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# The Child Sexual Exploitation Service and Missing children service for young people in Stoke-on-Trent: A Review

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## Acknowledgements

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The review team would like to thank all those who have contributed to the review. The commissioning team Carolyn Higgs, Amanda Owen and Adel Eaton have provided excellent preparatory and co-ordination support throughout the review process.

Managers, commissioners and practitioners from all agencies we approached have been extremely positive and helpful, and we are very grateful for their help in facilitating the review, taking part in focus groups and interviews, undertaking self-interviews and completing questionnaires.

We would like to extend special recognition and thanks to the young people who gave their time and their views to help managers, commissioners and practitioners, through this review, to deliver a safeguarding service focussed on good outcomes for young people.

We recognise that all those who have taken part in this review have extremely busy schedules, and we have asked for their help within very tight timescales.

Any errors are the responsibility of the author.



The University of Bedfordshire has won the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education for its pioneering applied research into child sexual exploitation influencing new safeguarding policy and practice. The prestigious prize is the highest form of national recognition open to higher and further education institutions in the UK and the award enhances the university's widely-acknowledged reputation for its work in raising awareness of child sexual exploitation.

## 1. Introduction

This report presents the findings from a high level independent review of two separate service areas which currently operate across Stoke-on-Trent. The service areas are:

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE); and
- Missing Children

The term 'high level' describes the reviewing of the system as a whole or the larger components of it, with any consideration of the detail presented in support of this, rather than as focus in its own right.

The review has been undertaken by Chanon Consulting, with advisory support provided by International Centre: researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking (The International Centre) at The Institute of Applied Social Research, University of Bedfordshire. The review was commissioned in May 2014 and completed in July 2014. It was supported by Stoke-on-Trent Vulnerable Children Corporate Parenting team, the Children and Young People's Joint Commissioning team and the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board.

### *The review team*

Chanon Consulting has excellent fieldwork experience, project management and operational expertise and a high level of understanding of CSE/missing children policy and practice issues. The International Centre engages in applied research with particular expertise in realist evaluations and participatory evaluative methods. See appendix 4 for more information about the review team.

### *The report structure*

The report is organised as follows. It opens with a description of the policy background and methodology for the review. It presents key issues from published material providing a framework for a good practice response to CSE and missing children; and examines Stoke-on-Trent documentation in order to form a baseline in terms of the current local strategy, systems, policy and practice. The report then considers current services for sexually exploited and missing children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent. It does this in the light of the requirements for good CSE and missing children responses as described in the national CSE guidance - *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation, Supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children* (the DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance); and the *Statutory guidance on Children who Run away or Go missing from Home or Care* (the DfE, 2014 Missing children guidance). It looks at current training for Stoke-on-Trent staff. The report draws conclusions from the review as a whole, and finally, makes a series recommendations for action over the short and longer term.

Contributions from participants are included in the report by interview (i), focus group (practitioner - pf or young person - ypf) or survey (yps) and a number, to preserve anonymity.

## Specific review objectives

This review has sought to better understand the safeguarding system that currently operates within Stoke-on-Trent to respond to the needs of children who are at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation and those who run away/go missing, with specific reference to:

- capturing what is working well
- gaps in local practice, and
- recommending system/service improvements with reference to learning from the DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance, the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups<sup>1</sup>, the DfE, 2014 Missing children guidance and other recent learning in the fields of CSE and missing children.

The specific review objectives were to consider the follow issues with reference to CSE and missing children:

a) Child sexual exploitation:

- professional knowledge and understanding of CSE and appropriate service responses
- nature of available training and briefings on child sexual exploitation and professional uptake of these
- perceived quality of local leadership and strategic planning across the key partners
- mapping of existing range of services and key principles required for an effective multi-agency response
- use of the existing CSE care pathway and processes – including assessment and referral processes and the overall system/multi agency response – and ease of access for young people and their families
- perceived effectiveness and integration of the commissioned specialist CSE service
- perceived degree of complementarity between city and county's arrangements

b) Missing children:

- extent to which the Runaway and Missing from Care and home protocol and care pathway processes are fit for purpose
- understanding of processes and professional knowledge and competence to respond appropriately in respect of children missing from care and home
- co-ordination of safe and well checks with independent return interviews
- perceived effectiveness and integration of the service commissioned to undertake return interviews

c) How the CSE service and the Missing children service relate to each other and fit in the wider safeguarding children system.

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<sup>1</sup> *I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world.* Interim Report (2012) and *If only someone had listened.* Final Report (2013) The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups

## Policy context

The phenomenon of CSE has received increasing attention within policy discourse over the last five years, and with it the issues of children going missing. In consequence there are now a number of groups within and outside government, at national level, which are focusing on improving the response to both child sexual exploitation and missing children.

### *Key developments*

#### **Child sexual exploitation**

Having published initial guidance around the safeguarding of children from CSE - the DCSF, 2009 guidance<sup>2</sup>, the government subsequently published a National Action Plan to tackle CSE in 2011<sup>3</sup>, followed by a report on progress in 2012.<sup>4</sup> A step-by-step guide for practitioners on addressing CSE concerns was also published in 2012<sup>5</sup>, as was the Association of Chief Police Officers CSE Action Plan (currently being updated). The Crown Prosecution Service issued updated guidance on prosecuting cases of child sexual abuse, including CSE, in 2013.

Following a number of high profile legal cases involving sexual exploitation, children going missing and gangs, the Office of the Children's Commissioner undertook an Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation by Gangs and Groups (CSEGG) in 2011-2013.<sup>6,7</sup> The Inquiry concluded that

*'serious gaps remain in the knowledge, practice and services required to tackle child sexual exploitation and while there are pockets of good practice, much still needs to be done to prevent thousands more children falling victims'.<sup>8</sup>*

In 2013 the DfE transferred responsibility for CSE to the Home Office, which established a National Group on Sexual Violence against Children and Vulnerable People. The Group's priorities are to promote action to prevent child sexual exploitation, protecting children online, facilitating effective police interruption of perpetrators and ensuring that victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system.<sup>9</sup> As part of this, in 2014, the Ministry of Justice transferred responsibility for the availability of victim's services, including for victims of CSE, to the new Police and Crime Commissioners. Also this year, the Department of Health accepted all the recommendations for an improved health response to CSE from the Royal Colleges and other child and health stakeholders.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation, Supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children.* (DCSF, 2009)

<sup>3</sup> *Tackling child sexual exploitation action plan.* DfE (2012)

<sup>4</sup> *Tackling child sexual exploitation action plan: Progress report.* DfE (July 2012)

<sup>5</sup> *What to do if you suspect a child is being sexually exploited: A step-by-step guide for frontline practitioners.* DfE (2011)

<sup>6</sup> *I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world.* The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups. Interim Report (2012)

<sup>7</sup> Berelowitz et al, *If only someone had listened.* The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups. Final Report (2013)

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* page 7

<sup>9</sup> *Sexual Violence against Children and Vulnerable People: National Group Progress Report and Action Plan* (HO, 2013)

<sup>10</sup> *Health Working Group Report on Child Sexual Exploitation.* DH (January 2014) and *Health Working Group Report on Child Sexual Exploitation - Response to the Recommendations.* DH (May 2014)

## Missing children

In June 2012 the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults and the APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers published a Report from the *Joint Inquiry into Children Who Go Missing From Care*.<sup>11</sup> This report made a number of recommendations relating to preventative and responsive measures to protect and support young people and ensure provision of a safety net for young runaways.

A year later a study by Barnardo's<sup>12</sup> confirmed previous findings<sup>13</sup> that very few children and young people approach agencies for support when they run away and only a minority are reported as missing to the police. The Children's Commissioner's Inquiry highlighted the link between children going missing and CSE and the strength of this link was recognised in the Home Affairs Select Committee report on Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming.<sup>14</sup>

The Home Office leads the national 'Missing Children and Adults Strategy' but the DfE is responsible for the publication earlier this year of statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care.<sup>15</sup>

### Key Principles

The DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance and the statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (*Working Together*)<sup>16</sup> outline key underpinning principles for responding well to CSE and missing children. These translate into the following responsibilities and requirements - that:

- safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, individual practitioner and organisation
- services should be based on engagement with the child; and a clear understanding of the needs and views of children
- services should focus on prevention and on intervening as early as possible
- parents should receive information and support to prevent harm, and safeguard their children
- children and young people have rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and UK legislation, including a right to healthy development, to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and to psychological recovery<sup>17</sup>
- children are first and foremost victims, and police activity should be focused on the perpetrators

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<sup>11</sup> Report from the *Joint Inquiry into Children Who Go Missing From Care* issued by All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults and the APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. (2012)

<sup>12</sup> Smeaton E, *Running from Hate*. Barnardo's (2013)

<sup>13</sup> Rees G (2011) *Still Running*. The Children's Society (2011)

<sup>14</sup> *Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming, Second Report of Session 2013-14*, House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2013)

<sup>15</sup> Statutory guidance on Children who Run away or Go missing from Home or Care. DfE (2014)

<sup>16</sup> *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (DfE, 2013)

<sup>17</sup> UNCRC Articles 6, 34 and 39

- children harmed through CSE should receive holistic assessments of their needs<sup>18</sup>, with CSE services being integrated into the wide range of local child and family services

Statutory guidance is clear that strong local leadership is needed from local authority members, with a commitment from the chief officers in all the agencies; and effective local co-ordination and challenge by the local safeguarding children boards in each area. This is to ensure that partner agencies are fulfilling their statutory duties under sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004, respectively to co-operate to improve the well-being of children at risk from, or already experiencing sexual exploitation, and to make arrangements within the discharging of their own agency's functions to safeguard children from sexual exploitation and promote their welfare.

## Methodology

### *National good practice benchmarking*

This review has examined existing national guidance and good practice literature relating to the sexual exploitation of children and for children going missing from care and home. The focus on CSE has meant that the knowledge-base has grown exponentially in the very recent past. The criteria for inclusion here has therefore been:

- literature published in the past year by organisations with a track record of cutting-edge grass-roots research - providing the latest information about children's experience of sexual exploitation and going missing
- local learning from serious case reviews involving CSE cases, and
- the most recently published national guidance (e.g. DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance and DfE, 2014 Missing children guidance).

### *Analysis of Stoke-on-Trent documentation*

An analysis of Stoke-on-Trent documentation has been undertaken to form a baseline in terms of the current local strategy, systems, policy and practice in respect child sexual exploitation and runaways / children missing from care and home; the referral and inputs and outcomes information available to senior management and partnerships locally with responsibility for the welfare of these children.

### *Interviews with managers/commissioners*

Fourteen semi-structured interviews were undertaken with senior staff with responsibility for managing and/or commissioning services for children who have been sexually exploited and/or who have gone missing from care and home. The staff who participated in the interviews represented the key agencies with responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children at risk of (or already experiencing) harm from sexual exploitation, and from going missing. These interviews aimed to examine in greater depth the factors that inform strategy, commissioning and service delivery, and the processes through which decision-making takes place.

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<sup>18</sup> Based on the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*. DH (2000)



### *Focus groups with practitioners*

Three focus groups were held, one with representatives from the Child Sexual Exploitation Operational Panel, one with frontline police officers, and the other with local authority children's social care social workers working with children who have experienced sexual exploitation and have gone missing from home and/or care. The focus groups aimed to explore practitioners' experience and perspective of Stoke-on-Trent's response to child sexual exploitation and children who go missing from home and care.

### *London CSE survey questionnaire*

In addition to the interviews with managers/commissioners, the independent Chair of Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board was asked to complete the London Child Sexual Exploitation Survey questionnaire. This was an addition to the original methodology and was included because it enabled the review team to benchmark Stoke-on-Trent's response to child sexual exploitation against the largest existing cohort of comparable responses to child sexual exploitation by local authority/local safeguarding children board areas in England.

### *Case profiling by social workers*

This aspect of the project aimed to explore the profile of current Stoke-on-Trent cases involving child sexual exploitation and children who go missing from home or care. It was also undertaken to provide an insight into - the children and young people's journey's through the system, the complexity of the cases, the contribution from parents and which agencies were involved.

Five social workers currently working with such children were asked to provide a semi-structured audio record of their child's case by, tape-recording their responses to a questionnaire. It is important to emphasise the numbers concerned are small and that this sample is not intended to be representative.

### *Feedback from young people*

Feedback from young people was sought in two ways. A focus group was held to explore the views of children and young people who had received services as a result of their experiencing sexual exploitation, including, in some cases, going missing from home or care. The aim was to gather information about what worked well and where improvements could be made to the services the young people had received. The children and young people who participated in the focus group also completed a short questionnaire providing feedback on their experience of receiving services from the commissioned specialist CSE service.

A second cohort of young people, all of whom are currently looked after, completed a similar short questionnaire providing feedback on their experience of receiving services from a range of local services.

### *Review ethics*

The review has followed the standards of ethical approval from the Institute of Applied Social Research Ethics Committee and the University of Bedfordshire Research Ethics Committee. These requirements are in line with ethical guidance produced by *The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)* and *The British Sociological Association*. Stoke-on-Trent City Council was also asked if there were any additional ethical governance procedures for this review but none were identified

Participation in the project was voluntary. All the professionals who took part in the focus groups, interviews, case profiling; and the children and young people who contributed through the focus group and by completing the questionnaires, were asked to provide written consent. The information provided was confidential and it was agreed that, in the event of poor practice being identified which could place individual children at risk of harm, this would be reported to the Strategic Manager Safeguarding & Quality Assurance, at Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

## 2. National good practice benchmarking

### National guidance, recent publications and learning from SCRs

This review has examined existing national guidance and good practice literature relating to child sexual exploitation and children going missing from care and home. The high profile and national focus on CSE over the past several years, has seen the knowledge-base about this type of abuse grow exponentially over the same time period.

