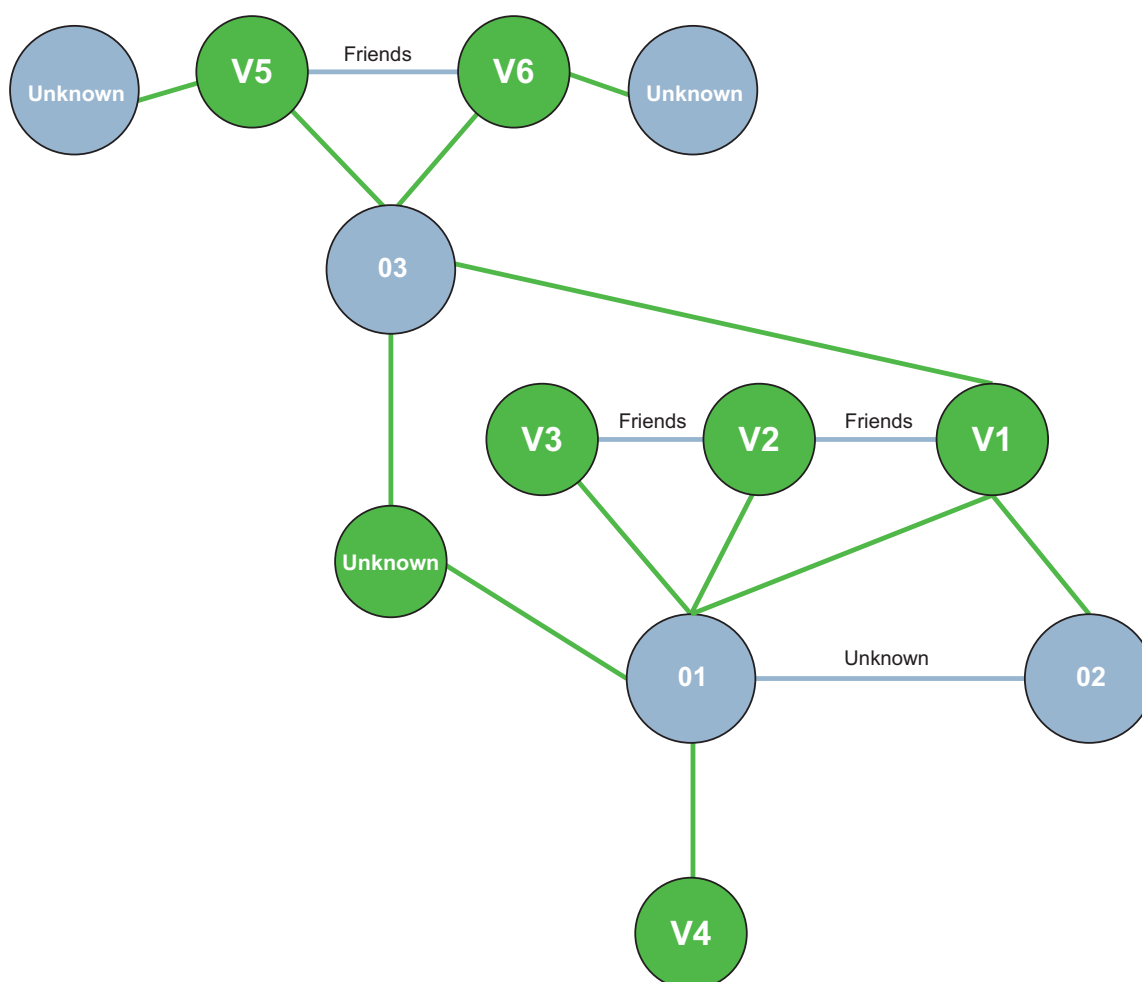
This case study involves six female victims: V1 (15), V2 (13), V3 (19), V4 (19), V5 (16) and V6 (15). There are three male offenders, all white British: O1 (21), O2 (28) and O3 (22). There are multiple strands to the sexual exploitation.

- ➔ Initially, V1 believed that she was in a relationship with O1. V1 was raped on two occasions by O1 during this period. O1 had a previous conviction for the sexual abuse of a child when aged 16. Intelligence suggests that O1 had been involved in inappropriate relationships with young girls previously.
- ➔ V1 later believed that she was in a relationship with O2. O2 groomed V1 to believe that he was her boyfriend. He was later served an abduction notice. When V1 was told that O2 had been ordered to stay away from her, she self-harmed and threatened suicide. O2 sent V1 text messages threatening to commit suicide unless she attempted to see him, exacerbating V1's mental health issues. Overall, V1 went missing 53 times in a 15 month period. There is little evidence to connect O1 and O2 in the exploitation of V1.
- ➔ V2 went missing from home with V1. O1 made sexual advances toward V2, though there is no evidence to suggest she was sexually exploited. V2's older sister, V3, was sexually exploited by O1. V3 was aged 19 but had severe learning difficulties. O1 also sexually exploited V4, another young adult with severe learning difficulties.
- ➔ V5 and V6 went missing together on one occasion and were found in the company of O3. O3 can be connected with O1 through another girl who may have been sexually exploited by O1. V1 could also be connected with O3. O3 is therefore connected to the other offenders only through the exploitation of one or more victims.
- ➔ V5 had previously been seen getting into the cars of unknown men. It is believed that V5 was sexually exploited by a large group of men in a neighbouring region. V6 was sexually exploited by another unknown male. It is possible that she was also a victim of criminal exploitation, in that she may have been handling drugs on behalf of this unknown male.
- ➔ V1, V2, V5 and V6 all had a history of self-harm. All victims in this case study were vulnerable prior to meeting the offenders.

B – FINDINGS

Emerging themes

- This case study demonstrates the complex relationships formed by offenders in the opportunistic sexual exploitation of vulnerable young people. The connections between the victims and offenders in this case are fairly loose, and the offending behaviour is not organised. It appears that the offenders are connected exclusively through the shared victimisation of the same individuals. However, offences do not appear to have been commissioned or perpetrated in concert. V1 was exploited by a number of offenders, though they do not appear to have deliberately acted in concert to groom and abuse her. Rather, O1 and O2 acted in isolation.
- It is evident that vulnerable victims can be abused by multiple offenders over a period of time. V5 and V6 were both abused by various unknown males. V5 was taken to a neighbouring region where she was abused by multiple unknown males implicated in the sexual exploitation of another group of victims, and V6 was coerced into handling drugs on behalf of an unknown male. These experiences indicate that vulnerable children and young people can be victimised by a large number of males in a variety of ways.



Case study no.6

This case refers to one known victim, Victim X, a 13 year old female. Victim X displayed several indicators of vulnerability prior to experiencing exploitation. Victim X began frequenting Takeaway Restaurant 1 where she encountered various adult males who worked on the premises.

B – FINDINGS

Overall, Victim X was abused by at least 6 males, O1 (20), O2 (20), O3 (26), O4 (35, married with children), O5 (37, married with children), and O6 (24, married with children). At least 2 other offenders were alluded to during interview. O2 and O3 are cousins; and O5 and O4 were friends. All offenders were of a British Asian background.

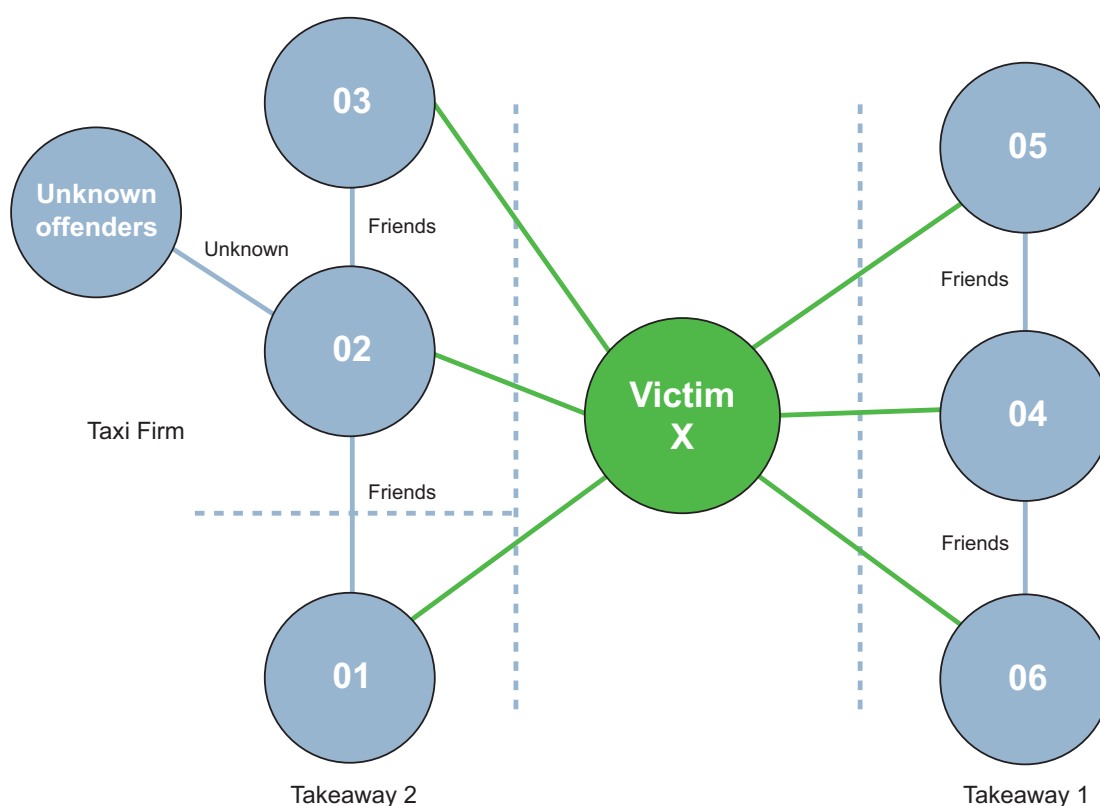
- ➔ Victim X first encountered O5 through his work as a delivery driver at Takeaway 1. O5 raped Victim X on several occasions.
- ➔ Victim X was also abused by the owner of Takeaway 1, O4. After a period of grooming, O4 raped Victim X in the back room of Takeaway 1.
- ➔ O6 was a delivery driver at Takeaway 1. He was one of at least three individuals known to Victim X who used the same nickname. He gave Victim X gifts and drove her to various locations in his car. He raped her in his car on several occasions.
- ➔ Victim X encountered O1 at Takeaway 2. Victim X received constant phone calls and texts from O1. Victim X thought that O1 was her boyfriend and that they were 'going out'. However, she was also aware that they were never out in public together. He would coerce Victim X into sex, telling her that she 'wanted' or 'needed' sex, occasionally locking the doors to prevent her leaving. O1 used violent threats as a means of coercion. O1 passed her phone number to O2.
- ➔ O2 worked for a taxi firm in the town. He used one nickname in the town, and another when elsewhere in the region. He groomed Victim X over the phone and subsequently raped her on multiple occasions.
- ➔ Victim X's friend was present on several occasions, though there is no suggestion that she was raped or abused. She was groomed, though offenders appeared to target Victim X specifically. They were aware of her vulnerability and exploited her.
- ➔ The offenders did not belong to a fully connected network. O4, O5 and O6 encountered Victim X through Takeaway 2. O1 encountered Victim X through Takeaway 1. O1 and O2 were friends – O2 was given Victim X's phone number by O1. O2 and O3 worked for the same employer. Again, they all targeted a vulnerable girl, though they were not necessarily related in any way.
- ➔ In some respects, through their work these offenders had attained a position of responsibility and power in the community. In the absence of education, Victim X spent time at Takeaway restaurants. Offenders abused their position of power.
- ➔ Offenders used multiple phones and concealed their number when contacting Victim X. This would suggest that offenders deliberately attempted to evade detection should their offending behaviour be reported.

Emerging themes

- ➔ Four principal grooming tactics were used in this case:
 - (i) Emotional blackmail, telling the victim that 'if you were my friend you'd do it'. This played on Victim X's vulnerability, her lack of friends, her disengagement from education, and her need for affection. O1 also played on this vulnerability and outlined the consequences of failing to comply with his demands, though instead of threatening to remove his friendship, he threatened her with violence.

B – FINDINGS

- (ii) Creating an artificial ‘debt’ to be repaid through sexual exploitation. For example, giving Victim X cigarettes for free created a ‘debt’ that could only be paid off through sexual exploitation.
- (iii) Bombarding Victim X with calls and texts from offenders. In combination, it is likely that Victim X received texts and calls from multiple offenders at all times of day and night. This pressure would have been very difficult to withstand without any support, and Victim X found it easier to submit to the demands placed upon her than to resist.
- (iv) Leading Victim X to believe that they were her ‘boyfriend’. O2 was particularly devious. Having raped her on their first meeting, Victim X was scared of O2. However, O2 then convinced Victim X that he loved her by grooming her extensively for a month before subjecting her to multiple rapes.



Case study no.7

This case study focuses on children who were targeted by a group of males for sexual exploitation. Eight children identified as repeat missing persons in a local area were also identified as being sexually exploited.

A number of males sexually exploited these victims. The offenders did not make up an organised network. They were a large group of males from a variety of backgrounds and not all offenders were known to each other. The group included some British males of an unknown Asian background and a number of White British men.

B – FINDINGS

- ➔ The Asian males identified worked for taxi companies and in takeaway restaurants. Many of the White British males identified in the offender group had a prior history of perpetrating sexual offences against young girls and some were known heroin addicts.
- ➔ Some young adults, aged over 18, had previously been sexually exploited by these offenders when under the age of 18. They had been groomed to recruit new victims for their exploiters. Gifts, including alcohol and drugs, were used to groom girls for exploitation.
- ➔ Offenders used false names and nicknames during interactions with the victims in order to conceal their true identity. Offenders appear to have deliberately targeted girls aged 13 and over, waiting until girls turned 13 before sexually exploiting them, as they were aware that they could then claim that they believed the victim to be over 16 at the time of the sexual activity.
- ➔ All victims were aged 14-18. In total, these children went missing on 225 separate occasions during a six month period. The missing episodes are likely to have coincided with incidents of sexual exploitation. It is known that seven out of the eight victims used drugs and half of the victims were known to have self-harmed.
- ➔ In most cases, victims were groomed according to a fairly similar process. Victims, often aged 12 at the time, would be approached by a teenage boy connected with the offender group. The boy would become their 'boyfriend', giving the victims gifts and affection. The 'boyfriend' would often coerce the victim to engage in sexual activity as a form of 'payment' for the gifts received. The victim would then be introduced to various older males and sexually exploited. Victims would often be taken to unknown flats and hotels in the area where the abuse would take place. These males would threaten the victims with violence.
- ➔ The victims came from mixed backgrounds. Some were in local authority care. Others lived with their parents, but had a chaotic lifestyle owing to parental substance misuse, neglect and abuse. Some victims came from stable homes, but were associating with risky adults and were drawn into exploitation through the grooming process. The offender group occasionally paid girls to recruit other victims. Some victims were taken into care following exploitation.

Emerging themes

- ➔ Although it is not possible to determine the exact nature of the relationship between the offenders in the group and the victims, it appears that some of the offending behaviour was organised. The use of a consistent grooming method and the transportation of the victims to a range of specific locations for abuse would suggest that offenders planned the commissioning of offences. The use of a younger offender to recruit girls suggests that offenders had specific roles in the commissioning of the sexual exploitation. Overall, the limited information available points to an organised network of abusers.
- ➔ Victims who had been groomed and abused were used to recruit girls. It is suggested that some of the recruiters were over the age of 18. This demonstrates that for many victims, there is no exit to exploitation. Their exploitation continues beyond the age of 18. It is also evident that offenders deliberately target children. Offenders lose their sexual interest in victims after they have reached the age of 18, preferring to risk the recruitment of new victims. It is therefore clear that, in this case at least, the offenders have specifically targeted young children.

B – FINDINGS

Case study no.8

This case study illustrates the experience of a female victim of sexual exploitation in a town in northern England. Although comparatively little information is known of her exploiters, this case study demonstrates the way in which a chaotic family life can place a child at risk of sexual exploitation.

- ➔ Victim X had been involved with social services since her birth. Her mother was an alcoholic, and it has been suggested that both her mother and her sister had also been sexually exploited. Victim X's father was in prison.
- ➔ Victim X bullied other children at school. At the age of 11, she was sexually abused by a known child sex offender residing in the local area. She was groomed by this offender, and believed that she 'loved him'. This offender appeared to offer Victim X affection which was missing from her family life. This relationship continued for several years.
- ➔ At the age of 12, Victim X was eventually excluded from school for the persistent bullying of other students, though she continued to attend a Pupil Referral Unit on a sporadic basis. She was very unhappy at home was badly neglected and there was rarely food available in the family home. Victim X started spending more time on the street where she was associating with adult males. Victim X began associating with other vulnerable children as she became increasingly detached, and she was known to the police for theft and other criminality.
- ➔ There were two strands to the exploitation of Victim X:
 - (i) As Victim X became increasingly detached, she was groomed and sexually exploited by another adult male. This offender created a profile of Victim X on an adult sex website designed to facilitate sexual relationships between site members. The offender controlled her use of this website, and coerced her into sexual exploitation with males met online in exchange for money. The offender has groomed Victim X to feel in control of these situations, as the men she met through the website often lacked confidence. Victim X did not see herself as a victim of sexual exploitation as a result of this grooming, though she exchanged sex for money in order to buy food. She had no control over her situation and had no alternative but to exchange sex for food.
 - (ii) Victim X frequented the city centre and would get into cars with men who would then sexually abuse her. On more than one occasion, Victim X was held against her will at a hotel by an offender and forced to have sex. Victim X was also sexually abused at a number of private addresses by a number of offenders in the local area, generally aged 30 – 50. Some of these offenders remained in contact with Victim X through her mobile phone. Many offenders sexually abused Victim X on multiple occasions. After meeting Victim X on the street, one male befriended her on Facebook and then used access to her Facebook 'friend list' to make contact with other girls. Victim X was known to have 'recruited' other vulnerable girls for sexual exploitation. On occasions, Victim X threatened other girls if they did not do as she asked and engage in sexual activity with other men.
- ➔ Victim X's mother was aware that she was being sexually exploited but did not intervene, and there was unconfirmed information to suggest that her mother took indecent images of Victim X as a child and sold them to local men. Victim X was also known to have inappropriate sexual relationships with younger boys.
- ➔ Victim X self harmed and eventually, she was referred to a specialist service for sexually exploited children by children's services. Victim X was very difficult to engage with, and would often act aggressively or violently toward people who tried to help her.

B – FINDINGS

Emerging themes

- ➔ This case demonstrates the way in which a chaotic family life and neglect can place a child at risk of sexual exploitation. It is evident that parental neglect led to Victim X becoming detached from school and her home life. She began spending more time on the streets where she came into contact with her exploiters. In this instance, the victim was 'pushed' from home, rather than 'pulled' by grooming and exploitation.
- ➔ Victim X found it difficult to engage with agencies which tried to provide help and support. The length of time in exploitation made it difficult for her to trust adults. Earlier intervention may have prevented much of the abuse she experienced.

Case study no.9

This case study illustrates the way in which (i) victims can be drawn into exploitation through association with peers who spend time in the company of perpetrators, and (ii) ties with offenders can be broken through multi-agency support.

- ➔ Victim X began associating with peers who introduced her to various adult males. Some of the males had previously sexually exploited the girls. On several occasions, Victim X visited a friend's house where she would spend time with these males. Victim X was made to feel special in the company of these adult males and her peers, giving her a sense of belonging.
- ➔ One offender in particular groomed Victim X to believe that he was her 'boyfriend'. She believed that she was in love with this offender. He raped her on multiple occasions, and it was evident that her friends were being sexually exploited by other adult males in the group. However, she was loyal to the offender, refusing to speak with the police regarding her situation and claiming that she had 'consented' to all sexual activity with this particular male. Eventually, Victim X began truanting from school and running away from home in order to spend time with this offender.
- ➔ Victim X had a stable home life. She had a good relationship with her parents, and her siblings were unaffected by sexual exploitation. Over time, her parents became broadly aware that she was being sexually exploited. Her parents found it difficult to cope with the situation, as Victim X's behaviour became increasingly difficult as she spent time away from home in the company of the offender and his associates. They felt powerless to intervene in her exploitation, and their family life was placed under immense pressure. Although Victim X attended school, school staff became concerned that her behaviour was overly sexualised, particularly in her interactions with other students. Social services were alerted, and she was later referred to a specialist service for sexually exploited children and young people.
- ➔ When police were made aware of her sexual exploitation, Victim X resisted any engagement and refused to cooperate with police during enquiries. The victim continued to frequent various locations in the area with friends in order to meet older males during this period. A child protection plan was eventually put in place by social services.
- ➔ With support for both Victim X and her family from professionals, including social workers, specialist project workers and the police, Victim X was eventually able to exit exploitation. She re-engaged with school and stopped running away from home. Furthermore, Victim X recognised and acknowledged that she had been groomed.

B – FINDINGS

Emerging themes

- ➔ Most notably, this case study demonstrates that children from stable families can also become drawn into sexual exploitation. In some cases, the 'boyfriend' MO is particularly effective where children experience a deficit of love and attention in their home life. However, it can also be an effective grooming tactic when children belong to a stable family. This suggests that vulnerability to exploitation is subtle, and association with vulnerable peers may be considered a risk factor.
- ➔ This case also demonstrates that multi-agency support and intervention can be effective for breaking the link with an offender and re-engaging the victim with education. It is notable that Victim X's family also received support from professionals. Sexual exploitation can damage relationships between children and parents, so support for both parties during re-engagement is absolutely vital.

B – FINDINGS

7 Victim consultation

In order to shed further light on the understanding of victim experiences derived from the literature review, practitioner debriefings and quantitative/qualitative intelligence analysis, CEOP consulted with children and young people who had experienced sexual exploitation. Two groups of young people communicated their thoughts on their experience of reporting sexual exploitation, and their interactions with the police and criminal justice process during a face-to-face consultation process. This consultation was facilitated by the National Working Group on Sexual Exploitation which included a range of projects working directly with children.

Key themes are explored in more detail below, with reference to the specific feelings and attitudes articulated by the consultation groups.

7.1 Barriers to reporting sexual exploitation to law enforcement

Each Consultation Group (CG1 and CG2) was asked about difficulties faced by young people in reporting their experiences of sexual exploitation to police forces. Several key themes emerged.

Fear

Many children and young people reported that a general fear of both police processes and the consequences of reporting exploitation to law enforcement were considerable barriers. Participants demonstrated a general fear of involvement in the law enforcement and judicial process, including questioning, giving evidence and potentially acting as witnesses in criminal prosecutions. This fear was underpinned by a general perception that they would not be viewed as credible witnesses, and is exacerbated by the negative experiences of peers who have also been involved in police investigations of sexual exploitation.

Young people were afraid that making a complaint to police would trigger an investigation which would place their family under stress:

"I didn't want to go through that. I didn't want that stress for my parents." (CG1)

"If you've got a hard family life you don't want to put more stress on your parents, you might not know how your parents would react" (CG1)

Children and young people also stated that they were afraid of the possible repercussions of alerting police to their experiences of exploitation. One participant stated that they felt that *"when you're talking to the police... everyone finds out. It's not private"* (CG1). Participants believed that they had no protection from their exploiters after they had spoken to the police. They believed that offenders would be bailed following arrest, allowing them back into the community:

"He's a danger. He's a criminal. You're always going to see him. He lives so close to me in town." (CG2)

Participants stated that they feared seeing their exploiter in their community or being intimidated, threatened or re-abused by an offender following a report to the police. Some participants stated that exploiters should be removed from the community during the investigation of a complaint for their protection, arguing that it is unfair for victims to be forced to leave the area instead:

"You're a victim not a criminal. You shouldn't change your life to avoid him." (CG2)

Overall, fear is a major barrier to reporting. Participants were afraid of both the law enforcement process and the possible retribution of exploiters in their local community.

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Negative perception of police

Some participants stated that they had negative perceptions of the police which would discourage reporting experiences of sexual exploitation. Some participants in the group said that they had previously interacted with police officers when out in public places, often when drinking alcohol at weekends. Participants generally agreed that police in such situations do not *“talk to you nicely”*, and *“you wouldn’t want to speak with police officers after that”* (CG2). Some participants reported that they believed that the police would not be able to understand the issues associated with sexual exploitation:

“Most of the time police officers who deal with it are police who deal with everything” (CG2)

“It’s frightening that police officers don’t understand” (CG2)

Participants suggested that their negative perception of the police would prevent the disclosure of exploitation or compliance in ongoing investigations.

Police attitudes

Participants stated that the police had often adopted a very negative attitude towards victims of child sexual exploitation. The attitude of police officers is evidently a key factor in mediating victim engagement in the law enforcement investigation process.

For example, some participants stated that the posture of the police officer affected their ability to engage with law enforcement enquiries. One participant stated that the police officer they dealt with was *“proper chatty and made me feel comfortable”* (CG1), whereas another participant stated that a police officer *“really put me in my place and made me feel weird”* (CG1). Another participant added *“she could have smiled”* (CG1).

Some participants reported having good interactions with police officers, saying *“it depends on which one it is”* (CG1), with some PCSOs and school police officers specifically mentioned during discussions of positive interactions with police.