#### *Summary profile from the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups*<sup>19</sup>

The Inquiry has provided useful information about the profile of CSE and children going missing from home and care. The Inquiry estimated that at least 16,500 children were at risk of CSE in the year to March 2011 and 2,409 children were confirmed as victims of sexual exploitation in gangs and groups in the year to October 2011. There is no confirmation of the numbers of children sexually exploited by individuals.

The majority of child victims of sexual exploitation are girls, but boys are also sexually exploited. Of the children identified via the Inquiry's call for evidence, 72% were girls and 9% were boys<sup>20</sup>. The average age of children experiencing sexual exploitation is 15 years old, however, there is a cohort of 10 to 14 year old victims, with some incidences of younger children being sexually exploited.

In terms of the link between CSE and children going missing from home and care, of the sexually exploited children who were interviewed during the CSEGG Inquiry, 70% had gone missing from home and 65% were not attending school.

All the children interviewed for the Inquiry reported experiencing physical violence, 48% of them had injuries that required them to visit an accident and emergency department. In the Inquiry's call for evidence submissions:

- 41% identified children having drug and alcohol problems as a result of sexual exploitation
- 32% identified children self-harming as a result of sexual exploitation
- 27% raised broader concerns about victims' mental health following sexual exploitation
- 39% identified a negative impact on children's sexual health.

Professionals reinforced this concern during site visits and evidence hearings, reporting pregnancy, miscarriages, terminations, sexually transmitted infections including chlamydia, herpes and gonorrhoea, and other consequences.

The picture of children and young people's mental health was concerning. The Inquiry reported that 85% of the sexually exploited children who were interviewed had either self-harmed or attempted suicide as a result of sexual exploitation. During site visits, evidence hearings and interviews with children, the following issues were identified:

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<sup>19</sup> *I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world.* Interim Report (2012) and *If only someone had listened.* Final Report (2013) The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups

<sup>20</sup> Where gender was disclosed

- emerging personality disorder
- borderline personality disorder
- emerging psychosis
- depression
- self-harming
- thoughts of suicide
- drug and alcohol abuse
- severe low self-esteem
- self-neglect.

### Further relevant evidence for consideration

The evidence relevant to responding well to CSE and children and young people going missing is presented here under separate subject area headings with a view to facilitating consideration of all the subject areas at each stage of the child's journey through the care pathway - awareness raising and prevention, identification, assessment, and short and longer term interventions.

Further details of interventions at each of these stages are available from a review of Local Safeguarding Children Boards responses to CSE undertaken by the University of Bedfordshire '*What's going on to safeguard children from sexual exploitation? How local partnerships respond to child sexual exploitation*'.<sup>21</sup> This research highlighted the difficulties for safeguarding boards to achieve the dual aim of both protecting young people and working with partners to prosecute abusers.

Any or all of the areas may become relevant at the point that CSE is identified, for example even in a case where a child or young person and/or their family is already receiving services for other reasons.

The subject areas covered include:

- awareness and prevention of CSE, the links between CSE and offending, including sexually harmful behaviours
- CSE and learning disabilities/difficulties
- CSE and children from black and ethnic minority communities
- a health response to CSE
- the multi-agency response
- safe accommodation for children who have been sexually exploited
- adolescent abuse and neglect, teenage intimate partner violence

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<sup>21</sup> '*What's going on to safeguard children from sexual exploitation? How local partnerships respond to child sexual exploitation*' University of Bedfordshire. Jago et al (2011) [www.beds.ac.uk/ic](http://www.beds.ac.uk/ic)

- going missing, CSE and independent return interviews, learning from serious case reviews, national guidance, and
- risk assessment tools.

### *CSE awareness and prevention*

There is work to be done on awareness and prevention of CSE amongst professionals and parents. Two national surveys<sup>22</sup> in 2013 assessed parental and professional understanding and experience of child sexual exploitation in England, with a particular focus on the role of parents. The results are instructive for local areas working to improve collaborative responses to CSE; they include that:

- 40% of parents were not confident in recognising the difference between indicators of child sexual exploitation and normal challenging adolescent behaviour
- 43% of professionals were not confident that they would be able to spot the signs that a child is a victim of CSE
- only a quarter of parents see unsupervised use of social networking chat rooms/sites as a risk factor linked to higher risk of a child being a victim of CSE

### **The role of schools**

- 75% of parents would expect their school to tell them if the school knew that some pupils were being sexually exploited or at risk of being exploited. However, almost 40% of teachers stated they would not, as a matter of urgency, inform the parent of a child they thought at risk of sexual exploitation
- more than 50% of teachers feel that there is not enough evidence and guidance available for them to work effectively with children who have been sexually exploited

### *CSE and youth offending*

A better understanding is needed of the relationship between CSE and offending. Research<sup>23</sup> involving over 500 sexually exploited children was undertaken specifically addressing the association between child sexual exploitation (CSE) and youth offending in Derby, key findings were that:

- almost 40% of CSE victims had offending histories
- youth offending may reduce the likelihood of reporting CSE and affect witnesses' credibility

### **Harmful sexual behaviour**

Research undertaken and collated by NSPCC gives the following statistics and insights into harmful sexual behaviour by children:

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<sup>22</sup> *Are parents in the picture? Professional and parental perspectives of child sexual exploitation*. Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (Pace) in partnership with Virtual College's Safeguarding Children e-Academy (2013)

<sup>23</sup> Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science

- two thirds of the contact sexual abuse experienced by 0-17 year olds was perpetrated by someone under the age of 18<sup>24</sup>
- all children, including the instigator of the behaviour, need to be viewed as victims because children and young people who develop harmful sexual behaviours have usually experienced abuse and neglect themselves. Around 50% of children with harmful sexual behaviours had been sexually abused themselves<sup>25</sup>, and one study found that all the children had also experienced physical and emotional abuse<sup>26</sup>; and parental mental health or domestic violence may also have an impact.<sup>27</sup>

Studies in the US have shown that up to 30% of children with harmful sexual behaviour go on to commit sexual offences as adults if they do not receive any treatment. For those children who do receive treatment, however, the figure drops to between 5% and 14%.<sup>28</sup>

### *CSE and learning disabilities/difficulties*

Learning disability is widely recognised to heighten the risk of CSE. A recent grass roots survey of health professionals reports that young people with a learning disability may have a disordered attachment to the grooming process. Examples of girls with Down's Syndrome were cited, and young people, on the Autism Spectrum, particularly girls, are often pre-occupied with relationships and it is difficult for them to understand grooming. The complex interplay between a young person being both a victim and an offender can be pronounced for children with learning disabilities. It is important that the methods used for educating these young people in the dangers of sexual exploitation are adapted to their level of understanding and delivered in a way that they can absorb the information given, and subsequently put that information into practice.

### *CSE and children from black and ethnic minority communities*

Research on CSE and children from black and ethnic minority communities is limited, however, a recent report by the Muslim Women's Network UK<sup>29</sup> gives an insight into the potential challenges in relation to Asian girls:

- withdrawal from sex education limits understanding of e.g. issues of consent
- strict upbringing means that girls are most easily groomed through other girls at school and via the internet
- shame and family dishonour silences the girls and fear of honour-based violence and forced marriage is exploited by perpetrators
- shame and dishonour silences families including from reporting a daughter missing
- families' lack of understanding about sexual exploitation
- shame and dishonour silencing communities

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<sup>24</sup> Radford et al (2011)

<sup>25</sup> Jones and Ramchandani (1999)

<sup>26</sup> Yates (2012)

<sup>27</sup> Vizard (2007)

<sup>28</sup> Rich (2011)

<sup>29</sup> *Unheard Voices - Sexual exploitation of Asian girls and young women*. Muslim Women's Network UK (2013)  
[www.mwnuk.co.uk/go\\_files/resources/UnheardVoices.pdf](http://www.mwnuk.co.uk/go_files/resources/UnheardVoices.pdf)

- victim blaming, victims, those considered ‘bad’ were usually the ones who did not wear the headscarf and therefore were not thought of as victims but as ‘bringing it on to themselves’. However, the victims in the case studies came from a range of backgrounds and included those who wore the headscarf and those who did not.
- The double standards in attitudes towards boys and girls the different attitudes towards boys and girls and their treatment contributed to community exoneration of the men.

### *Health response to CSE*

Health commissioners, managers and practitioners have a crucial role to play at every stage of the CSE care pathway. However, the Health Working Group Report on Child Sexual Exploitation<sup>30</sup> published earlier this year emphasises health’s primary responsibility for commissioning and delivering the local recovery services for children harmed by sexual exploitation. It cites evidence that being a victim of sexual violence or abuse is a risk factor for the development of mental health problems and disorders. For example, girls who needed treatment as a result of having experienced contact sexual abuse had high rates of disorder and co-morbidity (using DSM-III-R criteria) prior to treatment:<sup>31</sup> 73% suffered post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), 57% suffered major depression, 37% suffered generalised anxiety disorder and 58% suffered separation anxiety disorder.

The Health Working Group recommend that local health commissioners might wish to promote a joined-up response with partner agencies through care and referral pathways for health treatment and recovery services for children who have been sexually exploited, and where appropriate, engage non-statutory agencies in delivering or co-delivering these services.

### *CSE and multi-agency working*

Multi-agency working with clarity about roles, partnership working and managed information sharing is critical to an effective CSE response

The final report<sup>32</sup> of the Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups urged local safeguarding children boards/local authorities and their partner agencies, to reassure themselves that they have addressed the most common gaps in their local responses to CSE. Thus local safeguarding children boards should ensure that:

- they have good data collection to develop a ‘problem profile’, and to monitor outcomes
- staff clearly understand that the children’s history and family circumstances render them vulnerable to predators, and the actions of a child subsequent to being abused reflects trauma and powerlessness, rather than wilful ‘putting themselves at risk’
- children’s views are individually and collectively sought and acted upon
- they have one over-arching lead driving the local response
- they have a multi-agency commitment to a CSE strategy, which reflects children’s views

<sup>30</sup> *Health Working Group Report on Child Sexual Exploitation*. DH (January 2014)

<sup>31</sup> Trowell J, Kolvin I, Weeramanthri T, Berelowitz M, Sadowski H, Glaser D and Leitch I (2002), Psychotherapy for sexually abused girls: psychopathological outcome findings and patterns of change. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 180, 234–247

<sup>32</sup> *If only someone had listened*. The Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups. Final Report (2013)

- staff are supported by sufficient, good quality training, sound risk assessment tools, a clear understanding that children can be a victim and a perpetrator simultaneously - and need services to address both
- staff have supervisory support
- partnership working is supported by a CSE co-ordinator and information sharing is promoted
- the local specialist CSE service has medium to long term funding

### *Safe accommodation*

Recent evaluation of a safe accommodation project<sup>33</sup> for CSE victims concluded that the model can enable young people to be effectively protected and to recover from the abuse. Core to the model is a child-centred specialist placement team (specialist foster carer, project worker, fostering social worker) who create a safe environment around the young person based on a relationship that can 'hold' them in to the placement.

### *Adolescents need protection from neglect*

Neglect is the largest category children subject to child protection plans (CPPs), and substantial numbers of 10 to 15 year-olds are neglected in England. The analysis of serious case reviews, 2002-5<sup>34</sup> which showed that a quarter of the 161 children who died or who were seriously injured were over 11 years old. These young people were labelled as 'hard to help' and had a long history of involvement from children's social care and other specialist agencies, including periods of being looked after, by the time of the serious incident.

*Working Together* (DfE 2013) states that 'practitioners should be rigorous in assessing and monitoring children at risk of neglect.' There is clear evidence to show that a range of negative outcomes among young people is associated with adolescent experience of neglect, these include negative health and mental health outcomes, educational disengagement, the risk of running away, bullying, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse; sexual exploitation and risky sexual behaviours.<sup>35,36</sup>

Family closeness [the opposite of neglect] has been confirmed as the most important protective factor against high-risk behaviours such as smoking, alcohol and drug use, and early initiation of sexual activity.<sup>37</sup>

### *Behavioural norms and intimate partner violence (domestic abuse)*

In 2013 the government widened the definition of domestic abuse to include 16 and 17 year olds. This reflects findings such as those from the British Crime Survey 2009/10, that 16-19-year-olds were the group most likely to suffer abuse from a partner. Young people's attitudes to

<sup>33</sup> Shuker L, *Evaluation of Barnardo's safe accommodation project for sexually exploited and trafficked young people*, University of Bedfordshire (2013) [www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/research\\_and\\_publications/evaluation-of-barnardos-safe-accommodation-project-for-sexually-exploited-and-trafficked-young-people/publication-view.jsp?pid=PUB-2340](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/research_and_publications/evaluation-of-barnardos-safe-accommodation-project-for-sexually-exploited-and-trafficked-young-people/publication-view.jsp?pid=PUB-2340)

<sup>34</sup> Brandon et al. (2008)

<sup>35</sup> Stein, M., Rees, G., Hicks, L. and Gorin, S *Neglected Adolescents – Literature Review*, 2009, DfE (2011)

<sup>36</sup> Hicks, L and Stein, M. *Neglect Matters*. DfE (2011)

<sup>37</sup> Resnick, Bearman and Blum et al. *Protecting Adolescents From Harm: Findings From the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health* (1997)



relationships 'normalises' the abuse e.g. findings from one of the surveys was that 43% of young people believe cheating, flirting, or dressing outrageously justifies violence and 55% of the young girls believe that they were at least partly to blame for their unwanted sexual experiences.<sup>38</sup> An NSPCC study found that almost 90% of 13 to 17 year old girls had been in an intimate relationship and of these, one in six said they had been pressured into sexual intercourse and one in sixteen said they had been raped.<sup>39</sup>

### *CSE, going missing and return interviews*

A view from a recent report<sup>40</sup> by The Children's Society is that local authorities do not take running away as seriously as they should - it is a clear indicator that a child is at risk of harm. The child may be running away from conflict with parents or carers, family breakdown or poor relationships, experiences of abuse and neglect or problems at school. Whilst missing children are very vulnerable to being sexually exploited; or they go missing to be with the abuser who has groomed them. Projects with a focus on working with young people who experience running away and/or CSE report that anywhere between 50 - 90% of their caseload experience both running away and CSE.<sup>41</sup>

In this context an independent return interview provides the critical opportunity to understand the whole picture behind a missing episode and the needs of the child. Yet findings from The Children's Society study were that only 29% of local authorities<sup>42</sup> offered return interviews to all children missing from home and care, compared 49% who offered interviews to all children missing from care. Furthermore, only 19% of local authorities offered some return interviews via an independent provider (most were undertaken by children's social care). And finally, only a third of local authorities include an assessment of need in their return interviews.