Participants also stated that police officers often made assumptions about their lifestyle and background which undermined their credibility as victims and witnesses. These observations were generally related to the perception of participants that police officers fail to understand the nature of sexual exploitation:

“If they question you a lot and say ‘did you try to run away?’ and they think you didn’t try to get away, they think you wanted it. They doubt you.” (CG1)

“You feel judged because of your background. They may not believe you”. (CG1)

Some participants also felt that these opinions were often based on previous interactions and knowledge of the victim’s family:

“They put you in a category – your parents don’t care, you’re a little slapper.” (CG2)

“They stereotype you, because of how my mum looks – she looks like she takes a lot of drugs.” (CG2)

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The belief held among participants that police officers stereotype victims of child sexual exploitation is likely to be damaging to the investigation process. Victims will not approach police officers if they believe that their complaint will not be dealt with on a neutral basis, but will be interpreted on the basis of inaccurate and preconceived notions of ‘promiscuity’ and dysfunctional family lives. Participants strongly felt that police officers should not judge children and young people who report experiencing child sexual exploitation based on previous experiences with children and young people. Overall, it is unacceptable that witness credibility could be undermined by preconceived perceptions of victim lifestyle, circumstances and behaviours.

Overall, the victims of sexual exploitation who participated in this consultation exercise reported a deficit of trust between victims and the police. One participant stated that:

“If I ever got raped I wouldn’t tell no-one. I don’t trust no-one”. (CG2)

7.2 Experiences of investigation and judicial process

Participants in the consultation exercise were also asked about their experiences as witnesses in investigations of child sexual exploitation and in court proceedings against offenders.

Pressure

Investigations of sexual exploitation can be highly traumatic for victims. Aside from the potential threats and intimidation which may arise from reporting sexual exploitation to the police, questioning during interviews by police can also discourage participation in the investigative process. Participants reported that some police officers exerted excessive pressure during interviews in an attempt to extract evidence to assist investigations:

“In the interviews they put pressure on you. They make you feel you’ve done something wrong”. (CG2)

“The way they put pressure on you... they will ask the same questions over and over again – ‘are you 100% sure it’s like that’ – and if you won’t tell them everything they get proper mad”. (CG2)

One participant stated that repeated questioning was unwelcome:

“People don’t go to the police because when you go to the police it makes the situation 150 times worse. You have to go through it again and again”. (CG2)

Several participants remarked that the police *“twist your words”* (CG2), indicating that victims feel that they have been unable to give a full and accurate account of their experiences of exploitation during investigation.

Participants also reported feeling under pressure during court proceedings. Participants reported that there could be up to ten barristers for the accused, so that a witness could be cross-examined up to ten times. Barristers could also be particularly aggressive in their questioning:

“It’s just too intense...” (CG2)

“They try to trick you into saying it’s not true and that it’s a lie”. (CG1)

Some participants said that they would have welcomed some coaching on the court process prior to giving evidence, as they felt unprepared for the aggressive attitude of the barristers, and their attempts to undermine the victim through confusing and oblique lines of questioning.

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Many participants were also afraid of seeing their exploiter in court:

“No way I can face him again”. (CG2)

Although victims could apply for special measures to be implemented for cross examination, the use of a video link for giving evidence was considered inappropriate by many participants. The video link allows the victim to give evidence from a remote location, though their image can be seen by everyone in the courtroom. Participants expressed discomfort with the idea of the family and friends of their exploiter being able to see them on the screen in court.

“They know what I look like and I don’t like it... I have actually seen them in town and run away” (CG1)

Overall, it is evident that victims of child sexual exploitation are subjected to severe pressure during the investigative and judicial process. Victims are aware that their testimony is crucial to securing a successful prosecution, though the interviews with police officers experienced by some participants during investigation were not conducive to maximising the extraction of evidence. Their experiences of cross examination were also extremely negative.

Disbelief

Many participants reported that police often failed to take them seriously or believe their accounts of sexual exploitation during interviews. Disbelief is particularly damaging. Having overcome the barriers to reporting outlined above, victims should be taken seriously by the police. However, some participants in the consultation stated that they felt they had not been taken seriously by the police:

“The police always assume that we’re lying.” (CG2)

“Why would we go the police and lie about it?” (CG2)

Participants also reported experiencing the disbelief of others in the courtroom, with many reporting that they had been accused of lying by barristers during cross examination. One participant stated that they felt judges were inclined to believe that victims were lying based on prior conceptions of children and young people:

“They keep telling you you’re lying.” (CG1)

“And judges don’t believe you – they stereotype you.” (CG2)

Overall, the fear of encountering disbelief may be sufficient to impede children and young people reporting sexual exploitation to law enforcement. Many participants reported that disbelief was encountered among police officers, and barristers would overtly accuse victims of lying about their experiences during cross examination. Some participants perceived there to be a general attitude of disbelief running through law enforcement and the judiciary. This perception is likely to deter future complaints concerning sexual exploitation.

Failure/cases dropped

Many participants in the consultation reported that they had been witnesses in cases of sexual exploitation which had been dropped, either by police during investigation, or by the CPS subsequent to investigation. Participants stated that this undermined their faith in law enforcement and their ability to provide protection from exploiters. Victims must live in the knowledge that their exploiter or exploiters are back in their local community:

“I put so much effort in on these cases... he still walks around town” (CG2)

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“When cases are dropped it makes you feel like crap... if a case gets dropped again... if I get raped again I’m just not going to bother” (CG2)

One participant believed that the evasion of prosecution and conviction emboldened offending behaviour:
“Sometimes when they don’t have enough evidence they just drop it without thinking that [young person] is in danger... this makes the [perpetrator] stronger because you told on them but no-one believed you so they can keep doing more” (CG1)

7.3 Victim’s recommendations

Participants were asked to suggest some practical steps for helping them to overcome barriers to reporting to the police, and to improve police responses to sexual exploitation. Their responses are outlined below.

Police

Participants suggested that police officers should be more sensitive in their interactions with children and young people. They urged that police officers should be less formal and should endeavour to speak with children and young people on a more personable basis. Victims of child sexual exploitation must feel able to talk freely with the police about their experiences in an environment and atmosphere conducive to disclosure, in order to maximise evidence gathered during enquiries with victims and improve judicial outcomes. Some victims reported positive experiences with the police, stating, for example, that they had been given the personal contact details of an investigating officer and told to contact them should they ever need any help with issues arising from their exploitation.

It was also recommended that police officers be less judgemental and shed any preconceived ideas of victim lifestyle and circumstances. All reports of sexual exploitation should therefore be taken seriously. Police officers must not assume that a child is lying about their experience, nor should they allow an atmosphere of disbelief to prevail during interviews and enquiries. Victims should not be accused of lying, and police officers must be honest with victims, but avoid explicitly stating that their account lacks credibility.

Participants believed that offenders should never be bailed to return to the local community during investigations. Victims often reported being intimidated and threatened by their exploiters during investigations. Consideration must therefore be given to the range of tools at the disposal of police forces to protect victims from intimidation and re-abuse. Finally, participants suggested that police forces establish special teams to deal with cases of child sexual exploitation. This would enable them to develop a rapport with specialist officers.

Courts

Participants expressed frustration with the slow progress of the judicial process, arguing that court procedures must be accelerated. Long cases punctuated by adjournments can be a significant ordeal for victims, particularly where exploiters are bailed to return to their community.

Current arrangements for the cross examination of child sexual exploitation victims are inappropriate. First, victims should never have to face their exploiter in court. However, video link testimony is also unsatisfactory, as the entire court, including the families, friends and associates of the accused, can see the victim on the screen. Victims have reported feeling unsafe in the community as a result. Measures to give victims complete anonymity during court proceedings should therefore be implemented. Second, participants reported that too many barristers could cross examine the victim, and questions were too complex and difficult to understand. It may be more appropriate to simplify the process of cross examination to reduce the demands placed on victims.

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Furthermore, participants reported a general lack of understanding around several pertinent criminal justice processes. For example, some participants said that they were unaware of the appeals process and how it functioned. Participants believed that victims should be fully briefed on these aspects of the judicial process prior to trial. Victims should also be fully briefed on the status of investigations, particularly when a case is dropped. Indeed, in these circumstances, victims must be given access to adequate protective services to prevent their re-abuse.

Age/service access

Participants in the victim consultation noted a significant gap in service provision. It was noted that the police may be reluctant to intervene in cases of sexual exploitation where the victims is aged 16 or 17. Police forces and social services may believe that a child aged 16 or over can consent to sexual activity, leaving them powerless to intervene in an exploitative relationship. However, it should be noted that children under the age of 18 cannot consent in law and should be eligible for a child protection response. One participant noted that *“you’re still a child... you’re still being exploited”*. Older young people must be taken seriously when they make a complaint to the police.

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8 Frontline practitioner debriefs

A number of frontline practitioners experienced in handling cases of child sexual exploitation were debriefed in order to augment the data collection and analysis. Debriefing practitioners was a very useful component of the rapid assessment methodology for adding a layer of detailed, expert understanding of child sexual exploitation to the assessment. Some practitioners were debriefed in isolation, and others were debriefed as part of a wider focus group comprising a number of stakeholders involved in multi-agency partnerships.

The rapid assessment methodology precluded the possibility of transcribing debrief discussions and performing a detailed qualitative analysis of transcripts. However, frontline practitioners can offer a unique firsthand insight into the issues associated with child sexual exploitation. Debriefs were therefore undertaken according to a semi-structured interview schedule to ensure that all relevant issues were addressed, whilst allowing those interviewed to direct discussions of themes considered to be important. Notes were taken by facilitators during discussion. Themes covered during debriefs included: engagement with victims, working in partnership, investigating cases of child sexual exploitation and the factors which lead to NFA, the relationship between child sexual exploitation and running away or going missing, the characteristics of offending and the level of organisation underpinning networked offending, and victim experiences.

Key themes emerging from these debriefs are outlined below.

Multi-agency working

Police forces, children's services social workers and voluntary sector workers consistently stated that multi-agency working is absolutely essential to tackling child sexual exploitation. From a police perspective, SIOs found it extremely difficult to engage with victims of child sexual exploitation. Police officers stated that without a victim disclosure, gathering the evidence necessary to demonstrate a sexual offence was extremely challenging. A lack of disclosure would often result in investigations being dropped. SIOs stated that police forces were generally prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation and investigate cases, though stressed that police forces cannot operate in isolation. Some social workers also stated that many victims of child sexual exploitation do not meet thresholds for intervention by children's services. It was consistently stated that a voluntary sector organisation can fill the gap between statutory services, where a project worker from a voluntary sector organisation can continue to work with children at risk of child sexual exploitation, regardless of whether a disclosure has been made or they meet children's services thresholds for intervention. It was also stated by several voluntary sector organisations that the process of intensive outreach was generally successful in mitigating risk and enabling victims to make a disclosure of exploitation to the police. Overall, multi-agency frameworks require buy-in from the police, social services and non-statutory voluntary sector agencies in order to identify, understand and mitigate risks to children and young people.

Co-location was considered a major factor in the development of a successful multi-agency response by many agencies subject to debrief. Co-location is advantageous in a number of respects, including information sharing, where data held by social services, the police and voluntary services can be shared efficiently. Rather than exchange emails or communicate via telephone, information can be shared directly. Co-location also fosters more consistent working practices and a child protection philosophy.

Frontline awareness

Several practitioners pointed to a general lack of awareness of the signs and symptoms of child sexual exploitation. *They emphasised that only those agencies and multi-agency partnerships which take a proactive approach to identifying child sexual exploitation are aware of the scale and scope of the issue in their local area. Several practitioners used the expression 'if you lift the stone, you'll find it' and this was a major theme arising from the interviews.*

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Practitioners pointed out that identifying sexual exploitation was a shared responsibility. They identified the fact that a wide range of agencies come into contact with sexual exploitation but do not necessarily pick up on the signs and symptoms because of a lack of awareness. They also identified that workers often focus on the other challenging behaviours that victims exhibit. These can then become the focus of their contact with agencies, and their underlying exploitation often remains obscure.

A common theme emerging from police participants concerned the general lack of awareness of many frontline police officers. Frontline officers are likely to come into contact with sexually exploited children when they are reported missing from home but it was pointed out that officers are often unaware of the link. They identified the need for a robust return to home interview to be conducted, to gather intelligence relating to any possible sexual exploitation.

SIOs also pointed to the lack of responsibility for handling cases of child sexual exploitation within police units. It was commonly stated that referrals of child sexual exploitation cases would fall outside the terms of reference for CAIUs. Given that CAIUs are generally mandated specifically to deal with cases of familial child abuse, cases of child sexual exploitation may be passed to CID teams. Some SIOs stated that CID teams manage a diverse caseload, and are therefore lacking in specific expertise associated with child victims of sexual abuse.

Engagement with victims

All agencies subject to debrief advocated for a programme of intensive outreach with victims. Police officers consistently stated that engagement with victims of child sexual exploitation is extremely challenging. Many victims do not wish to engage with police officers, often as a result of a negative perception of the police arising from previous negative experiences, or conflict with the police upon initial contact during a missing episode. The inability of the police to positively engage victims was identified as the primary source of police forces failing to identify or act upon cases of child sexual exploitation.