Updated guidance on missing persons from the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is currently under development and due for publication in early 2015. Current guidance is available at <http://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/>.<sup>43</sup>

### *Contributions from learning from serious case reviews*

Key findings from a recent high profile case, many of which are replicated across the different serious case reviews and thematic reviews, were:

**Profile of children:** all but one of the girls had learning difficulties/disability or special educational needs.

**Leadership and multi-agency working:** leadership and accountability for multi-agency working was lacking. There was a reliance on good personal relationships rather than systematic and prioritised multi-agency co-operation. Formal systems are needed for multi-agency work in order

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<sup>38</sup> NSPCC/Sugar magazine survey (2006)

<sup>39</sup> Barter C, McCarry M, Berridge D and Evans K. *Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships*. University of Bristol and the NSPCC (2009)

<sup>40</sup> Rees, G *Still Running*. London: The Children's Society (2011)

<sup>41</sup> Children's Commissioner (2012), *I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world*. The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups. Interim Report

<sup>42</sup> 134 local authorities, April to December 2012

<sup>43</sup> College of Policing (2014): Missing persons [Internet].

to guarantee transparency and accountability, good information sharing (in this case, particularly from health - GPs and A&E), and a means of escalating concerns across agencies.

**Prioritising CSE:** CSE was not a priority locally, the CSE working group was not senior enough, the specialist CSE service was not integrated into the over-arching strategy and the CSE response was poorly co-ordinated, with agency roles and responsibilities not clarified and owned. A CSE procedure was in place (2009) but the impact was not measured.

#### **The care pathway:**

- *awareness* - awareness of CSE was very low amongst professionals, parents and the community
- *identification* - sexual activity was known and tolerated despite the girls young ages, running away and alcohol misuse were not recognised as issues which needed addressing in their own right or as indicators of CSE and fairly frequent visits to A&E in the small hours did not prompt questions and information sharing.
- *assessment* - this was poor (no risk assessment tool, history or current/recent context, no young people's involvement or multi-agency input). The men were invisible despite being inappropriately present at intimate examinations (GP) or as escorts to A&E. The children's needs and families' parenting/protective abilities were not known or responded to; and finally, youth offending team assessments focussed on offending behaviour not safeguarding needs or even a description of the whole child.
- *short term interventions (coping)* - early intervention failed. It should have happened before the young people's developing vulnerabilities were preyed on; and referrals failed because they asked for family support', rather than just stating clearly the risk of harm and the perceived vulnerabilities/need.
- *longer term interventions (recovery)* - the CAMHS response was not a safeguarding one (closing cases for lack of attendance without sharing this information). Poor assessment meant that referrals poorly articulated the children's needs and interventions were inevitably inappropriate and ineffective. This was compounded by an absence for interventions of a model, a knowledge-base, target outcomes, a practice framework etc.

**Training needs and supervision:** safeguarding supervision was missing; and training was recommended for frontline practitioners and their managers in areas such as -

- the need to engage with young people, including persistence in the face of hostility
- vulnerability, the impact of trauma and neglect, understanding, rather than just managing, risk-taking (a key indicator of abuse)
- child development, maturity and learning disability e.g. a 13 year old with learning difficulties could not possibly be expected to understand the implications of pregnancy.

The results of the NSPCC's analysis of serious case reviews involving CSE<sup>44</sup> mirrors these findings, and also makes some key points about identifying and dealing with perpetrators. These are that

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<sup>44</sup> *Learning from case reviews around child sexual exploitation*. NSPCC briefing (2013)

[www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/resourcesforprofessionals/scrs/briefing-sexual-exploitation\\_wda99717.html](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/resourcesforprofessionals/scrs/briefing-sexual-exploitation_wda99717.html)

too often when young people do disclose abuse no actions are taken by agencies against perpetrators. Disclosure from young people of underage sexual activity or sexual exploitation needs to be taken seriously and dealt with as a crime. See Stoke-on-Trent multi-agency response to CSE, The Police section, for comment on this from the children and young people's focus group.

### *Contributions from guidance and risk assessment tools*

#### **National guidance**

The government guidance *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation, Supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children* (DCSF, 2009) remains useful in setting out the responsibilities of local safeguarding children boards and their partner agencies in responding to CSE. It was followed by guidance aimed at practitioners - *What to do if you suspect a child is being sexually exploited* (DfE, 2012) which summarises the key expectations on professionals across the areas of identification, referral, assessment, support and recovery, prosecution and other legal proceedings.

An important area which is not addressed well by the DCSF guidance is the child's journey from universal services 'recognition' through 'identification' to referral for 'assessment' by children's social care. The learning from serious case reviews is that cases are often not progressed for lack of evidence that the child is actually at risk or experiencing CSE. The government guidance encourages the gathering of evidence to increase the chance of successful criminal prosecutions of perpetrators, but missing from the guidance is an emphasis on the responsibility which practitioners must have for gathering evidence of CSE. This requires universal services practitioners to build a relationship of trust with the young person, to elicit a disclosure, or at least, enough information/evidence to enable a reasonable assessment of risk to be made as to whether the child is being sexually exploited.

#### **Local guidance**

The DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance urges local services to 'focus on prevention and on intervening as early as possible'. However, a conclusion was drawn from a 2013 review<sup>45</sup> of CSE Risk Assessment tools currently in use in England, Wales and Scotland, that the tools appeared better for use when a young person's behaviours and presentation indicated that CSE had already become established in their life. There is therefore scope to improve the multi-agency response to CSE with assessment materials and guidance which better assist universal services practitioners to recognise children and young people's vulnerabilities and intervene earlier. The National Working Group Network<sup>46</sup> offers support to practitioners working on CSE cases and sites a number of relevant tools, including risk assessment tools.

Risk Assessment tools are invaluable in embedding a consistent local understanding and response to CSE. There is a need to keep them under constant review due to the speed with which the evidence base on CSE is growing. For example, a finding from the current MSUnderstood Project<sup>47</sup> in London is that Risk Assessment tools need to direct practitioners to identify the spaces or

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<sup>45</sup> Analysis of sixteen Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Risk Assessment tools currently in use in England, Wales and Scotland (Chanon Consulting (2013))

<sup>46</sup> The National Working Group Network [www.nwgnetwork.org.uk](http://www.nwgnetwork.org.uk)

<sup>47</sup> MSUnderstood is a partnership between the University of Bedfordshire, Imkaan, and the Girls against Gangs project working on peer-on-peer abuse.

locations where a child or young person spends time e.g. in school or college, a neighbourhood, business area, local park etc; and assess the risks both posed by the location and the individuals (peers and adults) with whom the child has relationships in that space.

There is good local guidance developed by local safeguarding children boards and the London safeguarding children board, for responding to issues related to CSE, such as safeguarding children with disabilities, and from trafficking, forced marriage and gangs, and working with children who harm others. Local strategies include those on, for example, neglect.

### 3. Strategy, policies and procedures: Stoke-on-Trent, the local picture

#### A baseline for good local practice

Strategies, policies and procedures (when appropriately developed and implemented) provide an invaluable frame of reference within which all local agencies can locate their role and responsibilities in relation to each other in preventing and responding to CSE. Research and practice, however, consistently identify challenges in the translation of the commitments outlined in high level policies and procedures into professional practice and young people's lived realities.<sup>48</sup>

Analysis of Stoke-on-Trent documentation was undertaken in order to form a baseline in terms of the current local strategy, systems, policy and practice in respect child sexual exploitation and children missing from care and home. In order to facilitate a consistent and easily articulated analysis of the documents, the review team developed a simple audit tool comprising a list of high level criteria, adjusted to address the different objectives and audiences of the documents. The audit tool was applied to the documents in the three categories: 'strategic', 'operational' and 'specialist service specifications'.

Each document was reviewed against the list of high level criteria together with a more detailed review of the document's content. The documents were benchmarked against a standard derived from good practice documentation from elsewhere in the UK and the latest research and policy information. Some of the documents, both strategic and operational, are jointly developed with Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board e.g. the *Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy (2012)* and the *Draft Joint protocol on Children who Run away or Go missing from Home or Care (2014)*.

The strategic documents included the:

- *Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy (2012)*
- *Social Worker - CSE Outcomes Plan*
- *Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Sexual Violence Action Plan*
- *Stoke-on-Trent Threshold Criteria for the Guide to Levels of Need for Children*
- *Young People and Families 2014/15*
- *Stoke-on-Trent Children in Care Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2014- 2016*, and
- *the Stoke-on-Trent CSE Operational Panel Principles*

The operational documents included the:

- *Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding-Children-from-Sexual-Exploitation procedure*
- *CSE Risk Factor Matrix*

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<sup>48</sup> Derby Safeguarding Children Board (2009); Beckett 2011; Jago et al (2011)

- CSE *One Minute Guide*, and
- the *Handy Hints CSE Risk Indicators*.

Other operational documents were the:

- *Draft Joint protocol on Children who Run away or Go missing from Home or Care*, and
- the *Stoke-on-Trent SCB Information Sharing Agreement*.

The specifications for the commissioned specialist CSE and Missing children service specifications and the Stoke-on-Trent Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) were also audited.

### *The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire CSE Strategy*

The *Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy (2013)* is the key document driving the Stoke-on-Trent CSE and Missing Children response. It was developed and published by the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Boards joint Multi-agency forum for Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation (MACaRoSE). The Strategy outlines very well both the national framework and the local need for a proactive multi-agency response to CSE.

The hidden nature of CSE means that as the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board and partner agencies focus on CSE the true picture of prevalence and profile emerges over time and agencies and individual practitioners develop a better understanding of what is happening and how. The CSE Strategy recognises this, stating that ‘strategy formation and development is a dynamic and flexible process which will need to respond to a variety of inputs including those from emerging local strategies, stakeholders’ views and central government initiatives’. The CSE Strategy could usefully be linked to relevant other local strategies such as, the Early Help Programme (recently implemented), Neglect (a new Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board priority), the Youth Offending Strategy (in development to reflect the Stoke-on-Trent multi-agency response to the emerging issues of gangs), the forthcoming CAMHS Strategy, the Sexual Health and Wellbeing Plan, the Domestic Abuse Strategy and others.

A key stakeholder view to include would be that of the children and young people. This aim is articulated in the *CSE One Minute Guide* which includes the goal of developing appropriate range of services through consulting with children and young people. Another aim is to raise awareness of parents and carers of CSE, what signs to look out for and what services are available to support children and young people. See Stoke-on-Trent multi-agency response to CSE, The Parents and carers section.

### **Recommendation:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Updates the *Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy (2013)* to link with relevant other local strategies, and to include a detailed Action Plan.

## CSE is a rapidly evolving phenomenon

The suite of documentation which Stoke-on-Trent management and practitioners have to guide their thinking and actions in relation to CSE and Missing children is comprehensive, relevant in terms of content and process and is easy to access/follow.

As is to be expected the documents have been developed at different times, equally those published within the past year were most likely to meet most or all of the good practice criteria. Examples include the *Threshold Criteria for the Guide to Levels of Need for Children, Young People and Families 2014/15*, the *Draft Joint protocol on Children who Run away or Go-missing from Home or Care* and the *Stoke-on-Trent SCB Information Sharing Agreement*, all dated April or March 2014.

A challenge for local safeguarding children boards, partner agencies and practitioners across the country is that child sexual exploitation is a rapidly evolving phenomenon. The cohort of victims is for example becoming younger<sup>49</sup>, the means by which they are groomed and controlled is changing e.g. from grooming in youth education and activity settings to grooming online and at licenced premises. Victims are being trafficked within a local area in a more organised way; gang-involvement is a growing concern; many perpetrators are now recognised to be from the victims' peer groups, rather than being 'older boyfriends'; and overt coercion has to some extent replaced 'exchange' of gifts and favours.

The changes include the need for professional expertise and response in new areas.

### Recommendation:

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Updates the existing *Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation* procedure, and measures compliance and impact.

## *Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation procedure and Risk Factor Matrix*

The speed with which understanding about CSE is changing means that it is not surprising that strategic and operational documents dated earlier than 2014 may not always make links to appropriate other documents or cover all relevant content and process areas. An example of this is the Stoke-on-Trent *Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation* procedure, published first in 2009 and updated it in 2013. The DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance requires all local safeguarding children boards to have a local CSE procedure which is compliant with the local safeguarding children board's Child Protection procedures. The Stoke-on-Trent CSE procedure fulfils this requirement, needing merely to be reviewed and updated (also to include reference to the DfE *Step-by-step CSE Guidance* issued in 2012).

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<sup>49</sup> Children aged 13 and 14 years represent the largest single victim group in reports to CEOP. Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre (2013)



Updating of the Stoke-on-Trent CSE procedure will allow for updating of the *CSE One Minute Guide* and the *CSE Risk Factor Matrix*.

The *CSE Risk Factor Matrix* is used to assess the risk to a child or young person of becoming a victim of sexual exploitation, or the extent to which a child or young person is already being sexually exploited. The Matrix is one of three CSE risk assessment/referral formats currently in use locally. For the avoidance of confusion it would be helpful to reconcile these documents to reflect a single agreed multi-agency risk assessment matrix.

*'The Risk Factor Matrix is self-explanatory and takes 10 minutes to complete. It sets out all the potential indicators. The specialist CSE service uses the completed Risk Factor Matrix to score the risk to the young person as low, medium and high. Then a staff member will go out, meet the young person and do a fuller risk assessment. A lot of the time it comes out higher risk, although the information may only come the second or third time they meet.'*<sup>113</sup>

### Vulnerability factors

A child, or their vulnerability, is never the cause of their own abuse, and children without pre-existing vulnerabilities can be abused<sup>50</sup>. Nevertheless, factors which can increase a child's vulnerability to sexual exploitation include disrupted family life and domestic violence, a history of physical or sexual abuse, disadvantage, poor mental health, problematic parenting, parental drug or alcohol misuse and parental mental health problems, and more recently, exploitation of learning disability.<sup>51</sup>

Given that these vulnerabilities can be exploited, a proactive approach to child sexual exploitation would involve identifying children with recognised vulnerabilities and undertaking additional resilience building work with them. Stoke-on-Trent has vulnerabilities listed in the *CSE Risk Factor Matrix*. It may be more effective to separate out the list of vulnerabilities for use at an Early Help stage before CSE is suspected and a practitioner is prompted to use the *CSE Risk Factor Matrix*. See appendix 1.

### Recommendation:

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Confirms an updated version of the *Risk Factor Matrix* as the only risk assessment/referral tool to be used locally. Together with supporting materials on:
  - the signs of vulnerability
  - the definition and types of CSE
  - consent
  - legal age and activities which are criminal

<sup>50</sup> Beckett (2011); Office of the Children's Commissioner (2012)

<sup>51</sup> Scott S and Skidmore P *Reducing the risk: Barnardo's support for sexually exploited young people*. A two-year evaluation. Barnardo's (2006)



### *Other relevant operational procedures*

Stoke-on-Trent currently has guidance on responding to sexually active children and young people and for children and young people suffering neglect. The DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance requires local safeguarding children boards to have an up-to-date procedure for responding to sexually active young people. Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board and its partner agencies could usefully link the *Sexually Active Young People* procedure with the *Sexual Health and Wellbeing Plan* and closely cross-refer it and the *Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation* procedure. This would greatly assist practitioners, particularly in sexual health settings, to negotiate the tensions between young people's growing independence and their vulnerabilities.

Stoke-on-Trent currently devotes a section of the Child Protection Procedures to the issue of neglect, however in the light of a new understanding of the link between neglect and CSE - brought about by the raising of the profile of neglect as a child protection issue nationally - Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board may well wish to develop a Neglect Strategy (and procedure) supporting the local Early Help Programme.

Such a strategy could promote a common understanding of neglect and the thresholds for access to agencies, and improve recognition and assessment of children and young people living in neglectful situations before statutory intervention is required (including the use of e.g. the Graded Care Profile assessment tool). This, together with the provision of comprehensive recovery services in early childhood would potentially lower the prevalence of vulnerability which exposes young people to the risks of CSE.

#### **Recommendations:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Re-launches the *Sexually Active Young People* procedure, and publishes safeguarding children procedures for gangs and trafficked children. Good existing examples of these procedures are available across the country e.g. the *London Trafficked Children Toolkit* and the London procedure for *Safeguarding Children affected by Gangs and Serious Youth Violence*.
- Confirms the prioritisation of neglect and its impact on children and young people's development for the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board going forward.

### *Information Sharing Agreement*

The DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance also requires local safeguarding children boards to support practitioners to share confidential information 'in order to make decisions on sharing further information or taking action'. The Guidance is clear that 'the child's best interests must be the overriding consideration in making any such decision including in the cases of underage sexual activity'.

The *Stoke-on-Trent SCB Information Sharing Agreement (2014)* fulfils a DCSF Guidance requirement and it is up-to-date.

## Ensuring that services are child-centred

### *Specialist service specifications*

The review team considered the service specifications and contracts of three specialist services, that is, for the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), the CSE service and the Missing children service. The audit focused on whether the contract period and funding was sufficient to allow for the development and delivery of a high quality service, and whether descriptions of the governance arrangements, service offer, expected activity levels, outcomes for children and quality standards were appropriate. Finally, also whether whistleblowing arrangements aimed at protecting children and young people were outlined in the specifications or contract agreements.

Across the country local commissioners and providers of safeguarding children (and other services) are facing the same challenges highlighted by this audit. In terms of contract length, commissioners are reluctant, particularly in the current economic climate, to make a commitment to 3 year contracts, whilst providers find it difficult to provide the high quality care the children deserve when working to short time horizons. Notwithstanding this, children may well be better supported with more of a focus on outcomes for them, a mechanism for whistleblowing to protect them and, in the SARC specification - clear articulation of the service for children, alongside that for adults.

### **Recommendation:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Defines what a good outcome might look like for a child who has experienced CSE, and how it will be measured and recorded.

## 4. Current Stoke Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children Practice

### 4.1 Multi-agency practice

#### Translating guidance into practice

Research and practice consistently identify challenges in the translation of the commitments outlined in high level policies and procedures into professional practice and children and young people's lived realities<sup>52</sup>. The study mentioned earlier by the University of Bedfordshire, *'What's going on to safeguard children from sexual exploitation? How local partnerships respond to child sexual exploitation'*<sup>53</sup> explored the extent and nature of the response of local safeguarding children boards to the government guidance *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation, Supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children (DCSF, 2009)*. The disparity between the guidance and practice was larger than anticipated - at the time of the study only a quarter of local safeguarding children boards in England were implementing the 2009 guidance.

The guidance was designed to help local agencies to respond effectively to child sexual exploitation and remains the national standard for evaluating local CSE responses. Accordingly the review team have used the guidance as a framework for reviewing the CSE and Missing children services for young people in Stoke-in-Trent. The Missing children service is also considered in relation to the *Statutory Guidance on Children who Run away or Go missing from Home or Care (DfE, 2014)*.

The 2009, DCSF CSE guidance summarises the elements of a good response as:

- the development of local prevention strategies
- the identification of those at risk of sexual exploitation
- action to safeguard and promote the welfare of particular children and young people who may be sexually exploited, and
- action against those intent on abusing and exploiting children and young people in this way.

The review team's view is that two elements essential to a good response which are to be found within the Guidance could be usefully highlighted separately in this list. They are:

- a child-centred approach, and
- the provision of therapeutic care to enable children and young people to recover.

The key issues addressed by the DfE, 2014 Missing children guidance include:

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<sup>52</sup> Derby Safeguarding Children Board (2009); Beckett (2011); Jago et al (2011)

<sup>53</sup> *'What's going on to safeguard children from sexual exploitation? How local partnerships respond to child sexual exploitation'* University of Bedfordshire. Jago et al (2011) [www.beds.ac.uk/ic](http://www.beds.ac.uk/ic)

- the link between going missing and being sexually exploited
- the vulnerability of children in residential care
- the need for good information from return interviews
- the need for management information to plan better service responses
- the need for good care planning and placement stability.

## Stoke-on-Trent multi-agency response to CSE

### *Local safeguarding children boards*

The government guidance sets out a series of responsibilities which local safeguarding children boards are required to meet with regard to CSE. These are to:

- prioritise, plan, commission and report on services and activities based on an assessment of local need
- publish and support the implementation of a local CSE procedure
- offer universal and specialist training on use of the procedure, including the gathering of evidence to assist prosecution of perpetrators. See Training section
- take account of new types of CSE and amend their intervention approaches accordingly
- put in place systems to track and monitor all cases of CSE
- take into account the seriousness of the harm caused by CSE when considering undertaking a serious case review
- consider what types of structures both within the local safeguarding children board and in local agencies and partnerships will effectively support the implementation of the government guidance
- identify a sub-group to lead on CSE, drive work forward and ensure effective co-operation between agencies and professionals arrangements to co-operate with neighbouring areas, and other LA areas
- audit periodically how multi-agency plans for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, support for parents and carers and action on offenders

Local safeguarding children boards are charged with including CSE in the local needs assessment using it to inform planning, commissioning and monitoring CSE services and activities; and ensure it is regarded as a priority. The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership's response to CSE was indeed initially prompted by the presentation of evidence of the existence of CSE in the local area by Staffordshire police. It is based on regularly updated local CSE problem profiles with a wealth of additional intelligence gathered from the monthly CSE Operational Panel which was set up, and by a police *CSE Information Report*, an information gathering form in use by all partner agencies. The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board is now in a good position to maintain an overview of CSE and how it might be changing in Stoke-on-Trent, supported by a large and growing database of increasingly high quality information about CSE victims and perpetrators.

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board has prioritised CSE and it will continue to be so for the foreseeable future, ensuring that the profile of CSE remains high in Stoke-on-Trent.

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board is well supported by Staffordshire police who have refocused priorities from burglary and serious acquisitive crime to CSE and domestic abuse. As part of this drive, eighteen months ago the police doubled the size of their Child Exploitation Team, which now comprises a Detective Inspector, two Detective Sergeants and 12 police officers working across the city and county. This is a significant investment, particularly in the current economic climate.

This response to assessed local need is also seen in the contribution made by the CCG commissioners who part-fund the commissioned specialist CSE service, viewing their commitment as similar to the Family Nurse Partnership approach, that is, 'investing in order to break the cycle'.

Local safeguarding children boards are also adjured by the Guidance to continually assess how young people are being groomed and the routes into CSE in the local area, and amend their intervention approaches as the profile and prevalence of exploitation changes over time. Examples of the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board reviewing and refocussing its work include:

- the youth offending service starting to work with boys on the cusp of gangs and related CSE in response to the recent identification of CSE linked to gangs by the police,
- appointment of a boys and men practitioner in the commissioned specialist CSE service, in response to identification of boys as victims of CSE, and
- the adoption of neglect as a priority by the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board in response to the national profiling of neglect in relation to children vulnerable to CSE.

In accordance with the DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board has published a *Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation* procedure (updated in 2013), together with a risk assessment/referral tool (the *CSE Risk Factor Matrix*) and summary guides. See the National good practice benchmarking section. Also as required, the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board offers universal and specialist training on CSE and the use of the procedure, including the gathering of evidence to assist prosecution of perpetrators. See Training section. Both the procedures, with supporting materials, and the training, are in need of constant updating in line with the local changes in profile and prevalence of CSE mentioned above.

Local safeguarding children boards should put in place systems to track and monitor cases of sexual exploitation that come to the attention of local agencies. The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board is able to rely on the monthly CSE Operational Panel, whose purpose is to - identify children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation, assess and manage risk, monitor the care plans until risks have reduced and are safely managed and identify offenders and inform police investigation and prosecution.

The CSE Operational Panel has standing representatives from the Police Exploitation Team, the Missing Person Co-ordinator in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Children and Young People's Services (Children in Care, Emergency Duty Team (EDT) and Placement Support), the commissioned specialist CSE service, the Youth Offending Service, the Teenage Pregnancy and

Sexual Health services, Education Welfare, the local housing provider, the Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service, CAMHS, the Rape Crisis Centre , the Youth Service and the YMCA.

Any of the agencies, including schools, health services, the voluntary sector, can refer a case to the CSE Operational Panel. All cases open to Stoke-on-Trent children's social care services are reviewed by senior management after a particular time period, in order to gauge the ongoing risk to the child or young person and assess the progress of the case. The CSE cases receive this review, the benefit of the Panel is that cases are reviewed monthly, there is multi-agency input and specialist CSE input on how to progress a case, and the Panel also reviews cases not open to children's social care. This latter point is particularly important because, until a child or young person trusts a worker enough to make a disclosure, their case can remain below the children's social care threshold - supported by Early Help interventions. Without access to the CSE Operational Panel the young person's case may not get the scrutiny and information sharing needed to develop the true picture of the risks they may be facing.

The DCSF Guidance urges local safeguarding children boards not to underestimate the importance of learning which can be gained from a serious case review of a CSE case. The Stoke-on-Trent Board manager undertakes CSE case file audits, picking the cases at random. The reviews are very useful, the approach of a no-blame culture enables the multi-agency network to improve policies and practice and resourcing. Each review is followed by a 'Lessons learnt' workshop. A lot has been done, and it should become apparent in multi-agency practice.

Local safeguarding children boards are required to develop Board and local structures, including a sub-group, to effectively support the implementation of the Guidance. In Stoke-on-Trent the following structures have been put in place to respond effectively to CSE:

- a joint Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Boards' Multi-agency Forum for Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation (known as MACaRoSE)
- a Stoke-on-Trent CSE Operational Panel
- a joint Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire MASH
- a Police Child Exploitation Team, with a seconded social worker
- a Stoke-on-Trent commissioned specialist CSE service
- a Stoke-on-Trent Missing children service, with access to the police IT system for missing children
- a partnership between the sexual health service, located in the SARC, the teenage pregnancy service located in Educational Welfare - to facilitate access to schools - and the Stoke-on-Trent commissioned Specialist CSE Service.