Social workers also reported difficulty in engaging with victims. Many victims had developed a negative perception of children's services, perhaps as a consequence of unsatisfactory experiences with social workers prior to sexual exploitation. Some victims may distrust statutory services and authority figures in general. In order to obtain a disclosure, practitioners stressed the importance of building rapport and addressing the victim's needs holistically. A single-minded pursuit of disclosure is unlikely to be successful.

However, voluntary sector agencies reported that they were very successful in engaging victims of child sexual exploitation through a sustained process of intensive outreach. Voluntary sector agencies stated they could work with children and their families to address underlying vulnerabilities and mitigate risk. Where voluntary sector agencies also worked in partnership with law enforcement, this process could lead to a disclosure of exploitation to a project worker, perhaps stimulating a law enforcement investigation.

Some agencies reported that safeguarding should be prioritised. Multi-agency teams can prioritise the mitigation of risk among victims, rather than the investigation of perpetrators. Addressing risk over a sustained period of intensive outreach may reduce risk-taking behaviour, removing the victim from exploitative situations. The prioritisation of safeguarding goes hand in hand with a model of intensive outreach. Practitioners also emphasised that in order to mitigate the detrimental effect of sexual exploitation on the families of victims, services should be available to provide support, advice and guidance to victims, their parents and siblings.

Investigations and evidence

Police officers expressed the difficulties of compiling sufficient evidence to prosecute and convict perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. Although police forces are configured differently and according to local needs, some SIOs indicated

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that cases of child sexual exploitation would fall outside the terms of reference for CAIUs. Instead, these cases would be referred to the CID and investigated by officers inexperienced in issues associated with child sexual exploitation. It was also noted that investigations of child sexual exploitation can be extremely complex. Small investigative teams often lack the resources to effectively investigate cases.

Overall, police officers stated during debriefing that investigating and evidencing child sexual exploitation is a major challenge.

For example, the overwhelmingly majority of offenders interviewed by police officers subject to debrief had given 'no comment' interviews and pleaded 'not guilty' to prosecution for sexual offences. The police must therefore conclusively prove the guilt of the perpetrators, though evidence can be difficult to obtain. Police officers stated that the investigation of groups or networks of perpetrators could perhaps be facilitated by an examination of phone records. However, it was stated during debrief that evidence pertaining to mobile communications can be expensive and difficult to extract. Likewise, forensic evidence is not always available, owing to the length of time between offence and disclosure to law enforcement.

Prosecutions and court proceedings

All practitioners subject to debrief had experienced difficulties during prosecution and court proceedings. Police officers stated that they had encountered difficulties with the CPS who were often reluctant to take up cases of child sexual exploitation, usually on account of the victims being perceived as unreliable. Some police officers stated that victims do not present as rape victims during recorded interviews, in that they believe the perpetrator is their boyfriend, do not necessarily appear to be upset by the experience, and may be uncooperative and difficult to engage.

Consequently, CPS rape specialists are unsuitable for cases of child sexual exploitation. Police recommended working with a regular CPS solicitor who has a strong awareness and shared understanding of the issues. They found that this tends to result in successfully bringing cases of sexual exploitation to court and securing convictions of offenders.

Practitioners stated that the credibility of witnesses would be undermined by defence barristers. Defence barristers may suggest that victims were complicit in the exploitation, had wilfully engaged in sexual activity with defendants, had lied about their age to defendants, and were regular drug and alcohol users. Barristers use these tactics to undermine the victim in the eyes of the jury. Indeed, some practitioners stated that defence barristers would request access to social services' records of the victim in order to extract evidence to undermine the credibility of victim testimony.

It was stated by all practitioners that supporting victims during court proceedings is vital to the successful prosecution of a case. Given the difficulties endured by victims during court, particularly the personal and traumatic line of questioning pursued by many defence barristers, practitioners emphasised that all agencies must work together to support victims and their families before, during and after court appearances. Some practitioners pointed to experiences whereby victims were cross examined by multiple barristers. In other cases, practitioners stated that victims had observed their peers enduring a very difficult cross examination, shortly before they were to give evidence themselves. Others reported that victims had been intimidated by associates of the defendants.

Finally, it was stated by several practitioners that services cannot exit when the court process has ended, regardless of the outcome. Children and young people may remain at risk of sexual exploitation, even if the offender has been convicted. Should a defendant be acquitted, victims are likely to require additional support. Acquittal may demonstrate that the victim's testimony has not been believed by the jury. This can be extremely distressing for victims, given the trauma of re-living experiences of exploitation in court, only to feel disbelieved and doubted. Practitioners therefore argued that engagement must continue beyond the court process, with an exit strategy based on the mitigation of risk, rather than the outcome of a court case.

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9 Summary of Findings

This summary draws upon each of the four strands of evidence described previously: the literature review, the victim consultation, the practitioner debriefings, and the quantitative/qualitative analysis of submitted intelligence.

1. Assess the size and scale of ‘localised grooming’ in proportion to the overall known picture of sexual exploitation of children in the UK

This assessment was designed to assess the scale of ‘localised grooming’. Unfortunately, CEOP received a limited response from agencies, especially children’s services and LSCBs. In total, only 13 LSCBs responded to the request for information. The highest response was from police forces but a significant number of forces reported a nil return. The data is significantly weighted towards the relatively limited number of areas who have provided a comprehensive response. These areas generally have stronger partnership arrangements to address child sexual exploitation.

The data submitted refers only to the ‘localised grooming’ model of child sexual exploitation and does not include online grooming, trafficking of children into the UK, peer-on-peer abuse or other forms of sexual exploitation. It has proven impossible, however, to neatly segment localised grooming from other forms due to the complexities and overlap within the offending behaviour.

This assessment cannot be seen as fully representative of the nature and scale of child sexual exploitation in the UK, or, indeed, of the ‘localised grooming’ model. Data relating to child sexual exploitation is often partial and incomplete, concealed in secondary indicator data, or simply unrecorded.

In many cases, agencies do not have any data on child sexual exploitation. Indications from service providers suggest that because victims frequently do not recognise that they are being exploited and do not disclose abuse, there is significant unidentified and unmet need.

Where police, children’s services and voluntary sector agencies have worked together, coordinated by the LSCBs, to identify and address cases of child sexual exploitation, a significant number of cases have come to light. However, very few cases are known in areas where agencies do not routinely engage victims and collect data. Agencies which do not proactively look for child sexual exploitation will as a result fail to identify it. As a result, the majority of incidents of child sexual exploitation in the UK are unrecognised and unknown.

2. Establish any patterns of offending profile or victim experience

Offender data

2,379 individuals were reported to CEOP as being possible offenders in relation to ‘localised grooming’ and child sexual exploitation. 1,162 individuals were excluded from analysis due to a lack of any basic information about them. The remaining data was divided into two groups, according to the level and quality of information available. Group one consisted of 940 individuals for whom a full name or initials were recorded. Group two consisted of 277 individuals for whom only a given name or alias was available. The level of detailed information associated with individuals in group one is much higher than that in group two. Unfortunately, there are likely to be gaps and errors in both groups.

When groups one and two (1,217 offenders) were analysed, despite the variable data quality, the results show that the vast majority are men, with 87% males, 4% females, and 9% unknown. They also show that the offenders are disproportionately skewed towards young adults within the 18-24 age range, with almost half of the offenders being under 25 where their age is known. The relative youth of the offender population is a striking feature of the data that is distinct from a common profile of the older male abuser.

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Caution should be taken in drawing conclusions about ethnicity due to the relatively small number of areas where agencies have been proactive around this particular type of crime. We do not draw national conclusions about ethnicity from the data available at this time because it is too inconsistent. Further research would be needed to examine whether the ethnic breakdown reflects issues that need to be addressed within a community context, local demographics of the areas from which data is drawn, an unconscious bias among agency responses or other factors that need to be explored.

In relation to ethnicity, the data was often recorded to a particularly poor standard at the point of capture. 'Ethnicity' was often conflated with 'nationality' and neither factor captured according to a conventional or standardised classification scheme. Within the available dataset there was a significant difference between the groups. For groups one and two combined, the ethnicity of 38% of offenders was unknown, 30% were white, 28% Asian, 3% Black and 0.16% Chinese. When only group one was analysed, the offenders were found to be 38% white, 32% unknown, 26% Asian, 3% Black, and 0.2% Chinese.

Offender behaviour

The cases submitted to CEOP identified 230 networks of offenders ranging in size from just two offenders to much larger groups, the full extent of which was not known. Some offenders were core network members, responsible for identifying and grooming victims for exploitation by a group of their friends and associates. Other offenders were more peripheral members of a network, less heavily involved and more opportunistic in their activity.

Many of the detailed cases submitted to CEOP showed that grooming is used to manipulate victims, distance them from families and friends, and place them under the control of the offender. Offenders will often use flattery and attention to persuade victims to view them as a 'boyfriend'.

Many offenders appeared to derive satisfaction from exerting control over victims through coercive and manipulative behaviour, not only to commit sexual offences, but also as an end in itself. In this respect the offender psychology appears to bear a resemblance to perpetrators of domestic abuse. Further debriefing of offenders is needed to gain a better understanding of this.

Victim data

2,083 victims of child sexual exploitation were reported to CEOP. The vast majority of victims in the dataset are female, although in 31% of cases, the gender of the victim was unknown. Although the majority of victims in the dataset are female, difficulties in recognising sexual exploitation among boys and young men are likely to have led to an underrepresentation of male victims.

The most common ages at which a child comes to the attention of statutory or non-statutory agencies are 14 and 15. The data found that victims were from a range of ethnicities although the majority were white. Among the 2,083 victims, 61% are white, 33% are unknown, 3% Asian, and 1% Black. Research suggests that minority ethnic groups are likely to be under-represented due to additional barriers they face in reporting and accessing mainstream services.

For most cases in the dataset information about whether the victim had gone missing was not known, but out of the 1,014 cases where information on this was recorded, 842 children were known to have been reported missing on at least one occasion. Unfortunately, the data does not show whether these missing incidents fell before, during, or after the period of exploitation. Of the 896 children in the dataset whose living situation was known, 311 were already in care at the time of the exploitation and a further 43 children were moved into care following intervention.

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Victim experience

Victims have a range of different vulnerabilities but there are some common themes that emerge from the data:

- ➔ as identified in the dataset, sexually exploited children frequently go missing from home or run away for varying periods of time. Similarly, as identified in the data, many victims were reported to be in the looked after system before or during exploitation;
- ➔ from the data, where information relating to school engagement was known, the majority of victims were disengaged from school. This was manifested in truanting, a lack of interest and frequent poor behaviour, including bullying peers. Many victims were also themselves victims of bullying;
- ➔ victims in the dataset exhibited a number of signs of having been exploited. These indicators include injuries as a result of physical/sexual assault during the exploitation and problematic sexual behaviour, including unwanted pregnancies and STIs; and
- ➔ the chaotic and at times, aggressive behaviour of some victims, meant they were perceived to be a risk to other children by the police and social services.

The vulnerability of many victims renders them particularly susceptible to the grooming tactics employed by perpetrators. All victims in the dataset had been groomed to some extent by their exploiter with a variety of coercive tactics used to control them and keep them in exploitative situations:

- ➔ many victims feared that their exploiter would be violent towards them should they fail to comply with their demands or if they were to cooperate with the police;
- ➔ offenders use one victim to gain access to others, asking victims about their friends and encouraging them to bring their friends to pre-arranged meetings. If a victim attempts to steer away from risky situations, offenders can use their peers to pull them back in;
- ➔ a common experience among victims was the disorientating effect of being moved by the offender around and between large towns. Victims were often targeted by perpetrators in public places, including town or city centres (particularly shops, restaurants and takeaways) and local parks. After initial meetings with offenders, a number of different types of location were used for sexual exploitation. Taxi firms have been implicated in a number of cases and offenders were reported to have picked victims up from near their homes, on the street or from parks and driven them to other locations; and
- ➔ offenders often deliberately create and/or exacerbate vulnerabilities that victims have, such as disengagement from their families or family difficulties, detachment from services, or challenging or criminal behaviour. This is so that they can retain exclusive control over the young person.

Overall, victims are unlikely to disclose exploitation voluntarily, as a result of fear of exploiters, loyalty to perpetrators, a failure to recognise that they have been exploited and a negative perception or fear of authorities.

Agencies involved in identifying and safeguarding sexually exploited children and young people, including the police, must recognise that victims are unlikely to present as victims of a sexual offence and are likely to be hostile to engagement. Agencies must be aware that the length of time between incidents of exploitation and disclosure to the authorities is not a symptom of unreliability, but a direct result of exploitation.

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3. Assess the effectiveness of processes which might help identify such offending or potential victims

Multi-agency working

Front line workers within the police, children's services, and the voluntary sector consistently stated that multi-agency working is essential to tackling child sexual exploitation. National guidance states the LSCBs should ensure that specific procedures are in place, setting out the roles and responsibilities of local agencies and professionals; should identify a sub-group to lead on child sexual exploitation; and should establish lead professionals in each agency. It also recommends the development of a multi-agency team.

However, recent research has shown that most LSCBs have not implemented key aspects of this guidance. For example, approximately three quarters have not established a relevant sub group, most do not have a lead professional, and most do not have up to date protocols.

Front line awareness

Practitioners indicated a need for improved awareness of the signs and symptoms of child sexual exploitation across a range of services. More work is needed to ensure that all agencies are able to identify sexual exploitation, support children and escalate concerns. These agencies include sexual health clinics, child and adolescent mental health services, GPs, youth workers, teachers in schools and in pupil referral units, school nurses, YOTs, specialist services for homeless or drug abusing young people, as well as various police teams.

A greater understanding of the vulnerabilities and experiences of victims and the symptoms of abuse is needed to help front line agencies develop a more tailored response to children who are likely to be particularly vulnerable.

Engagement with victims

Practitioners described the need for proactive outreach to successfully engage with victims. Police and social workers reported difficulties with positively engaging victims of child sexual exploitation. Victims themselves reported negative experiences of statutory services. Where the engagement was successful, it was because workers had invested time in building rapport with young people.

Voluntary sector agencies reported that they were successful in engaging victims of child sexual exploitation through a sustained process of intensive outreach. Where voluntary sector agencies also worked in partnership, this led to more successful outcomes, where the initial disclosure of exploitation to a project worker, could lead to a police investigation.

Investigations and evidence

In general, children vulnerable to child sexual exploitation often fail to meet children's services thresholds for intervention because they are not seen as vulnerable, to the same extent as younger children and their exploitation is not understood. In many cases, children will only receive an appropriate response if there is a specialist voluntary sector provider available in the area.

Referrals of child sexual exploitation cases commonly fall outside the terms of reference for police CAIUs, which are generally mandated specifically to deal with cases of familial child abuse. Cases of child sexual exploitation are often passed to CID teams which manage a diverse caseload and are often lacking in the capacity and expertise to investigate them.

B – FINDINGS

Police experience major challenges in compiling sufficient evidence to prosecute and convict perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. Police recognise the need to improve the quality of their engagement with, and evidence gathering from, victims in addition to their offender interview techniques.

Prosecutions and court proceedings

Police officers reported experiencing difficulties during prosecution and court proceedings. They reported that CPS solicitors are often reluctant to take up cases of child sexual exploitation because victims are often perceived as unreliable. Victims may struggle to express their experiences and may be uncooperative and difficult to engage.

Police recommend working with a regular CPS solicitor who has a strong awareness and shared understanding of the issues. This tends to result in successfully bringing cases of child sexual exploitation to court and securing convictions of offenders.

Supporting victims during court proceedings is vital to the successful prosecution of a case. Victims find the court processes traumatic and difficult, particularly the aggressive and intrusive line of questioning pursued by many defence barristers. Practitioners emphasised that all agencies must work together to support victims and their families before, during and after court appearances.

Engagement with victims must continue beyond the court process, with ongoing support to mitigate risk, which is not dependent on the outcome of a court case. Children and young people in this situation may have multiple vulnerabilities that need addressing and they may still remain at risk of sexual exploitation, even if the offender has been convicted. Acquittal of the defendant is extremely distressing for victims, given the trauma of re-living experiences of exploitation in court, only to feel that they have been judged to have been lying.

C – CONCLUSIONS AND
D – RECOMMENDATIONS



C – CONCLUSIONS

Size and scale of the known picture

Where the police, children's services and voluntary sector agencies have worked together to address child sexual exploitation, victims have been identified and supported and offenders held to account. However, in most areas of the UK, there does not appear to be a proactive approach to this issue. We find that the data collected in this assessment is likely to represent only a small fraction of the full picture and is an inadequate basis for national findings.

Offending profile or victim experience

The offenders within our dataset are younger with almost half of them being under 25, where age is known. There is a noticeable level of networking and particular behavioural characteristics among many offenders in that they appear to derive satisfaction from the status and power of exerting control over victims, not only to commit sexual offences, but also as an end in itself.

Victims often exhibit multiple vulnerabilities with going missing and living in care common features of their experience. Vulnerabilities are deliberately exacerbated by offenders in the interests of retaining control.

The challenges for victims to break out of exploitation can be overwhelming. Victims find it difficult to disclose their abuse and they need proactive engagement from workers to help and support them over the long-term. Investigative and court processes can increase the pressure and distress experienced by victims.

Effectiveness of processes

Most LSCBs do not fulfil the pivotal role prescribed for them in statutory guidance in respect of child sexual exploitation. All agencies need to improve their recognition of this abuse and exploitation, intervening with safeguarding activity at an early stage. The need for a commitment to multi-agency work to tackle this issue encompasses all front line services.

D – RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Victims

- Victims and their families should receive support from specialist services throughout the process of disclosure, police investigations and court proceedings, until the risk of sexual exploitation is mitigated.
- Victims' accounts and experiences should be used to inform agency responses both in designing prevention messages and early interventions – through to the set up of specialist support.

2. Multi-agency working and front line services

- All LSCBs must meet their responsibility under current guidance – Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (DCSF, 2009) – and ensure that there is a coordinated multi-agency response to this issue and clear and up to date procedures.
- LSCBs must ensure that children who are at risk can be identified at an early stage across a range of agencies and that there are clear protocols for sharing information. They should ensure that children at risk have a full assessment of their needs and referral to relevant services for intervention and support.
- Given the links between child sexual exploitation and other vulnerabilities, LSCBs must ensure that those working with, or in contact with, children who are particularly vulnerable, understand the signs of exploitation and can refer children for tailored support. There should be particular emphasis on foster carers and residential care staff, as well as all front line workers that come into contact with missing children.
- LSCBs should support the development of a specialist multi-agency team that can support vulnerable victims as well as deterrence and prosecution activity.
- LSCBs should ensure that there is sufficient specialist training for front line service providers so that they are equipped to identify children at risk. Professionals should have an understanding of key indicators of exploitation and that although many victims can present as 'streetwise', they are in fact highly vulnerable.
- Each policing team that may come into contact with victims or offenders needs to have an understanding of child sexual exploitation. Training should be provided to appropriate police units and teams, including CAIUs, CID, PPUs and community policing. Police forces should also develop a strategy to ensure that cases of child sexual exploitation are identified and progressed appropriately.
- Children's services must ensure that cases of child sexual exploitation are assessed and responded to appropriately; this will require a thorough understanding of the impact on victims.

3. Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

The CPS should review all prosecutions in child sexual exploitation to identify barriers to taking cases forward, and outline best practice in relation to the support available for victims. The CPS should also review recent cases to identify key aspects of the investigation and criminal justice process that can lead to successful prosecution outcomes.

D – RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Data recording

All front line agencies should develop ways of capturing and recording data relating to known or suspected cases of sexual exploitation. LSCBs should coordinate the development of a template for capturing information which is of use to both police and services for sexually exploited children. Police forces should proactively gather intelligence and develop regular problem profiles of child sexual exploitation.

5. Research

This assessment has identified many significant gaps in current knowledge of child sexual exploitation and the 'localised grooming' profile. Although many of these gaps in knowledge can be addressed through the improvements in data collection among police and LSCBs outlined in recommendation 4, there are specific gaps in knowledge which must be addressed through further research. Areas for further research and analysis are outlined below:

Offender psychological profile

- ➡ Offenders convicted for offences related to child sexual exploitation should be subject to intensive debriefing for the development of a psychological profile. This requires long-term, detailed qualitative research. A psychological profile can reveal aspects of offender motivation and behaviour, informing law enforcement strategies for deterrence, investigation and offender treatment.

National assessment of child sexual exploitation

- ➡ This assessment is unavoidably limited by the absence of adequate measures for collecting information relating to child sexual exploitation by all agencies at a local level. Should recommendations 1.1 and 1.2 be implemented, it would be possible to repeat this assessment and gather a much greater quantity and quality of data. This would greatly improve understanding of child sexual exploitation in the UK. It is therefore recommended that this assessment is repeated in 2-3 years.

Peer exploitation

- ➡ Peer exploitation, broadly defined as the sexual exploitation of children and young people by other children and young people, has not been addressed. Given the relative youth of many of the offenders, there is a need for further research to assess the potential role of peer exploitation. The Office of the Children's Commissioner has initiated a research project on gang-associated sexual exploitation /abuse of children and young people to address this issue.

The sexual exploitation of boys and young men

- ➡ This aspect of sexual exploitation is largely hidden and unknown, though it is clear that boys and young men are currently being sexually exploited in the UK. It is therefore recommended that further research is conducted on this particular group.

Victims from minority ethnic communities

- ➡ Existing research has had little insight into experiences of child sexual exploitation in minority ethnic communities. It is recommended that research is conducted with minority ethnic communities to improve understanding in this area and identify suitable strategies for engaging victims of a minority ethnic background.

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APPENDIX A. Policy framework

'Localised grooming' is a form of child sexual exploitation. As such, statutory and non-statutory responses to 'localised grooming', as with other forms of sexual exploitation, are shaped by a number of guidance documents. Policy areas which touch upon aspects of 'localised grooming' include missing children, health, education, substance abuse, youth offending and all associated aspects of law enforcement, safeguarding and child protection.

'Localised grooming' involves a number of partners. A large number of agencies are likely to come into contact with sexually exploited children and victims of 'localised grooming', including (i) the police, through public protection units, community liaison officers and various other units; (ii) LSCBs and their partners; (iii) various local authority services, including children's services, social workers and education practitioners; and health practitioners, including GPs and sexual health clinics; (iv) the Crown Prosecution Service; and (v) non-statutory agencies providing services for missing, sexually exploited or vulnerable children.

Over the past ten years, guidance for practitioners in various sectors working with sexually exploited children has developed in accordance with a wider understanding of the underlying issues and risk factors associated with vulnerable children. The findings and recommendations of this thematic assessment should be understood within the context of this wider understanding of child sexual exploitation.

A brief overview of social policy developments since 1999 affecting frontline responses to child sexual exploitation, and therefore 'localised grooming', is sketched below.

- ➔ 1999 Working Together to Safeguard Children, Department of Health, Home Office, Department of Education and Employment, National Assembly for Wales

This guidance was jointly issued by the Department of Health, the Home Office and the Department of Education and Employment to promote effective information sharing, collaborative working and coordinated children's services. It was recognised that vulnerable children require coordinated care from health, education, social services and non-statutory agencies. Multi-agency working is endorsed in the guidance, where local authorities are held responsible for the establishment and lead of Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs), and the roles and responsibilities of agencies within inter-agency arrangements are clearly outlined.

In addition, this guidance includes a brief section on investigating 'complex (organised or multiple)' abuse, defined as "abuse involving one or more abusers and a number of related or non-related children. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse". It is recognised that "investigations become extremely complex, because of the number of places and people involved and the timescale over which abuse is alleged to have occurred." 'Localised grooming' may fall under this broad definition of complex child abuse. Guidelines for investigating complex child abuse cases were published by the Home Office in 2002.

Finally, this guidance states that children involved in "commercial sexual exploitation should be treated primarily as victims of abuse". The emphasis on commercial sexual exploitation reflects a narrow understanding of the range of social, economic and cognitive inequalities between child and abuser subject to exploitation.

- ➔ 2000 Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution, Department of Health

Issued as a supplement to the 1999 Working Together to Safeguard Children document, this guidance was intended to set out an inter-agency response to "children involved in prostitution". This language is outmoded in the face of current understanding of the spectrum of abusive experiences described by the phrase 'child sexual exploitation'. 'Prostitution' implies choice and agency; sexually exploited children cannot make an informed choice and the phrase 'abuse through prostitution' is inappropriate for children. Commercial sexual exploitation is only one aspect of child sexual exploitation, and coercers may abuse children without making any attempt to gain material profit.

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Nevertheless, the guidance states that local agencies should develop inter-agency protocols to guide action when there are concerns that a child is abused through commercial sexual exploitation, including guidance on sharing concerns about a child's safety within a multi-agency approach. The introduction of local protocols is important for information sharing and the development of an effective multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation.

Based on current understandings of child sexual exploitation, the language used in this guidance is outmoded. However, the guidance does recognise that commercial sexual exploitation is a child protection issue, where issues of consent are irrelevant and exploitation is child abuse, and children under the age of 18 cannot consent to exploitation.

➤ 2001 National Plan for Safeguarding Children from Commercial Sexual Exploitation, Department of Health

The National Plan builds on the Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution guidance issued in 2000 with an account of action taken to safeguard children from commercial sexual exploitation, including coordination and cooperation, prevention, protection, recovery and reintegration, and children and young people's participation. The National Plan was devised by a steering group including government departments and the voluntary sector.