The MACaRoSE drives the joint CSE Strategy and monitors multi-agency working in relation to CSE. The sub-group seeks to fulfil its functions as described in the Guidance, scope and share good practice and expertise about CSE, draw a balance between bringing offenders to justice and providing support to victims who are also identified as offenders, develop a working action plan for CSE and develop practices and processes for:

- early identification, prevention, early intervention
- joint operational procedures

- preservation and gathering of evidence
- targeting and disruption of offenders
- information exchange and data sharing
- education and training
- cross border responses
- migrant and other vulnerable children
- group and gang related Sexual Exploitation

The Stoke-on-Trent CSE Operational Panel links into the MACaRoSE. Its objectives are to:

- maintain delivery of an operational multi-agency panel to manage risk relating to individual children and young people to link with the MACAROSE
- consider referrals from agencies working with children and young people and assess risk in multi-agency forum to ensure consistent response and access to services.

*'The process is that you complete a Risk Factor Matrix and the CSE Operational Panel looks at it and lets you know if you can come. It was good because I got the names of the men at the bus stop and the housing representative on the Panel recognised the name of one of them and he could be investigated.'* <sup>3pf1</sup>

Agencies are fully engaged with the CSE Operational Panel. Innovatively it also includes adults' transition workers who start work before the young person is 18, because it was recognised quite early on that vulnerability to sexual exploitation continues and can be exacerbated with the stresses of moving into adulthood and independence.

Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board co-operates with the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board and partnership through the MACaRoSE. Co-operation with other local authority areas is promoted particularly through the Missing children service for looked after young people placed in Stoke-on-Trent and through the Child Exploitation Team social worker for Stoke-on-Trent young people placed in other local authority areas.

Finally, this review of CSE and Missing children services for young people in Stoke-in-Trent forms part of the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board's auditing of how multi-agency plans for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, support for parents and carers and action on offenders are being developed and implemented, in line with the DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance. Review needs to be built into systems on an ongoing basis.

In their local planning and commissioning LAs and their partners should consider what services are needed to address the needs of young people who have been sexually exploited

#### **Recommendation:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Consolidates the work underway to promote the supervisory, co-ordinating and information sharing role of the CSE Operational Panel.



### *Roles & responsibilities*

All Stoke-on-Trent organisations which provide services for, or work with children, are working to the *Stoke-on-Trent SCB Information Sharing Agreement*, are engaged with the information sharing forums such as, the MASH, the CSE Operational Panel, and make use of the police *CSE Information Report* and briefings. An example of a recent innovation is that the teenage pregnancy team, the commissioned specialist CSE service and the sexual health service can now flag contact with young people on the IT system to track different locations and indicators which could assist practitioners to identify CSE.

All Stoke-on-Trent services that provide services for, or work with children are also working to the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board *Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation* procedure and the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board *Sexually Active Children and Young People* procedure. Their staff have access to Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board multi-agency CSE training at levels 1 and 2.

The DCSF, 2009 guidance urges local safeguarding children boards to ensure that there is a dedicated lead person in each partner organisation with responsibility for implementing both specific local agreements and procedures, and also the organisation's wider responsibilities in relation to CSE e.g. ensuring that CSE is included in the commissioning cycle and in the organisation's fulfilment of the requirements of sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004. The Stoke-on-Trent CSE Operational Panel provides a forum in which representatives from the different agencies to seek support and receive challenge to their agency's contribution to the local response to CSE. Good practice would be to appoint a multi-agency CSE Co-ordinator to ensure a co-ordinated response.

### **Recommendations:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Formalises the nomination of the dedicated CSE leads in each partner organisation currently attending both the CSE Operational Panel and the strategic MACaRoSe.
- Nominates a multi-agency CSE Co-ordinator.

### *Feedback from children and young people*

In relation to their communicating and raising awareness function, local safeguarding children boards are charged with gathering the views and experiences of children and young people in their area to identify any issues around sexual exploitation. This will include views from children and young people who have not been subject to CSE as well as those who are or have been victims. Particular care is required when consulting with children who have been harmed - ethical considerations include sensitivity about the content of the consultation and the provision of appropriate preparation and post-consultation support for the children.



The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board has used the opportunity afforded by this review to gather the views from children who have been harmed on the range of services which they will have come into contact with prior to and since they were identified as victims of CSE.

#### Recommendation:

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Promotes incorporation of contributions and feedback from children and young people into the development and delivery of Stoke-on-Trent's strategic and operational response to CSE and Missing children; and provides guidance as to how to do so ethically and in a meaningful manner.

#### *Children's social care*

Children's social care have responsibility for ensuring that all children and young people who are being, or are at risk of being, sexually exploited are assessed and supported in line with *Working Together, the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*, and with the DfE CSE Guidance 2009.

In Stoke-on-Trent a social worker is seconded into the police Child Exploitation Team to co-ordinate the response and intervention of children's social care and partner agencies, be the children's social care point of contact for services working with children, including schools and provide oversight of those children and young people who are identified as being at risk of or being sexually exploited through the monthly multi-agency CSE Operational Panel, link with other local authorities and be involved with case planning and victim strategy.

The Child Sexual Exploitation Team social worker undertakes assessments for newly referred children and young people and works closely with the allocated social worker to provide continuity for the child. The police Child Sexual Exploitation Team social worker also supports the social workers to identify CSE in their current cases, complete a *CSE Risk Factor Matrix* and make referrals to the CSE Operational Panel and the commissioned specialist CSE service for care planning advice and support.

The Stoke-on-Trent Early Help service comprises multi-agency Locality Teams who can play a key role in developing local agency competence and confidence in sharing information and intervening early for children and young people at risk of CSE - 'They are the eyes and ears of the communities.'

*'The Locality Teams are key to building up local agency knowledge, training, evidence giving and gathering. They are the eyes and ears of the communities.'*<sup>15</sup>

#### *The Police*

The investigation of child sexual exploitation requires the police to be:

- proactive, spotting patterns of sexual exploitation locally, sharing information with partner agencies linking this work to missing young people
- strategy of building trusts and gathering evidence over time
- working across force boundaries and targeting internet abuse

Staffordshire police have developed a CSE problem profile for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire which has been refreshed with three police operations within the past five years. The police have trained PCSOS and local policing team officers to look for CSE and report alerting indicators. Information is also gathered from partner agencies at the CSE Operational Panel and through the police *CSE Information Report*; and they work closely with the commissioned specialist CSE service and rely to an extent on the police Child Exploitation Team social worker, sometimes waiting 18 months for a young person to make a disclosure.

Staffordshire police have developed innovative approaches in working with victims:

*'We got a disclosure through an intermediary using laptops because the girl couldn't talk about it - we are needing to be quite creative.'*<sup>110</sup>

They have also developed innovative practice in pursuing perpetrators. An example is the *Evidence Recovery Plan* in which an evidence package is collated, and an alert logged on the police national IT system so that across the country other police forces can access the alert and ask Staffordshire police for the evidence package should they need it.

The police Child Exploitation Team have had some success at intercepting online grooming:

*'We have a 16 year old school girl being blackmailed to have sex and send pictures over the internet, but we've just met him in her place and arrested him.'*<sup>111</sup>

The Child Exploitation Team's primary focus is on organised CSE and the intelligence gathering activity this requires (the Team does a lot of work from CEOPS referrals); while child protection police respond to cases of individual sexual abuse and exploitation. The DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance is clear that sexual exploitation of children and young people is child abuse, and as with other forms of child abuse, investigations should be carried out by officers trained in child protection procedures and familiar with the risk indicators for child sexual exploitation.

### *Health services*

#### **A&E and GPs**

As part of the Early Help Programme there has been strong initiative to encourage health practitioners to engage with young people, identify young people who are at risk of CSE and provide services for them as part of the multi-agency response. GPs have been receiving Early Help training. The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board training package has had good take up in Health (who are currently undertaking a training needs analysis).

Paediatric and Accident and Emergency staff may pick up on signs of sexual and physical abuse or signs of violence when young people present with injuries or because of alcohol or drug intoxication or an overdose, an eating disorder or another form of self-harming/attempted suicide. A young person from the focus group<sup>f7</sup> provided a reminder that presentation by children and young people experiencing CSE at health services, in this case A&E, is often for something

else e.g. sexual health advice, an eating disorder or as in this case, attempted suicide. An audit for this review showed no referrals to children's social care or the police Child Exploitation Team in over the past year.

### **Public health**

The Stoke-on-Trent Public Health contribution to CSE includes provision of the sexual health/SARC and teenage pregnancy services, nominating two 'fast track' workers who provide sexual health services for CSE victims, funding the police Child Exploitation Team social work practitioner post and supporting the school nurses to be fully engaged with CSE.

Stoke-on-Trent school nurses are full time in all the schools and are trained to Level 3 Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board training. Together with sexual health practitioners and health visitors, school nurses are the health staff who most commonly identify children at risk or experiencing CSE in Stoke-on-Trent.

*'School nurses are carrying a huge case load of children hovering on the cusp of the safeguarding threshold.'*<sup>i14</sup>

Possibly because of the visibility of school nurses to children and young people, the children and young people in the focus group were quite demanding of school nurses, wanting them to be more available, to believe them when the children tell them what is going on, and to be proactive in engaging the children and eliciting information from them

*'Even if they don't report it, they should at least ask you about it [signs & symptoms of neglect/harm]. Because at the end of the day why is it there?'*<sup>ypf7</sup>

### **Child and Adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)**

In their local planning and commissioning, LAs and their partners should consider what services are needed to address the needs of young people who have been sexually exploited. According to the DCSF, 2009 guidance, services which might be considered include the provision of therapeutic care, day care, drop-in facilities, outreach and residential services.

The *Child and Adolescent Mental health (CAMHS) Strategy* is currently in development. It will include CSE, aiming to address the trauma victims experience as early as possible, recognising that untreated, it escalates and continues to be a problem in adulthood. Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the local authority and other partners have been gathering evidence to inform the Strategy. The contribution to this from the children and young people who participated in the focus group, was that they had waited too long for a CAMH service and felt that it is focussed only on crisis points. Their discussion about therapy and counselling highlighted the fact that the services need to be very specifically tailored to each individual child - what suited one, did not suit another.

**Recommendations:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Promotes a stronger commitment/involvement to responding well to CSE from health services, especially GPs and practitioners from A&E and CAMHS. The focus to be equally on improving identification, information sharing and support for the children's recovery.
- Ensures that the forthcoming CAMHS Strategy supports the commissioning of services which fully address the emotional and psychological needs of sexually exploited children and young people at each of the tiers 1, 2 and 3. This is likely to include expanding the range of providers, to provide more capacity, delivering easily accessible services which are suitably integrated into the multi-disciplinary/agency network around each child.

### *Schools and further education establishments*

Schools are central to the prevention of CSE. Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board has provided head teachers with detailed evidence showing which schools have a problem and how the children's networks link the schools. The CSE Operational Panel facilitates shared intelligence, which has proved effective in prevention and early intervention.

In terms of preventing CSE and going missing, teachers have a key role in developing and maintaining consistent relationships with children and young people. This was a finding from a recent evaluation commissioned by the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board into what 'effective help' means for children and young people in relation to CSE and domestic abuse. Having a good relationship with a child also opens up opportunities for disclosure and improves the chances of a teacher recognising signs that a child is at risk of CSE and/or going missing.

To improve identification the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board has produced and disseminated a *Handy Hints* sheet for the schools and the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board Education Officer, has been delivering CSE training for teachers. Secondary school children have benefitted from seeing the CSE drama 'Chelsea's Choice', and a CSE drama group called Escape will visit all the primary schools in 2014.

The majority of Stoke-on-Trent schools are academies. The sexual health/teenage pregnancy prevention team has good relationships with them; however the amount of time given to PHSE is a national issue - one session per quarter or even per year. This limits the amount of education about CSE which the children and young people can receive.

In the consultation for this review the children and young people could not be drawn to comment on anything to do with school and education.

**Recommendation:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

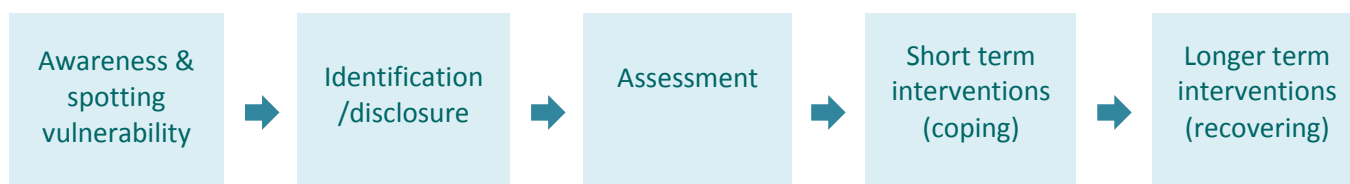
- Promotes a stronger commitment/involvement to responding well to CSE from schools/colleges. The focus to be on improving prevention, as well as identification, information sharing and support for the children's recovery.

*Housing*

Housing staff attend the monthly CSE Operational Panel, and have, for example been helpful in identifying potential perpetrators of sexual exploitation recognised the names of men who were meeting a young person in a public place. Housing also has a role in commissioning and/or providing accommodation which is safe for young people in transition into adulthood e.g. at the YMCA.

*A child-centred care pathway*

The DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance requires that LSBs and their local partners provide an effective response to CSE at each point in a child's journey:



Provision of an effective response depends not only on the availability and accessibility of appropriate services, but also on practitioners having the skills, time and interest in engaging children and young people. Feedback from the children and young people was that they really want professionals from all agencies to take time to talk to them about everything to do with their case. They conveyed a strong sense of feeling that 'things are done to them', rather than with them or for them; for example, it is really important to them that they are fully involved in developing their own risk assessments:

*'Yeah, you do it with them [the specialist CSE service keyworker]. It's like it's real. It's about everything.'* ypf6

*Awareness raising*

Child sexual exploitation continues to be a largely hidden problem. The *National Tackling CSE Action Plan* and DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance emphasise the importance of awareness raising both in order to help children and young people keep themselves safe and know where to turn for support, and to educate parents, professionals and the community. They need to know about patterns of grooming, indicators of risk of sexual exploitation, what to do if they suspect abuse, the impact and how to help a child recover; also, how to help prosecute perpetrators.

## Children and young people

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board and partners have invested a lot in raising children and young people's awareness; with a programme which includes:

- roll-out of the CSE dramas (plus workshops) to all secondary and primary schools in Stoke-on-Trent
- outreach from the police Child Exploitation Team to skill up teachers and undertake direct work with children
- outreach to schools from an education worker in the commissioned specialist CSE service
- a CSE focus in the sexual health sessions delivered by the Sexual Health Service in schools
- allocation of a practitioner from the Teenage Pregnancy Team attached to each school
- the majority of the police units having a 'vulnerability officer' who e.g. visits the children's homes and the schools and build relationships with the young people and the staff.

*'We have made progress, we working better and with more young people who are at the cusp of being affected by CSE.'*<sup>15</sup>

## Safeguarding and other professionals

There has been good investment in training for the staff of Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partner agencies. See Training section.

The next group of people to be targeted needs to be people whose work places them in a position where they will notice and could then report worrying behaviours. These people could include shopkeepers, park attendants, CCTV operators, pub licensees, hotel and hostel managers.

The *Say Something if you See Something* campaign pack by the National Working Group Network Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation and The Children's Society has been developed to local safeguarding children boards to work with retail, transport, leisure and hospitality businesses to protect children in their communities from child sexual exploitation:

[www.nwgnetwork.org/resources/resourcespublic](http://www.nwgnetwork.org/resources/resourcespublic).

## Parents and carers

Support for parents and carers, including those responsible for children who are living away from home, is key to safeguarding children from sexual exploitation. In the consultation for this review the children and young people said that the person who helped them the most was a family member.

The Stoke-on-Trent Child Exploitation Team police and social worker provide outreach education and support to parents Stoke-on-Trent foster carers. The CSE Social Worker provides training on CSE to the foster carers and provides service for all Stoke-on-Trent looked after children regardless of where they are placed. Parents also need education and information about reporting their children going missing. The dual approach from the Child Exploitation Team social worker and her police colleagues is proving effective in persuading parents to engage with the police.

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board is supporting schools to engage with parents and has placed articles e.g. on e-safety and grooming in *Our City*, a council magazine published quarterly and delivered to every household. The Board also did a radio feature in April 2013 (BBC Radio Stoke) which included contributions from safeguarding statutory and voluntary sector professionals and a young person. The police in Stoke-on-Trent provide 'Lite Bites' training on CSE and missing children to professionals and care home staff.

The DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance urges local safeguarding children boards and their partner agencies that as well as helping those who come forward and ask for such support, they should identify those families who might need additional support - the Locality Teams are well placed to do this through the Early Help programme.

### **The Community**

There has been an increased recognition of the contribution a broad range of others in the community who are not traditionally part of the safeguarding community can make to preventing and disrupting CSE. Across the country intelligence from communities has led to successful investigations and disruption strategies.

Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board and partners could usefully include community awareness raising in their programmes to raise engage and educate parents, carers and non-safeguarding professionals.

### **Recommendation:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Develops the current awareness raising programme to include engagement, education and partnership working with parents and carers, non-safeguarding professionals, and the community.

### **Identification**

The DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance requires that anyone who has regular contact with children and young people should be in a good position to identify children who are at risk of, or experiencing sexual exploitation. Stoke-on-Trent children's social care, health, education and police practitioners have received or have access to training (see Training section) and advice - from a 'single point of contact' for their school or children's home, the Child Exploitation Team and or their seconded social worker (who provides fortnightly drop-ins for social workers), the commissioned specialist CSE service, the CSE Operational Panel and the sexual health and teenage pregnancy teams. Staff have access to the Stoke-on-Trent procedures for *Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation, Sexually Active Children and Young People* and the *Draft Joint protocol on Children who Run away or Go-missing from Home or Care*, summary guides for responding to CSE and the *CSE Risk Factor Matrix*. See Policies and procedures section.

A tool such as the *CSE Risk Factor Matrix* is key for helping practitioners to be probing in their assessments and to ask deeper questions to identify concerns and intervene early. Stoke-on-Trent has recently rolled out a refreshed Early Help service comprising multi-agency Locality Teams responsible for developing local agency awareness, knowledge, evidence gathering and



information sharing. The Stoke-on-Trent Early Help programme is better suited to improving the local response to CSE than its predecessor, the CAF, because it provides oversight of plans and activity (by children's social care). The Locality Teams system is more personal, the agencies each have a named worker who can advise and support responses to children on the cusp of CSE.

**Recommendation:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Develops the use of the CSE Risk Factor Matrix, and supporting materials, as the basis for all CSE referrals and establishes the key role of Early Help intervention for children at risk of CSE.

**Assessment**

*Working Together 2010* articulated well the fact that children and young people who are sexually exploited are the victims of child sexual abuse, and their needs require careful assessment.<sup>54</sup> Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board and partners address this through use of the *CSE Risk Factor Matrix*, followed by an assessment undertaken by the Child Sexual Exploitation Team social worker who has the necessary expertise, and works closely with the allocated social worker to support case planning and management.

The DCSF, CSE guidance 2009 requires practitioners to use the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* when assessing children's needs. The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board may also want to consider the diagram of the Assessment Triangle in the *Health Working Group Report on CSE*.<sup>55</sup> See appendix 2.

**Short term interventions (engaging with children and young people)**

Stoke-on-Trent services have developed single and joint agency approaches which recognise that gaining the child or young person's trust and confidence is important if he or she is to be safeguarded from harm and enabled to escape from sexual exploitation. This ranges from individual practitioner's experience, e.g. where it can take up to 45 days to engage a young person in an initial conversation, to the CSE Operational Panel's experience of monitoring and supporting a case for 4 years before achieving the breakthrough - 'she's turned around now'.

The commissioned specialist CSE service has a good record of both engaging young people and working well with partner agencies to progress both safeguarding children and interrupting perpetrators. This includes, for example, working with a young person who refused to engage with a social worker and progressing plans made at multi-agency strategy meetings.

**Longer term interventions**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board and partners commission the specialist CSE service to support both short and longer term work with children who have been sexually exploited. The DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance is clear that children and young people may need

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<sup>54</sup> Paragraph 6.2 *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. DCSF (2010)

<sup>55</sup> *Health Working Group Report on CSE* (DH, 2014)



specialist therapeutic support, for example through the provision of mental health services to enable them to successfully escape from sexual exploitation and reintegrate into society.

In Stoke-on-Trent the specialist CSE service provides the core relationship and children can receive input from CAMHS and other counselling, substance misuse, the teenage pregnancy, sexual health and youth offending services. Support should also take the form of good quality placements for looked after children with carers who have experience of building trusting relationships and skills at containing young people.

New arrangements have been made to increase the accessibility of CAMHS. A CAMHS worker is now linked to one of the safeguarding teams so that where there are concerns about CSE a child can be assessed and a service identified and provided more quickly. Children's social care staff report that the link is definitely enabling young people to receive a CAMH service more quickly.

### **Recommendations:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Develops a care pathway for sexually exploited children and young people, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the different agencies in contributing to the assessment, safety and recovery of the child or young person. This may include making adjustments to the specification/practice of current services.
- Introduces a single notification point for all CSE cases e.g. the commissioned specialist CSE and Missing children service. Notification to take place at the point that CSE is suspected or identified for a new case or in a case that is already receiving Early Help or is open to children's social care.

### **Boys and young men**

The Stoke-on-Trent Board has recognised that boys and young men can be victims for CSE and find it very difficult to seek help. The commissioned Specialist CSE service now has a men and boys worker for victims or perpetrators. The worker's caseload is growing fast. The Teenage pregnancy team is working with a group of boys on healthy relationships, and the data which has been gathered to inform the CAMHS Strategy has revealed the need for a school counselling service for boys aged 8, 9 & 10 years (in Tier 2).

### **Trafficked children**

The DCSF Guidance requires local safeguarding children boards to consider whether they should have inter-agency strategies and protocols in place for the early identification and notification to the relevant agencies of potential trafficking victims. In terms of identifying CSE and gathering prosecution evidence it is helpful for practitioners to be aware that transporting a child or young person from one location to another within the city is likely to constitute trafficking where it is linked to CSE. A trafficking Handy Hints document supported by a local procedure would facilitate this.

### **Safeguarding children and young people who may be affected by gang activity**

The Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into CSE in Gangs and Groups<sup>56</sup> has highlighted the relationship between CSE and gangs, issuing a specific research report on the topic *'It's wrong but you get used to it'*.<sup>57</sup> The 2009 Guidance had already identified a link, requiring local safeguarding children boards and their partner agencies to address issues of gang involvement as it relates to CSE. The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Boards' joint Multi-agency forum for Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation (MACaRoSE) is developing a strategy to address the emerging issue of gangs. MACaRoSE has also commissioned a specialist community engagement service to work with selected communities where there may be offenders.

Currently Staffordshire Police have refreshed the local CSE problem profile with information and the Stoke-on-Trent partnership uses the CSE Operational Panel to combine knowledge about the victims with what is now known about gangs. A working group comprising the police, children's social care and the youth offending service are considering how to record and report information/intelligence being gathered from the work in schools.

The MSUnderstood project is exploring the different forms of peer-on-peer abuse including relationship abuse, child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups, and serious youth violence [www.msunderstood.org.uk](http://www.msunderstood.org.uk).

#### Recommendation:

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Links current police and youth offending service activity on gangs and young people with sexually harmful behaviours, with the young men and boys work being done by the commissioned specialist CSE and Missing children service, the sexual health and teenage pregnancy service, and other services.

#### Identifying and prosecuting perpetrators

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire safeguarding children boards' joint Multi-agency forum for Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation (MACaRoSE) uses intelligence to drive activity to target CSE perpetrators strategically, while the Stoke-on-Trent CSE Operational Panel shares information for tactical activity. Operational information sharing relies on good local partner relationships in the specialist and locality teams, outreach into schools and communities and integration through co-location and access to IT systems.

*'The commissioned specialist CSE service put their 'police information gathering hats' on to gather intelligence, get disclosures and make it safer all the way round for the child.'*<sup>i13</sup>

Police activity to disrupt gangs involved with CSE is overseen by a monthly CSE Working Group. Safer Schools Officers, attached to selected schools, target sexually harmful behaviour and aim to persuade/deter boys from becoming involved in offending. Each officer does a six week

<sup>56</sup> *If only someone had listened*. The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups. Final Report (2013)

<sup>57</sup> Beckett et al. *It's wrong but you get used to it*. University of Bedfordshire (2013) [www.beds.ac.uk/ic](http://www.beds.ac.uk/ic).

secondment into the Child Exploitation Team to understand CSE, the Child Exploitation Team and the overall police response. A next step for this work will be to broaden the message to include girls who offend and boys who are victims in response to the growing body of evidence about the overlap of victims and perpetrators.

This overlap is likely to become apparent as the Stoke-on-Trent Youth Offending Service rolls out their newly developed intervention package for children and young people involved in gangs. The DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance encourages youth offending teams to incorporate promotion of healthy relationships in their work with young people, as well as raising awareness of the risks of becoming involved in sexual exploitation.

### **Victim and witness support**

Given the levels of vulnerability of the victims and witnesses involved in cases of sexual exploitation, witness support is vital in its own right but is also an important aspect of ensuring a successful prosecution. Stoke-on-Trent has a witness support service provided by Victim Support.

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board may want to refresh practice using the guidance: *Provision of Therapy for Child Witnesses Prior to a Criminal Trial Practice Guidance* (HO, CPS & DH, 2001).

### **Benchmarking against a cohort of local safeguarding children boards**

In autumn 2013, London Councils and the London Safeguarding Children Board commissioned the University of Bedfordshire to map current responses to child sexual exploitation (CSE) across London. The study report<sup>58</sup> provides a unique snapshot of responses to CSE for a cohort of 30 local safeguarding children boards/areas. Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board has completed the same in-depth quantitative questionnaire from which the findings from the London survey were drawn. This has enabled the review team to benchmark Stoke-on-Trent's progress in tackling CSE against the progress being made by a group of other local safeguarding children boards/areas.

### **Structure strategy and training**

Stoke-on-Trent appears to have made better progress than most of London on scoping the issue of CSE locally through problem profiling and the use of the CSE Operational Panel to identify victims. Also in having a dedicated local safeguarding children board sub-group.

In terms of policies and procedures, there appears to be similarity in the need for progress in both Stoke-on-Trent and London in linking the CSE strategy to relevant other local plans, agencies having single CSE action plans. Challenges to implementation of strategy and procedures are ones of capacity for London and Stoke-on-Trent and partnership working, for Stoke-on-Trent this is in relation to Staffordshire.