➤ 2003 Every Child Matters

The Every Child Matters Green Paper was published following Lord Laming's enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. Focused on outcomes for children in general, as opposed to child protection specifically, it nevertheless emphasised that the multi-agency approach to child protection should be based upon effective information sharing. Most significantly, LSCBs were recommended as a replacement to ACPCs. LSCBs were introduced as a statutory replacement for ACPCs in the Children Act 2004.

➤ 2004 Policing Prostitution: ACPO's policy, strategy, and operational guidelines for dealing with exploitation and abuse through prostitution, Association of Chief Police Officers

This document outlines the policing of exploitation and abuse through prostitution, and in particular, effective strategies for reducing harm to individuals and communities. Although this guidance is of limited relevance to child sexual exploitation, and in particular 'localised grooming', it is recognised that children cannot consent to exploitation and children are frequently groomed for abuse through prostitution. The guidance explicitly states that language must be used which recognises children abused through prostitution as victims, and those who groom or abuse children are "abusers, coercers or exploiters".

Finally, the role of the police within a multi-agency framework is clearly outlined, where police assist partner agencies in the identification of at-risk children and young people. It is also stated that police forces should support local schemes for addressing the causes of children going missing from home, in recognition of the close link between children going missing from home and becoming a victim of sexual exploitation.

➤ 2004 Paying the Price Consultation, Home Office

In order to inform the development of a strategy for prostitution, the Home Office published its Paying the Price consultation document. The consultation aimed to shape a strategy around key pillars, including prevention and the factors which precipitate abuse through prostitution; protection and support for victims; and criminal justice responses to prostitution.

The consultation discusses children and young people throughout in recognition of evidence which suggests that many adults working as prostitutes were sexually exploited as children, and uses the terminology "abused through prostitution" to reflect the wider understanding of child abuse and child sexual exploitation. The consultation discusses the various routes of entry into child sexual exploitation, and recognises that adult offenders sometimes groom children for commercial sexual exploitation, and peers may introduce vulnerable children to exploiters. Finally, methods for supporting child witnesses in criminal prosecutions are considered.

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This consultation resulted in the Home Office Coordinated Prostitution Strategy, published in 2006.

- ➔ 2005 Guidance on the management, recording and investigation of missing persons, National Centre for Policing Excellence, produced on behalf of Association of Chief Police Officers

This guidance document outlines the principles underlying police responses to incidents of missing people. Children who repeatedly go missing from home or care are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. It is therefore important that the police response to children who repeatedly go missing from home or care is proportionate to the level of risk associated with the child. It is explicitly stated that police should not assume *“that risk diminishes because of frequency of absence”*.

This guidance recognises that (i) children in care account for the greatest proportion of the missing person reports received by police, (ii) these children are at-risk, and (iii) effective management of missing episodes does not simply involve investigation and return, but should include the use of multi-agency protocols to manage future risks of going missing.

- ➔ 2006 Working Together to Safeguard Children – a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

This document updated the 1999 Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance to reflect changes in policy and statutory arrangements, most notably the replacement of the ACPCs with LSCBs. It is clearly stated that LSCBs *“should actively enquire into the extent to which children are involved in prostitution in the local area”*. It is also stated that inter-agency protocols for information sharing and implementing a multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation should be consistent with LSCB procedures for safeguarding children.

Following this guidance, the Staying Safe Action Plan was published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in 2008, based on the principle that outcomes are improved where children are kept safe from neglect, abuse, accidents, bullying, crime and anti-social behaviour. Actions for 2008 – 2011 were outlined, and the sexual exploitation of children is briefly addressed, with a renewed commitment to update the 2000 guidance on Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution. Overall, the Staying Safe Action Plan laid the foundation for guidance documents of direct relevance to child sexual exploitation and missing children.

- ➔ 2006 Children and Young People – CPS policy on prosecuting criminal cases involving children and young people as witnesses, Crown Prosecution Services

The CPS has very clear guidance for children and young people acting as witnesses in criminal cases. This guidance outlines the types of support available to children and young people, and the special measures to which they may be entitled whilst they are a witness.

- ➔ 2009 Guidance on Investigating Child Abuse and Safeguarding Children, 2nd edition, National Police Improving Agency produced on behalf of Association of Chief Police Officers

This comprehensive guidance illustrates the way in which police forces should investigate child sexual exploitation. It outlines guidance for police on responsibilities within a multi-agency framework and cooperating with children’s services and other stakeholders during investigation. In particular, it outlines the steps to be taken in initiating a ‘complex child abuse’ investigation.

- ➔ 2009 Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation – supplementary guidance to working together to safeguard children, Department for Children, Schools and Families

APPENDIX A. Policy framework

This guidance offers a comprehensive and contemporary definition of child sexual exploitation, shifting focus from commercial sexual exploitation to a more general conception of exploitation as an unequal sexual relationship in which abusers use various methods of explicit and implicit coercion against victims, and generally exploit the inability of children and young people to exercise free and informed choice:

“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 vulnerability.”

This definition was initially published by the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People and was the basis to practice among specialist services for several years before statutory guidance caught up with practitioner understanding of the issues. The move away from a definition based on the model of commercial sexual exploitation to a broader model of exploitation is highly significant, presenting a working definition of child sexual exploitation consistent with the contemporary experiences of local authorities, police forces and non-statutory service providers. Consequently, this guidance remains relevant, and serves as a useful guide to the multi-agency response required by LSCBs to child sexual exploitation, from initial identification of cases to the prosecution of offenders. The use of ‘child sexual exploitation’ in this thematic assessment refers to the above definition.

In addition, the guidance states that LSCBs should ensure that specific local procedures are in place to address child sexual exploitation, where the identification of a child who is being sexually exploited, or at risk of being sexually exploited, should trigger local procedures to secure the safety and welfare of the child and to enable the police to investigate abusers and coercers.

- ➔ 2009 Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care, Department for Children, Schools and Families

This guidance outlines the steps taken to respond effectively to missing or runaway children. In particular, it focused on the national indicator introduced into the National Indicator Set in April 2009 to increase local awareness of patterns of young people who run away from home or care (NI71). The guidance explicitly recognises that children may go missing as a result of grooming for sexual exploitation.

- ➔ 2010 Working Together to Safeguard Children – a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

The most recent update to the Working Together guidance incorporates recommendations made by the Lord Laming review of child protection, *The Protection of Children in England: a progress report*. Instructions for LSCBs on child sexual exploitation are reiterated from the 2009 guidance.

The development of policy and guidance for addressing child sexual exploitation, including ‘localised grooming’, reflects an improved understanding of the spectrum of abuse which falls under the child sexual exploitation umbrella. It is now recognised that child sexual exploitation cannot be associated exclusively with commercial exploitation. Rather, child sexual exploitation refers to child abuse perpetrated within an exploitative relationship, where perpetrators exploit the vulnerability of children, often through coercion and intimidation, in order to perpetrate sexual abuse. It is also

APPENDIX A. Policy framework

recognised that child sexual exploitation is a complex issue which requires a multi-agency response, administered according to a specific LSCB protocol, in order to address the root causes of vulnerability and enable police to bring offenders to justice.

There is now a widespread understanding of the nature and complexity of child sexual exploitation among all relevant partners. This shared understanding of the nature of child sexual exploitation is vital to the implementation of an effective multi-agency response. Many LSCBs have developed appropriate protocols for a multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation, in accordance with current guidance.

'Localised grooming' is a form of child sexual exploitation. Existing statutory arrangements for tackling child sexual exploitation are therefore implemented in cases of 'localised grooming'.

APPENDIX B. Best practice

Lancashire Constabulary

Lancashire Constabulary has taken a robust and proactive stance on child sexual exploitation which serves as an outstanding example for all police forces in the UK, demonstrating an innovative approach to gathering intelligence related to child sexual exploitation and managing risks posed to vulnerable children and young people at a local level. Lancashire Constabulary has adopted a proactive approach to tackling child sexual exploitation. In particular, Lancashire Constabulary has developed and implemented a methodology for establishing the extent of child sexual exploitation in the force area, working in partnership with relevant agencies to gather and develop intelligence, thereby proactively identifying victims and offenders. During the period 1 September 2010 – 28 February 2011, Lancashire Constabulary identified 575 new victims of child sexual exploitation and 254 offenders/suspects. This approach to gathering intelligence led to 116 arrests and the issue of 90 section 2 abduction notices, 17 Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPOs) and one Risk of Sexual Harm Order (RSHO). Of the 575 victims, 7% were looked after in local authority care, 50% of all victims lived in urban areas, and 25% frequently went missing from home. Of the 254 offenders/suspects, the majority were lone males aged 13-67, though most were aged 20-30. Lancashire Constabulary has reported that 80% of offenders were of a white British background. Through proactive and detailed intelligence gathering, undertaken in conjunction with specialist multi-agency projects in the region, Lancashire Constabulary have established a clear offender MO, identifying that offenders are known to groom children and young people by offering them gifts (food, cash, cigarettes, etc.), picking up victims in cars and workers abusing positions of trust. Offenders are also known to target children and young people at particular shopping centres, supermarkets, care homes, public parks, cinemas, bus stations and car parks.

Lancashire Constabulary's approach to proactively gathering intelligence relating to child sexual exploitation has made a substantial impact on the recognition and identification of the 'localised grooming' MO in the region. It is clear that proactive intelligence gathering is essential in order to establish the scale of child sexual exploitation in a police force area. Child sexual exploitation may come to the attention of the police through various secondary behaviours, such as youth offending or going missing from home. In order to link these behaviours to child sexual exploitation and fully appreciate the scale and scope of child sexual exploitation in a region, Lancashire Constabulary have demonstrated that proactive intelligence gathering and multi-agency working must be implemented for the regular production of child sexual exploitation problem profiles.

Lancashire Constabulary is based on six regional divisions. The PPU in each divisional team is responsible for child sexual exploitation. Although the precise configuration of each unit varies across Lancashire Constabulary as a whole, each PPU has a multi-agency team working specifically on child sexual exploitation. These teams are flexible in order to manage workloads and respond to particular local issues in each divisional area, though all subscribe to the same ethos of multi-agency working and early intervention. In essence, the protection of vulnerable children is prioritised. Children at risk of sexual exploitation are managed by the teams across the force area, preventing further harm and disrupting offenders.

The multi-agency approach to child sexual exploitation is crucial. The composition of each team varies considerably, though the police have taken a positive approach to working with other relevant agencies to improve outcomes for vulnerable children experiencing sexual exploitation. For example, the Engage team, based in Blackburn, is led by a children's services manager, and includes police officers, a missing persons coordinator, a representative from local sexual health services and specific project officers. In contrast, the Deter team, based in Preston, is police-led, though Deter also includes social workers and a project officer from the Children's Society Street Safe Team. A worker seconded from CROP to support families of children affected by sexual exploitation covers both the Engage and Deter teams. The Freedom team is also police-led, and includes a social worker, health sector representative and a project officer from the Children's Society Street Safe team. Multi-agency teams are co-located to develop a shared understanding of the issues and to facilitate information sharing. Co-location is considered absolutely vital to the

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development and cultivation of a shared understanding of the issues underlying child sexual exploitation. Agencies develop a keen awareness of the ways in which their respective authorities and perspectives dovetail to provide a superior overall response.

Referrals to Lancashire's sexual exploitation teams come from a variety of sources, including schools, sexual health services and other healthcare professionals, parents, children's services, YOTs, and other police teams. Given that victims are unlikely to disclose their exploitation to the police, all agencies with whom sexually exploited children may be involved must be skilled in the recognition of the outward signs of exploitation. Multi-agency teams are able to cast a wide net, increasing referrals from a variety of sectors to their representative in the multi-agency team. For example, health workers in a sexual health service, such as a GUM clinic, may encounter victims of sexual exploitation. Where a sexual health worker is based in the multi-agency team, they can form links with those in local GUM clinics to ensure that victims are identified and appropriate information is shared. Furthermore, each agency within the multi-agency team can take responsibility for particular aspects of a referral, with social care needs addressed by social services, and investigation of offenders spearheaded by police forces, for example. This allows all agencies to efficiently apply their particular expertise to referrals, whilst adding value to the work performed by others.

Consequently, many children at risk of sexual exploitation are referred to Lancashire's sexual exploitation teams. Each referral is subject to a comprehensive risk assessment. Across each of the teams, children considered to be at medium or high risk of sexual exploitation are managed until the risk is reduced. The multi-agency response is crucial to (i) safeguarding victims and managing risk, (ii) maximising opportunities for disclosure, (iii) generating referrals of vulnerable children, and (iv) facilitating investigation.