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<sup>58</sup> Beckett et al, *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation: A Study of Current Practice in London*. The University of Bedfordshire (2014)

Stoke-on-Trent and London need to consider appointing a CSE Co-ordinator, though most London partner agencies have formal single agency leads. Local arrangements include funded/commissioned partnerships with specialist CSE voluntary sector organisations. In London a minority of areas have had to redirect funds to support activity on CSE.

Whilst the delivery of training is good, London's is largely unevaluated, whilst Stoke-on-Trent are evaluating theirs; have changed the training in response to feedback and are planning an impact assessment.

### *Care pathway*

**Awareness raising:** Stoke-on-Trent and London appear to be including vulnerability factors in awareness raising. Stoke-on-Trent has vulnerabilities listed in the *CSE Risk Factor Matrix*. Stoke-on-Trent may want to separate these out. See recommendation 3.

Between a quarter and a half of London has undertaken awareness raising with parent/carers and the community. This is more than Stoke-on-Trent has achieved. Stoke-on-Trent and London have yet to target non-safeguarding professionals such as licenced premises.

**Identification:** Interestingly, the top three sources of referrals for concerns about children who are at risk of, or vulnerable to, CSE in London were children's services, the police and education. Whereas in Stoke-on-Trent the top three are children's services, the police and the voluntary sector.

**Assessment:** the majority of London uses a single common risk assessment tool in their area and a multi-agency forum in which cases of children at risk of CSE are discussed. Stoke-on-Trent has the multi-agency CSE Operational Panel and the Risk Factor Matrix which could be used as a single common risk assessment tool in their area.

**Short and longer term interventions:** Stoke-on-Trent and the London case management arrangements are similar, as is their offer of early help and immediate and longer term support. London has made better progress in providing support to parents/family work.

**Perpetrators:** whilst over half of London reported having a specialist police response, only three have a specialist police unit such as the police Child Exploitation Team in Stoke-on-Trent.

### *Next steps*

London identified as their most pressing challenges capacity/resources, identification of victims and the disruption/prosecution of perpetrators, while for Stoke-on-Trent these are awareness raising and education, groups and gangs and community cohesion.

Priority next steps for London are reported to be awareness raising initiatives beyond existing focus on professionals, local mapping and/or data collection and embedding strategies into practice. Stoke-on-Trent identified developing work with parents/carers, awareness raising with licensing authorities/taxi drivers and developing consistent services across city and county - adopting best practice.

## 4.2 Stoke-on-Trent specialist CSE and Missing children services

### Commissioned Specialist CSE service

*'The commissioned Specialist CSE Service is very good at engaging the young people and getting their trust. And that's the foundation for anything isn't it?'*<sup>pf3.i6</sup>

The DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance promotes investment by LSBS and their partners in the provision of specialist CSE services by voluntary organisations. The reasons given are that voluntary organisations are able to offer an independent, confidential service providing intensive support to maintain young people's engagement; and to ensure that they can access the support they need from other services. The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board and partnership is to be commended for their continuing funding of the commissioned specialist CSE service which is highly regarded by professionals:

*'If we have concerns the first people we call are the commissioned specialist CSE service.'*<sup>pf3.1</sup>

The specialist CSE service is also extremely highly regarded by the young people who use the service. When asked what the service has done for them they said:

*'I don't feel so alone with my problems. I feel more happy in myself - not as angry all the time and upset.'*<sup>yps4</sup>

*'They taught me right from wrong. And made me feel safe on the internet.'*<sup>yps5</sup>

*'They built my confidence up and my awareness.'*<sup>yps6</sup>

*'I have not self-harmed as much as what I have done in the past. They got me out of being sexually exploited and made me feel safe again.'*<sup>ypf7</sup>

The children and young people were clear that being able to develop a trusting relationship with a worker is a priority for them:

*'The best thing about the service is I get the person I know and not a stranger.'*<sup>yps6</sup>

*'Make sure that someone stays with the same person, that they trust; make sure that no-one changes.'*<sup>ypf2</sup>

The children and young people really appreciate the fact that they can contact their keyworkers when they need them:

*'They take home their personal 'phone; so I could call her at 9 or 10 at night. And you could always text her and she would text you back or 'phone you.'*<sup>ypf6</sup>

They had more contact time and felt less judged/more comfortable, with their keyworker from the commissioned specialist CSE service than with any statutory service practitioners.

*'They talk to you without judging you and socialise outside of the room.'*<sup>ypf4</sup>

Almost all of the children and young people asked for more time with their keyworker. They wanted someone to spend time doing activities and 'socialising' with them, reflecting their need for supportive, social relationships:

*'She'd never been on an outing, never been on holiday, never owned a pet - so the practitioners helped her befriend a pet in a pet shop; she'd never been shopping with an adult female, so they went to Primark and bought her a blue top.'*<sup>i13</sup>

Children at risk of CSE, 11 - 18 years, can refer themselves to the service, or they can be referred - by anybody (parents, schools, care providers, social workers, health practitioners, housing officers etc). Referral requires completion of a *Risk Factor Matrix* which forms the basis for discussion between the referrer and the service, and further assessment by the service.

The specialist CSE service offers children and young people six sessions ranging from healthy relationships, internet safety, grooming. The educational content and face-to-face contact of programme double as a vehicle for staff to develop the trusting relationship required to help the child. For example, to get the child to agree to go through their Facebook page. Enabling the worker can say 'who's he?' and the child might respond 'Oh I sent him a picture of me topless' then they can get into a conversation about that picture being on the internet now forever. The worker learns who all the friends are and helps the child to reduce them to 'real' friends.

The emphasis on relationship building echoes the before mentioned evaluation commissioned by the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board into the meaning of 'effective help' to children and young people in relation to CSE and domestic abuse. The report found that children and young people valued consistent **supportive** relationships.

The child is risk assessed, whenever a new event/information comes to light, and then is risk assessed again after completing the 6 sessions e.g. 12 months later. If the risk has dropped sufficiently the child is discharged. A concern raised by managers and practitioners from statutory service partners, the staff from the commissioned specialist CSE service and the children and young people is the lack of capacity in the specialist service to meet existing and new demand. Feedback from almost all of the children and young people (with the exception of one) was that they would like more time with their keyworkers.

And the service has a long waiting list. Lack of capacity limits the amount of work the specialist CSE service can do with parents to help them support their children; and a separately funded outreach programme to Youth Service was successful but does not have continuity:

*'We had funding for two additional hours of evening outreach to youth clubs - got a CSE referral every time and also located some missing children. It worked really well. But that was temporary.'*<sup>i13</sup>

The service is very engaged with the community providing an invaluable service for young people who do not want contact with statutory services. Being embedded in the community also allows the service to gather intelligence which enables them to identify and safeguard children and young people who are not willing or able to make an initial approach for help to any of the local services.

### Missing children Service

The Stoke-on-Trent Missing children service combines statutory activity with a return interview service provided by a practitioner employed by the commissioned specialist CSE service.

Recognising the links between CSE and children going missing from their home or care placement, the DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance requires local areas should have appropriate measures in place to reduce instances of running away as much as possible.

### *Statutory responsibility*

A team of police public protection co-ordinators manage all the missing person reports (missing or absent for children) to the police every day and their IT system (Compact) sends an automatic alert to children's social care both when the child goes missing and when s/he returns.

For missing children the Police Public Protection Co-ordinators trigger meetings by emailing the social worker or Children's Social Care. This is in accordance with the Stoke-on-Trent *Draft Joint Protocol on Children who Run away or Go missing from Home or Care* which provides direction for escalation of concerns for missing children as the number of missing episodes over a rolling period increases.

All the missing person reports and statistics sent to the Head of the Child Exploitation Service, as well as the Police lead for Missing Persons. This reflects the fact that for the majority of missing children episodes involve young people who have connections with CSE.

### **Recommendation:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Introduces consistent case recording and monitoring practice in children's social care for all cases where children are absent or missing.

### *Commissioned Missing children service*

The DfE, 2014 Missing children guidance requires that every time a young person who has run away is located or returns home that an independent return interview is conducted, to establish the reasons for running away, and to identify what needs to be done to appropriately support the young person.

*'We are very fortunate to have a fantastic independent return interview service in Stoke. It started as a pilot for missing and absent children. Missing children don't want to talk to the police.'*<sup>18</sup>

The return interviews are undertaken by a Missing children practitioner who is employed and supported by the commissioned specialist CSE service. This means that she is truly independent of the statutory services. Feedback about the service from all parties has been very good - the service is available to children 11 - 17 years old and it is productive in terms of outcomes for the young people. Last year the Missing children practitioner identified 32 children and young people at risk or experiencing CSE. The Missing practitioner has been trained in investigative questioning and records all the return interview reports on the Police IT system (Compact); children's social care receives a copy.

Prior to going out to do a return interview, the Missing children practitioner calls the social worker, if there is one, and asks whether there are additional issues the social worker would like her to look out for and ask about. The Missing children practitioner has good relationships with



the Stoke schools and undertakes interviews there - neutral territory for the children and young people - whenever possible.

As with the commissioned specialist CSE service, capacity is an issue. The Missing children service practitioner is currently undertaking significantly more return interviews than originally anticipated, and there is no capacity to cover her work when she goes on leave.

The commissioned Missing children service is funded by the police, however the DfE, 2014 Missing children guidance indicates that responsibility for the service sits with the local authority. The police are therefore unlikely to continue to fund current service post March 2015.

In accordance with national guidance and the local *Draft Joint protocol on Children who Run away or Go missing from Home or Care (2014)* all 11-17 year old missing children also have a 'safe and well check' conducted by the police.

If there is evidence that an 'absent' child may be at risk then the Missing children practitioner goes out and does a return interview with him/her.

#### *Identifying patterns of running away*

Half of all the looked after children living in Stoke and Staffordshire are from other local authorities. Stoke and Staffordshire SCBs and the police have mapped all the children's homes in their areas and have achieved a 40% reduction in the number of missing children reports in the past year by providing training and appointing a Local Policing Team single point of contact officer for each care home.

The CSE Operational Panel provides a forum for keeping an overview of all the young people being placed in Stoke from out of area with CSE issues and who might therefore be likely to go missing. Each young person is discussed at the Panel.



**Recommendations:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Contacts the independent fostering agencies with carers in the locality and agree a process for each carer to notify children's social care when they have a new placement with a history of CSE.
- Seeks funding for a re-specified commissioned specialist CSE and Missing children service for an expanded, multi-disciplinary service, incorporating psychotherapeutic input to staff and young people; substance misuse input etc. The service to receive all Stoke-on-Trent CSE referrals and provide the critical core relationship for the child, from which the child/young person can access other services e.g. Sexual Health, Teenage Pregnancy, CAMHS tier 3, the Youth Offending Service etc
- In the event that funding for a multi-disciplinary service cannot be secured, then to re-specify for a CSE and Missing children service with at least the elements of:
  - expanded capacity in the CSE service to address the current waiting list, support for parents and outreach to the Youth Service,
  - more capacity and sustained multi-agency resourcing for the Missing children service, and
  - receiving all Stoke-on-Trent CSE referrals and providing the critical core relationship for the child, from which the child/young person can access other services.

## 5. Training

### LSCB responsibilities

The government guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013)* stipulates all organisations that provide services for, or work with children, should offer their staff safeguarding training to ensure that they are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Local safeguarding children boards have a responsibility for multi-agency training, and for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of local training to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.<sup>59</sup>

In respect of CSE the *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (DCSF, 2009)* guidance requires local safeguarding children boards to ensure that local safeguarding training includes information about all the issues covered in the guidance - prevention, identification, short (coping) and longer term (recovery) interventions, information sharing etc. Where sexual exploitation is known to exist locally, local safeguarding children boards should ensure that specialist training is available for all key professionals.

### Stoke-on-Trent CSE training

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board suite of CSE training courses is comprehensive and helpfully practical:

- CSE Prevention, Protection and Investigation
- Engaging Vulnerable Young People
- Developing CSE Awareness in Young People
- Working with Families around CSE, and
- Training the Trainer CSE

The training has been delivered by a private provider, with the Training the Trainer course designed to help increase Stoke-on-Trent's CSE training resource. Some training is already being delivered in-house, for example, training for responding to missing children. This training is available to practitioners from all local agencies. It is co-ordinated and delivered largely by the Police Public Protection Co-ordinators, and includes:

- specific training on the signs and symptoms of CSE, evidence gathering, identifying risk etc
- multi-agency 'study days' which include case studies from survivors about how they were groomed, went missing and their experience of CSE
- 'Lite Bites' training to partner agencies on missing children and CSE.

Each children's residential placements provider in Stoke-on-Trent has a dedicated officer who acts as their single point of contact (SPOC). The Police host an annual Missing Persons SPOC

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<sup>59</sup> Research has shown that multi-agency training in particular is useful and valued by professionals in developing a shared understanding of child protection and decision making. Carpenter et al. *The Organisation, Outcomes and Costs of Inter-agency Training to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*. DCSF (2009)

Development Day of presentations and case studies to skill-up the SPOCs to provide advice and training to the children's homes and other agencies as required.

CSE training is also delivered to local practitioners by the sexual health and teenage pregnancy teams and the commissioned specialist CSE service; and the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board Education Officer - for teachers.