Many of the children referred to Lancashire's sexual exploitation teams are unwilling to disclose exploitation on first engagement. They may deny that they have been exploited, on account of having been groomed by offenders, or they will refuse to engage as a result of negative perceptions of the police. Social workers may be in a better position to engage with victims, though many victims do not meet thresholds set by children's services for intervention by social workers. Where neither the police nor social workers are able to engage with victims, for whatever reason, it is commonplace for victims of sexual exploitation to slip through the net. However, the Lancashire model is based upon multi-agency working which includes the voluntary, health and education sectors. Workers from other agencies, such as the Children's Society, are able to continue to work with victims on the basis of their vulnerability and their continued risk of sexual exploitation through a programme of intensive outreach. Workers from non-statutory agencies may find it easier to build rapport with victims, over an extended period of time. This engagement allows the multi-agency team to manage ongoing risks giving victims an extended opportunity to disclose exploitation. Although victims frequently do not disclose exploitation to police immediately after referral, they do so weeks or months later. In some cases, disclosures may not be forthcoming for over six months. Victims are therefore subject to continuous engagement by multi-agency teams to obtain disclosures of exploitation, facilitating the investigation of offenders.

Although this approach facilitates the successful investigation of child sexual exploitation cases, based on information regarding offenders obtained through victim disclosure, it functions most effectively for the early intervention in risk-taking behaviour. Where children at risk of exploitation can be referred to the multi-agency team before grooming and exploitation has taken place, potential victims can be safeguarded and action taken to mitigate risk. This includes group work with vulnerable children in schools, one to one counselling to build self-esteem and raise awareness, and support work with families. The safeguarding of vulnerable children is therefore prioritised. In this respect, all teams across Lancashire Constabulary aim to intervene in cases of sexual exploitation before they escalate.

Sexual exploitation teams in Lancashire have consistently obtained impressive results in investigations. Police officers often focus on the disruption of offending behaviour. Section 2 Abduction Notices are given to offenders found in the company of vulnerable victims under the age of 16. Where necessary, victims are given multiple notices, generating a record of 'bad character' against the perpetrator. Should the offender be taken to court for offences related to sexual

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exploitation, the number of notices against the perpetrator can be used to demonstrate that the offender was repeatedly found in the company of vulnerable children under 16. Indeed, offenders frequently claim that they were either unaware that the victim was under 16, or that the victim led them to believe that they were over 16. By issuing multiple Section 2 Abduction Notices, the credibility of these claims is undermined. Each of the teams in Lancashire has developed a strong relationship with local CPS officers so that should an investigation be progressed, prosecutors are aware of the issues around sexual exploitation and are therefore in a strong position to achieve a successful outcome.

All sexual exploitation teams in Lancashire are underpinned by a comprehensive integrated system for capturing and storing intelligence relating to offenders and victims of sexual exploitation. A Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) database is used for recording details of all cases of sexual exploitation. This database resides within the SLEUTH system for managing missing persons data. This system facilitates information sharing between all police officers, including those outwith the sexual exploitation teams. For example, if a uniform frontline police officer encounters a vulnerable child, the officer can check their identity and determine whether the child has been referred to any of the sexual exploitation teams across Lancashire. Knowledge of their vulnerability is therefore cascaded to frontline officers. When missing children are returned home, their return to home interview is conducted by an officer from the PPU. The interview is regarded as an intelligence gathering exercise, where details such of the missing episode are captured and entered onto the intelligence system.

Information is also shared with appropriate agencies through a number of additional forums. A protocol for a multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation has been developed, outlining roles and responsibilities, and accountable to the Lancashire LSCB. This protocol does not replace or take precedence over current safeguarding procedures, but reinforces responsibilities under current guidance and delineates local arrangements for working in partnership to safeguard sexually exploited children. The protocol also outlines mechanisms for sharing information and intelligence relating to child sexual exploitation, such as recent trends in the behaviour of vulnerable young people and locations for grooming and children. Voluntary, community and faith sector organisations meet on a regular basis to share this kind of information and intelligence facilitating a shared understanding of issues related to child sexual exploitation.

Prevention work is also undertaken by teams across the Lancashire area. For example, the Deter team have trained a number of professionals in the Preston area in the identification of child sexual exploitation, including hotel staff, pub and nightclub door staff, small retailers and off licences, general medical practitioners, school staff and magistrates. Posters and leaflets have been displayed and distributed in various locations frequented by vulnerable young people, including a local cinema and bus shelters in the area. The Awaken team also deliver prevention work in schools in and around Blackpool.

Overall, the model adopted by Lancashire Constabulary is based on the premise of mitigating the risk of child sexual exploitation to vulnerable children and young people, and incorporates prevention, early intervention, and continuous multi-agency engagement. This model is highly effective for the identification of child sexual exploitation and children and young people at risk, and the investigation and disruption of offenders. The development of multi-agency partnerships in divisional PPUs for tackling child sexual exploitation is crucial to their success, allowing each agency involved to concentrate their specific expertise on those aspects of the issue they are equipped to address, whilst also influencing and informing the delivery of a holistic service for victims.

Safe and Sound, Derbyshire

Safe & Sound Derby was established in 2002 and has developed considerable experience in supporting victims of child sexual exploitation and helping them to escape from violence and abuse. The organisation also works to prevent young men and women from becoming victims of this crime in the first place, working with children and young people identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation.

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Safe & Sound Derby also raises awareness of child sexual exploitation and speaks on behalf of victims at a national level, benefitting children and young people across the whole of the UK.

Safe & Sound offers a range of services:

- one-to-one support and access to group work for young people identified as being, or at risk of being, sexually exploited. These services were delivered to 129 children and young people in 2010/11;
- prevention package delivered to young people in schools and other educational settings to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation. This was delivered to 6,113 young people in 2010/11;
- awareness-raising among young people delivered through outreach work in the local community. Safe & Sound workers spoke with 1,038 young people in 2010/11;
- one-to-one and peer group support for parents and carers of children who are being, or at risk of being, sexually exploited. This pilot project was initiated in June 2010, and 18 parents were supported in 2010/11; and
- training on the warning signs of child sexual exploitation delivered to professionals working with children, young people and families within Derby City, and awareness raising delivered to community groups. In total, 1147 professionals were trained in 2010/11.

By working closely with Derbyshire Police, Safe & Sound Derby has played an integral role in developing local understanding of child sexual exploitation. Safe & Sound supported local police in the development of a major investigation of child sexual exploitation, involving the UK Human Trafficking Centre to explore potential investigative opportunities and tactics. Operation Retriever was initiated following the diligent work of Safe & Sound in identifying victims and supporting police investigation. In particular, Safe & Sound worked with other statutory agencies in the local area, including health, social care, and the youth offending service to support the young people through investigations and prosecutions.

During the pre trial and trial phases of the investigation and prosecution, Safe & Sound supported young people to work with the police investigation, including interviews and video statements. This support continued after the court process ended.

Safe & Sound has also developed a method for effective information sharing within a multi-agency framework. It was recognised that existing data capturing methods did not enable law enforcement or children's services to understand the depth and breadth of child sexual exploitation. Safe & Sound therefore developed an 'Information Report' form for use by non-statutory agencies to record information in a manner consistent with police intelligence recording. This form has now been requested by several police forces and other agencies to develop an information sharing process for the sexual exploitation of children and young people within a local multi-agency setting.

Eclipse, Croydon

Croydon Eclipse began in 2007 as a three year partnership between Barnardo's, Croydon Children's Services and the Metropolitan Police, funded by the Metropolitan Police and Home Office 'Invest to Save' budget (ISB). Eclipse supported young people within Croydon who were at risk of, or were already being sexually exploited. In 2010, this project continued to operate as the South West London Service, a Barnardo's service which operates in partnership with the NHS. Eclipse has established itself as a successful partnership that reflects the key principles specified in the 2009 government guidance on safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation (DCSF, 2009). Central to Eclipse's success were clear communication and information-sharing, a flexible approach, dedicated staff and effective,

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lasting links with other partner agencies. Its work was greatly enhanced by co-location of the two main agencies, Barnardo's and the police.

Eclipse was staffed by Barnardo's workers and police officers, co-located since its second year in the Family Justice Centre in central Croydon. The core team consisted of six staff: three non-uniformed police officers and three Barnardo's staff. Barnardo's MissU2 missing child worker was also based with the Eclipse team. The partnership between police and Barnardo's served as a strong foundation for engaging with other key agencies, including health, education, YOTs and social services. Representatives from each agency would attend regular multi-agency protocol meetings, sharing information and deciding together on specific, timely actions to safeguard children referred to the Eclipse service. The Eclipse team had a proactive approach to tackling child sexual exploitation, delivering awareness-raising sessions in schools and residential units to agencies working with young people and to all new Croydon police officers.

Most service users received direct support through child-centred individual work, meetings with staff, group work and support with other agencies. Eclipse staff also conducted home visits and supported parents/carers. From June 2009 to May 2010, Eclipse supported 39 young people directly and 48 indirectly. Service users were aged 13 to 18, with nine in ten female and over a quarter in care. The ethnic profile reflects Croydon's youth population.

An evaluation of Eclipse's monitoring data by Barnardo's research and policy unit in 2010 illustrated broad declines in the risk of child sexual exploitation and going missing among service users. Other measures, such as risk of alcohol abuse and drug dependence and levels of engagement with education, demonstrated modest improvements. Over half the service users included in the monitoring data showed improvements in relationships with carers, helping to stabilise family life and protect against further sexual exploitation.

As sexual exploitation often transcends London borough boundaries, the Eclipse project also demonstrated that a pan-London response to child sexual exploitation would be assisted greatly by establishing and formalising a network of key police contacts on child sexual exploitation in other London boroughs.

Engage, Blackburn

Engage is a multi-agency service based in Blackburn, Lancashire. Lancashire Constabulary is divided into six divisions, A-F. Division E covers Blackburn. Engage was established following the recognition that Division E was subject to a much higher number of reported incidents of missing children. Many of these reports involved repeat mispers, and an abnormally high proportion of girls were being reported missing.

In order to address this intelligence gap, a number of children and young people who repeatedly went missing were interviewed by police officers. Many of the children and young people disclosed experiences of abuse consistent with child sexual exploitation. It was determined that children who go missing from home for a substantial period are unlikely to disclose experiences of sexual exploitation to the police, perhaps as a result of having been groomed by an offender. However, children and young people are far more likely to disclose sexual exploitation to social workers. As a result, Engage was established as a social work-led multi-agency team to reduce incidents of child sexual exploitation and increase the number of offender prosecutions in the Blackburn and Darwen area.

Engage is led by a social work manager, and includes police, children's services, and workers from Brook (sexual health), Lifeline (drugs and alcohol) and CROP (family support). This multi-agency team provides a holistic, child-centred approach to child sexual exploitation which has made a substantial impact in the Blackburn and Darwen area. The team are co-located, and all Engage workers are able to access police databases to build intelligence on offenders in the local area.

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Referrals are received from a number of sources, including local children's services. Upon reception of a referral, Engage will perform an initial risk assessment to determine the current level of risk to the child or young person. An effective risk assessment tool has been developed for this purpose, which requires consideration of all risk factors and includes professional judgement. Assessments are completed on a six week basis until the child is deemed to no longer be at risk. Engage also works with parents and carers through its CROP worker, providing an additional level of support for families affected by child sexual exploitation. Engage has developed a local protocol for children who go missing from home, based on the substantial expertise developed since its inception.

Finally, Engage also works to educate children and young people in the local area. Lessons are delivered in high schools throughout the area, and posters designed to prevent risk-taking behaviour have been displayed in areas known to be frequented by children at risk of sexual exploitation and where they may be targeted by offenders, including the local cinema and bowling alley.

Street Safe, Lancashire

Lancashire Children's Rights, a service run by the Children's Society, has developed the Street Safe service over the past seven years and is undertaking invaluable work with children/young people who are sexually exploited or are vulnerable to exploitation. The team also works with young people who go missing from home/care. The past year has seen the consolidation of work developed with colleagues in the multi-agency exploitation teams across Lancashire County.

The team has staff members working intrinsically within the multi-agency teams – Cherish (Southern policing division), Deter (Preston division) and Freedom (Penine division). The team also gives support to the development of the work that takes place at county level and where possible helps the progression of the Breakthrough team (Northern division).

The Programme Manager is a member of the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board representing the Voluntary, Community, Faith Sector (VCFS) and is supporting the work that the Board is undertaking in respect to victims of sexual exploitation and those children who go missing from home and care. At a local level, the team support the development of County policies and procedures both in regard to children and young people who are sexually exploited and those who run away or go missing from home or care.

The intensive support work that is undertaken by the Street Safe staff team ensures that children are able to receive a bespoke service that (i) identifies their needs through a thorough risk assessment, (ii) plans an intensive intervention package and (iii) undertakes direct work. Many of the young people referred to the service do not engage well with adults, particularly colleagues from the statutory agencies. Having the benefit of independent workers has been useful for encouraging engagement with the service. Staff members also act as advocates for the children and young people, ensuring that children have a way of raising their views.

Street Safe Lancashire operates at three different levels:

- ➔ providing customised direct support to individual children and young people, working alongside individuals and other agencies to help identify and address different needs and achieve best outcomes;
- ➔ working in schools and other organizations to deliver awareness raising sessions, prevention and group work for children and young people (primary and secondary schools, colleges, youth centres, special schools and faith based schools); and
- ➔ delivering training to professionals, parents and the wider community, working with the media, local and national

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organisations to raise awareness and to develop and influence policy making and service delivery to this group of children and young people. The training and resources used reflect the learning gained from years working with these children and includes their views, quotes, poems and messages to professionals.

Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board Sexual Exploitation Service, Sheffield

The Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board's Sexual Exploitation Service (SES) is a multi-agency partnership between Sheffield Safeguarding Children Service, Taking Stock and South Yorkshire Police. The multi-agency model therefore incorporates law enforcement, safeguarding professionals and youth workers.

Referrals come from a variety of sources, including the police, children's social care, youth offending teams and schools. SES works with young people aged up to and including 18, and referrals have increased year on year since SES was formed in 2001. The service has trained professionals from various local agencies to identify child sexual exploitation, leading to an increase in local awareness and the overall number of referrals received.

The service is based on a safeguarding model, using an established risk assessment procedure with clearly defined indicators, to determine whether children are 'at risk' of sexual exploitation, 'swapping sex' for favours, or 'selling sex'. When a young person is referred to the service, a referral is also made to social services, who carry out an Initial Assessment, and a sexual exploitation meeting is convened. This is a multi-agency forum that seeks to:

- ➔ gather information about the sexual exploitation of that individual young person;
- ➔ identify support for the young person and their family that will help them to exit from the sexual exploitation and/or minimise risk;
- ➔ agree a course of action on any offenders identified; and
- ➔ systematically gather information about associations with adult exploiters and young people. This wider strategy enables the service to cross reference associates and shows the links between different groups, both young people and offenders, on a city-wide basis.

Parents are invited to attend these meetings except in cases where they are implicated in the sexual exploitation. The service aims to involve parents as partners with professionals towards the common aim of preventing or stopping the sexual exploitation of young people. Young people are also invited to attend their own meeting, and many of them do so. In 2010-2011 45% of the young people attended their sexual exploitation meetings and 100% of those attending said that they (i) understood why they had been invited to the meeting felt they had been listened to; (ii) that it was easy to take part and express their views; (iii) they found the meeting supportive; and (iv) they agreed with the plan made at the meeting.

Taking Stock is the youth work element of SES, offering one to one work with young people at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation. Taking Stock's work with young people allows for long term support. Their ethos is to work within a youth work model and to begin from the young person's starting point. Their workers carry a relatively small caseload to allow them the flexibility to respond to young people who are extremely vulnerable and who do not always neatly fit into allocated time slots.

In addition to long term one- to- one support, Taking Stock has also produced an education pack, 'Friend or Foe', which is delivered in local schools through PSHE. The pack was originally launched in 2006 and explores positive and negative relationships, peer pressure and sexual exploitation. It was revised in March 2009 and further revision and

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reprint was made in 2011.

Recent development by SES includes work on the sexual exploitation of boys and young men, internet exploitation and internal trafficking. The service part funded a film entitled 'My Dangerous Loverboy' with Doncaster Streetreach and the Home Office in 2008. The film raises awareness of internal trafficking of UK national children for sexual exploitation. South Yorkshire Police provide a dedicated Child Sexual Exploitation officer and Police Sergeant. The Child Sexual Exploitation officer attends all initial meetings and takes forward the investigation and/or disruption plan agreed at the sexual exploitation meeting.

Since the inception of the service, several successful law enforcement operations against offenders implicated in the grooming and exploitation of victims in the Sheffield area have taken place. Information relating to sexual exploitation is captured in a specific form, designed to be compatible with police intelligence recording methods. This ensures that information passed to police can be assessed as police intelligence, and suitable action can be taken as a result.

Street Matters, Tower Hamlets, East London

The NSPCC Street Matters sexual exploitation service is based in East London, working with young women who have been sexually exploited and/or trafficked. The Street Matters team consists of five social workers with a specific interest and expertise in the issues associated with sexual exploitation and trafficking.

The Street Matters service works with approximately 250 cases every year. Practitioners take on a range of work with each young person, including advocating for a social worker or more suitable housing; working with the police and general, sexual or mental health services including rape crisis teams; supporting asylum claims; alerting statutory services to forced marriage concerns; and general support work, such as finding clothes for service users or their babies, and allowing them to use the Street Matters centre for clothes washing, showering, having a hot meal and talking with an understanding worker at any time during the day.

The Street Matters service also offers a range of intense support to young women:

- ➔ individual support and key work is offered, which may extend to a worker offering consistent support throughout the young woman's engagement with the service. In many cases, this is the only consistency in the young person's life. Consistency is important for building trust. In many cases, service users have had as many as 15 social workers over a period of 3 years, where young people move across a number of London boroughs;
- ➔ weekly group support – named The Chill Zone by service users – builds up peer networks and improves relationships with other service users and professionals;
- ➔ Street Matters workers deliver preventative sessions in every school in the borough through preventative group work; and
- ➔ weekly groups for all service users to access for hot meals, showers, food, clothing and try to address practical support needs through this, with an additional monthly support group for trafficked and sexually exploited young women, called the There to Here group.

Street Matters have reported that the age group for referrals is now lower than at any time in the previous five years, with

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many more cases of 11-12 year olds accessing services for sexual exploitation. These children are involved in sexually exploitative relationships and, particularly in London, have gang associations where sexual bullying, rape and physical violence is common, as are threats to family and intimidation. There is a very high incidence of drug and alcohol use among service users, and this is particularly marked in this area of East London, which has a 48% Muslim population. Many service users have experienced violence at home, perpetrated by parents or carers in an attempt to contain children and control their behaviour. In some cases, this may result in the family taking the young woman out of the UK, often to Bangladesh, and potentially forcing the young person to marry a stranger there. 90% of young people who access the service have been in care at some point in their lives, with most remaining estranged from any family.

The impact of Street Matters in the local area is clear. There is a heightened awareness of sexual exploitation, forced marriage and trafficking as a result of interventions and the Child Protection training offered to professionals such as the police, social workers, and health professionals.

Coalition for the Removal of Pimping (CROP)

Founded in 1996 and driven by the experiences and needs of parents affected by child sexual exploitation, CROP is the only UK organisation to specialise in working alongside the parents, carers and wider family of victims.

CROP's substantial experience, specialist expertise and family-centred approach to tackling child sexual exploitation means that it can support, encourage and enable parents and families to be actively involved in responding to the issues that arise as a result of the sexual exploitation of their child.

CROP aims to:

- ➔ enable parents to be active in safeguarding their children from sexual exploitation;
- ➔ challenge and change public attitudes on child sexual exploitation and its impact on families;
- ➔ work to change policy and practice in relation to child sexual exploitation; and
- ➔ promote the bringing of perpetrators to justice.

CROP provides confidential and non-judgemental one to one support, information and advice to affected parents. CROP also facilitates peer support between parents through parent support groups and national parent network days. The nature of CROP's parent support goes some way to reducing the isolation experienced by many parents and enabling parents to engage with practitioners to help safeguard their child from sexual exploitation.

CROP regards the whole family, not just the child, as the victim of child sexual exploitation. CROP believes that parents are not mere second line victims, but agents of change with the knowledge, expertise and capacity to safeguard their children.

APPENDIX C. Relevant offences

Note that this information is derived from Jago and Pearce, 2008

Sexual Offences Act 2003

	Maximum Penalty
s1, rape	Life imprisonment
s5, rape of a child under 13	Life imprisonment
s6, assault of a child under 13 (by penetration)	Life imprisonment
s7, sexual assault of a child under 13 (touching)	14 years
s8, causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity	Life imprisonment (penetration); 14 years (no penetration)
s9, sexual activity with a child under 16	14 years
s16, sexual activity with a child under 18	5 years
s11, engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child under 16	10 years
s18, engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child under 18	5 years
s12, causing a child under 16 to watch a sexual act	14 years
s19, causing a child under 18 to watch a sexual act	5 years
s14, arranging or facilitating a child sex offence (under 16)	10 years
s15, meeting a child following sexual grooming (child under 16)	10 years
s47, paying for sexual services of a child	Life imprisonment (under 13 involving penetration); 14 years (under 13 not involving penetration); 7 years (child aged 16 – 17)
s48, causing or inciting child prostitution or child pornography	14 years
s49, controlling a child prostitute or a child involved in pornography	14 years
s50, arranging or facilitating child prostitution or pornography	14 years
s57, 58 and 59, trafficking into, within and out of the UK for sexual exploitation	14 years
s61, administering a substance with intent	10 years

Children Act 2004

s11, arrangements to safeguard and promote welfare

Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

s4, supply (and offer to supply) a controlled drug to another

Life imprisonment (Class A); 14 years
(Class B or C)

Child Abduction Act 1984

s2, abduction of a child by another person

7 years

Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985

s1, supply of intoxicating substances to a person under 18

6 months

Civil Orders

Sexual Offences Act 2003

s104, Sexual Offences Prevention Order

s114, Foreign Travel Order

s123, Risk of Sexual Harm Order

APPENDIX D. Indicators of sexual exploitation

The following list of indicators has been reproduced from the guidance on Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (DCSF, 2009).

Developmental Needs

Health

- ➔ Physical symptoms (bruising suggestive of either physical or sexual assault);
- ➔ chronic fatigue;
- ➔ recurring or multiple sexually transmitted infections;
- ➔ pregnancy and/or seeking an abortion;
- ➔ evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse; and
- ➔ sexually risky behaviour.

Education

- ➔ Truancy/disengagement with education or considerable change in performance at school.

Emotional and Behavioural Development

- ➔ Volatile behaviour exhibiting extreme array of mood swings or use of abusive language;
- ➔ getting involved in petty crime such as shoplifting, stealing;
- ➔ secretive behaviour; and
- ➔ entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults.

Identity

- ➔ Low self-image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour, e.g. cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity.

Family and Social Relationships

- ➔ Hostility in relationship with parents/carers and other family members;
- ➔ physical aggression towards parents, siblings, pets, teachers or peers;
- ➔ placement breakdown;
- ➔ reports from reliable sources (e.g. parents/carers, friends or other professionals in contact with the child or young person) suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation;

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- ➔ detachment from age-appropriate activities;
- ➔ associating with other young people who are known to be sexually exploited;
- ➔ young person known to be sexually active;
- ➔ sexual relationship with a significantly older person;
- ➔ unexplained relationships with older adults;
- ➔ possible inappropriate use of the internet and forming relationships, particularly with adults, via the internet;
- ➔ phone calls, text messages or letters from unknown adults;
- ➔ adults or older youths loitering outside the child's usual place of residence;
- ➔ persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation;
- ➔ returning after having been missing, looking well cared for in spite of having no known home base;
- ➔ missing for long periods, with no known home base; and
- ➔ going missing and being found in areas where the child or young person has no known links.

Social Presentation

- ➔ Change in appearance;
- ➔ leaving home/care setting in clothing unusual for the individual child (inappropriate for age, borrowing clothing from older young people).

Parental Capacity

Ensuring Safety

- ➔ History of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse or neglect.

Family and Environmental Factors

Family History and Functioning

- ➔ History of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse; neglect; domestic violence; parental difficulties.

Housing

- ➔ Pattern of street homelessness; and

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- ➔ having keys to premises other than those known about.

Income

- ➔ Possession of large amounts of money with no plausible explanation;
- ➔ acquisition of expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions without plausible explanation; and
- ➔ accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding.

Family's Social Integration

- ➔ Reports that the child has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation.

Indicators of possible sexual exploitation for boys and young men

Developmental Needs

Health

- ➔ Physical symptoms – sexually transmitted infections, bruising or other marks on body suggestive of physical or sexual abuse;
- ➔ drug or alcohol misuse; and
- ➔ self-harming or eating disorders.

Education

- ➔ Truancy from school, deterioration of schoolwork or part-time timetable

Emotional and Behavioural Development

- ➔ Secretive;
- ➔ young offender behaviour or anti-social behaviour;
- ➔ secretive about internet use or using adult networking sites;
- ➔ sexualised language;
- ➔ aggressive or violent; and
- ➔ sexually offending behaviour.

Family and Social Relationships

- ➔ Associating with other children at risk of sexual exploitation;

APPENDIX D. Indicators of sexual exploitation

- ➔ missing from home or staying out late;
- ➔ getting into cars of unknown people; and
- ➔ contact with unknown adults outside of normal social group via face to face meetings, internet, text messaging or phone calls.

Identity

- ➔ Low self-esteem, poor self-image or lack of confidence.

Social Presentation

- ➔ Wearing an unusual amount of clothing.

Family and Environmental Factors

Income

- ➔ Social activities with no explanation of how funded; and
- ➔ possession of abnormal amounts of money, gifts, new mobile phones, credit on mobile phones, number of SIM cards.

Family's Social Integration

- ➔ Frequenting known high-risk areas or going to addresses of concern; and
- ➔ seen at public toilets known for cottaging or adult venues (pubs and clubs).

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