### *Achieving effective local training*

The task of raising levels of competence and confidence in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare across a local multi-agency workforce is a challenge faced by all local safeguarding children boards and their partner agencies. There are aspects of CSE which make this more complex than for other subjects, these include:

- practitioners legitimately struggling with the difference between CSE and child sexual abuse, in both instances a child or young person has been sexually abused, however where there used to be a clear age differential, as the profile of CSE victims has become younger this is no longer the case
- following from the Children's Commissioner's CSEGG Inquiry and the high profile cases of CSE involving organised gangs, practitioners becoming confused as to whether an inappropriate relationship for a sexually active young person constitutes CSE
- practitioners being unclear about the different types of consent - the legal age of consent to sexual activity, whether the young person consented or was coerced and the medical and social perspectives on consent
- difficulties surrounding information sharing and risk assessment with the need for intelligence-led safeguarding because the young person presents with a different issue (e.g. self-harming or anti-social behaviour), usually does not recognise the abuse for what it is and usually does not trust the help offered by the practitioner
- practitioners often needing to also respond to overlapping issues such as the child or young person being involved with going missing, youth offending and harmful sexual behaviour, gangs, trafficking and/or forced marriage

The number of staff who would benefit from training and the complexity of the subject make the task a daunting one. Nevertheless, Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board can now call on 18 staff who have undertaken the Train the trainer course, and can assist with a roll out CSE training to a much greater number of universal services practitioners.

The training in each course needs to cover knowledge, skills and process. In terms of addressing the five stages in a child's journey - awareness, identification, assessment, short term interventions (coping) and longer term interventions (recovery), a potential gap, reflected in the course titles may be 'recovery'.

The Review Team cannot assess, and therefore merely states, together with guidance on using the Stoke-on-Trent *Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation* and the CSE Risk Factor Matrix, training could helpfully:

- use information from this review to clearly define CSE (emphasising that it falls within the overall category of child sexual abuse)

- address the fact that professionals, young people and families all struggle to understand the role of 'consent' in terms of;
  - the legal age of consent
  - the subtler manifestations of coercion e.g. social or group pressure
  - the a medical model of consent i.e. ability to consent to treatment (Fraser/Gillick), and
  - the social model of consent to sexual activity i.e. consent which occurs within a social context of peer pressure, control, financial need or professional negligence, which may negate the possibility of individual consent.<sup>60</sup> See appendix 3.
- introduce an understanding of child and adolescent development, how trauma impacts on this and is reflected in young people's behaviours, and following from that knowledge about what is needed for children to recover
- use the *Stoke-on-Trent SCB Information Sharing Agreement (2014)* to develop practitioner's confidence to gather and share information/intelligence
- make the links for practitioners between CSE and going missing, youth offending and harmful sexual behaviour, gangs, trafficking and/or forced marriage etc

### **Monitoring the effectiveness of local training**

Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board maintains a multi-agency training attendance record for 22 organisations/services and the local authority corporate training team. Organisations which need also to be on the list are health and education service staff such as GPs, A&E staff, school nurses and mentors and teachers (other than from the College). The record can be a useful indicator of both the degree of prioritisation CSE is afforded by the different organisations and the expertise which the training will have brought to those agencies or services where staff have attended. Conclusions drawn from the training attendance record would need, however to take into account single agency training received by staff, for example, in the case of children's social care, new social workers will already have some understanding of [sexual] abuse, if not CSE, and neglect, and also attend induction training which addresses CSE.

The CSE training and the 'Lite Bites' training receive evaluation and quality assurance from the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board similar to all their training opportunities. They have evaluation records going back a number of years; the formal CSE training became a two-day training event quite recently in response to comments and evaluations from delegates and partner organisations.

The training attendance record and course evaluations provide a record of take-up and reception of Stoke-on-Trent multi-agency training, more difficult to assess is how the training feeds through into individual practitioners' practice. The Board are addressing this by designing an evaluation of the impact of the training on children and young people's lives.

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<sup>60</sup> Pearce J. 'Contextualising Consent in child sexual exploitation' in Melrose M and Pearce J *Critical Perspectives on Child Sexual Exploitation*.(2013)

**Recommendations:**

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

- Promotes take up of the CSE training programme with all relevant agencies.
- Incorporates information from this Review into Stoke Safeguarding Children Board's current CSE training programme.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

The findings presented in this report are based on analysis of Stoke-on-Trent documentation, interviews with managers/commissioners, focus groups with practitioners, findings from Stoke-on-Trent's completion of the London CSE survey questionnaire, case profiling by social workers and feedback from children and young people. However, the time limited nature of the review means that it is high level. That is, that the information from these sources reflects a point in time rather than in-depth ongoing interrogation and verification of the child sexual exploitation and missing children services for young people in Stoke-on-Trent.

The conclusion and recommendations presented here for are therefore offered as a basis for ongoing review, more in-depth evaluation, consolidation and/or further development - as part of Stoke-on-Trent's ongoing commitment to improve the local response to CSE and children going missing.

Further scrutiny and development will bring up other recommendations as services evolve, and as the national evidence-base expands and changes on the sexual exploitation of children, and the link with children and young people going missing.

### Conclusion

#### *CSE and Missing children national picture*

As mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this report, CSE has received increasing attention in recent years and local safeguarding children boards and their partner agencies are rightly needing to focus on improving the response to child sexual exploitation and to preventing it. The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation by Gangs and Groups concluded that serious gaps remained in the knowledge, practice and services required to tackle child sexual exploitation and pockets of good practice notwithstanding, much still needs to be done to prevent thousands more children falling victims. Ofsted included CSE in its new inspection framework for local safeguarding children boards. The Home Affairs Select Committee report on Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming recognised the strong link between children [in care] who go missing and those being groomed or sexually exploited.

#### *Stoke-on-Trent service response*

Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board and its partners/commissioners have responded to this national picture by investing a significant amount of time and resources in developing an effective multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation and children who go missing. Furthermore, they have commissioned this independent evaluation of the progress to date, accepting that it will identify successes as well as areas for further development.

Sections 3, 4 and 5 of this report focus on the strategies, processes, structures and practice which form Stoke-on-Trent's response to CSE. These have been framed within the context of the government guidance *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation, Supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children* (DCSF, 2009) which was designed to help local agencies to respond effectively to child sexual exploitation and remains the national standard for evaluating local CSE responses.

Three years ago only one quarter of local safeguarding children boards in England were implementing the DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance. A survey in 2013 of a cohort of local safeguarding children boards shows that the picture has improved. Stoke-on-Trent's position is better still than that. The Stoke-on-Trent response to CSE meets by far the majority of the detail of the DCSF Guidance requirements for safeguarding children from sexual exploitation, with developmental work in train to address the few remaining areas.

### *Stoke-on-Trent staff response*

The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board and partners are to be commended for their decision to commission an independent review of the CSE and Missing children service response in Stoke-on-Trent. A notable feature of this review has been the enthusiasm amongst both statutory and voluntary sector senior and frontline staff in working to safeguarding children from sexual exploitation in the agencies in Stoke-on-Trent and the young people with experience of receiving services for the study and their wish to be involved.

Two features of the review commissioning meetings, the interviews and the focus groups with managers and practitioners have been:

- the frankness and sincerity of professionals' engagement with the issues raised, and their willingness to be challenged and explore their approach and the processes within which they work; and
- the genuine interest and care they clearly have for the children and young people who they are working to safeguard. It was remarkable that regardless of the seniority of staff, they knew the details of individual children and young people's histories, circumstances and progress.

### *Missing children service*

The issue of children who go missing / run away has also had a high profile recently. Missing children have also been The Home Affairs Select Committee report 2013 on Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming recognised the strong link between children [in care] who go missing and those being groomed or sexually exploited.

The requirements for responding to missing children are outlined in the DCSF, 2009 CSE guidance and in the Statutory guidance on *Children who Run away or Go missing from Home or Care* (DfE, 2014). Both sets of guidance describe the offer of safe and well checks and independent return interviews as core elements of a good response. Stoke-on-Trent's Missing children service - available as it is to all children in Stoke-on-Trent 11 - 17 years old, who receive both a safe and well check and an independent return interview - is absolutely compliant with the both sets of government guidance.

The services for children experiencing sexual exploitation and those who runaway or go missing relate very well to each other and fit seamlessly into the wider safeguarding children system in Stoke-on-Trent. The issue which remains to be managed for both services is their consistency across local authority boundaries. Children and young people cross from Stoke-on-Trent into Staffordshire and vice versa on a regular basis, some do not move, but boundaries are a very fine line. Yet service quality and availability is dictated by postcode because Staffordshire does not have a commissioned specialist CSE service or an independent missing children service as Stoke-on-Trent has.

**Recommendation:**

- Seeks to collaborate with the Staffordshire safeguarding children board to refresh the Multi-agency forum for Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation (MACaRoSE); and through the sub-group explores ways of pooling budgets and developing jointly-commissioned CSE and Missing children services across both Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire - at a minimum to be consistent with the current standard of delivery for the Stoke-on-Trent CSE and Missing children services. Included in these deliberations will need to be the relationship these services will have with the Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).

**Recommendations**

The 25 recommendations for this review are presented here according to the anticipated timeframe needed to execute them effectively. The criteria for this is - recommendations which it should be feasible to complete within three months and those which will take longer for the commissioners to plan and progress to full implementation.

Stoke-on-Trent is in the very positive position that 'quick wins' are achievable, not only on simple issues, but also in more complex areas, because significant prior investment by the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board and its partners/commissioners will enable fast progress to be made at this stage.

*For implementation within the next three months*

It is recommended that the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board partnership:

1. Updates the *Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy (2013)* to link with relevant other local strategies, and to include a detailed Action Plan.
2. Updates the existing *Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation* procedure, and measures compliance and impact.
3. Confirms an updated version of the *Risk Factor Matrix* as the only risk assessment/ referral tool to be used locally. Together with supporting materials on:
  - the signs of vulnerability
  - the definition and types of CSE
  - consent
  - legal age and activities which are criminal.
4. Re-launches the *Sexually Active Young People* procedure, and publishes safeguarding children procedures for gangs and trafficked children. Good existing examples of these procedures are available across the country e.g. the *London Trafficked Children Toolkit* and the London procedure for *Safeguarding Children affected by Gangs and Serious Youth Violence*.



5. Confirms the prioritisation of neglect and its impact on children and young people's development for the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board going forward.
6. Defines what a good outcome might look like for a child who has experienced CSE, and how it will be measured and recorded.
7. Consolidates the work underway to promote the supervisory, co-ordinating and information sharing role of the CSE Operational Panel.
8. Formalises the nomination of the dedicated CSE leads in each partner organisation currently attending the CSE Operational Panel.
9. Nominates a multi-agency CSE Co-ordinator.
10. Promotes incorporation of contributions and feedback from children and young people into the development and delivery of Stoke-on-Trent's strategic and operational response to CSE and Missing children; and provides guidance as to how to do so ethically and in a meaningful manner.
11. Ensures that the forthcoming CAMHS Strategy supports the commissioning of services which fully address the emotional and psychological needs of sexually exploited children and young people at each of the tiers 1, 2 and 3. This is likely to include expanding the range of providers, to provide more capacity, delivering easily accessible services which are suitably integrated into the multi-disciplinary/agency network around each child.
12. Develops the use of the CSE Risk Factor Matrix, and supporting materials, as the basis for all CSE referrals and establishes the key role of Early Help intervention for children at risk of CSE.
13. Develops a care pathway for sexually exploited children and young people, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the different agencies in contributing to the assessment, safety and recovery of the child or young person. This may include making adjustments to the specification/practice of current services.
14. Links current police and youth offending service activity on gangs and young people with sexually harmful behaviours, with the young men and boys work being done by the commissioned specialist CSE and Missing children service, the sexual health and teenage pregnancy service, and other services.
15. Introduces consistent case recording and monitoring practice in children's social care for all cases where children are absent or missing.
16. Contacts the independent fostering agencies with carers in the locality and agree a process for each carer to notify children's social care when they have a new placement with a history of CSE.
17. Promotes take up of the CSE training programme with all relevant agencies.
18. Incorporates information from this Review into Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board's current CSE training programme.

*Recommendations for longer term implementation*

19. Promotes a stronger commitment/involvement to responding well to CSE from health services, especially GPs and practitioners from A&E and CAMHS. The focus to be equally on improving identification, information sharing and support for the children's recovery.
20. Promotes a stronger commitment/involvement to responding well to CSE from schools/colleges. The focus to be on improving prevention, as well as identification, information sharing and support for the children's recovery.
21. Develops the current awareness raising programme to include engagement, education and partnership working with parents and carers, non-safeguarding professionals, and the community.
22. Introduces a single notification point for all CSE cases e.g. the commissioned specialist CSE and Missing children service. Notification to take place at the point that CSE is suspected or identified for a new case or in a case that is already receiving Early Help or is open to children's social care.
23. Seeks funding for a re-specified commissioned specialist CSE and Missing children service for an expanded, multi-disciplinary service, incorporating psychotherapeutic input to staff and young people; substance misuse input etc. The service to receive all Stoke-on-Trent CSE referrals and provide the critical core relationship for the child, from which the child/young person can access other services e.g. Sexual Health, Teenage Pregnancy, CAMHS tier 3, the Youth Offending Service etc.
24. In the event that funding for a multi-disciplinary service cannot be secured, then to re-specify for a CSE and Missing children service with at least the elements of:
  - expanded capacity in the CSE service to address the current waiting list, support for parents and outreach to the Youth Service,
  - more capacity and sustained multi-agency resourcing for the Missing children service, and
  - receiving all Stoke-on-Trent CSE referrals and providing the critical core relationship for the child, from which the child/young person can access other services.
25. Seeks to collaborate with the Staffordshire safeguarding children board to refresh the Multi-agency forum for Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation (MACaRoSE); and through the sub-group explores ways of pooling budgets and developing jointly-commissioned CSE and Missing children services across both Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire - at a minimum to be consistent with the current standard of delivery for the Stoke-on-Trent CSE and Missing children services. Included in these deliberations will need to be the relationship these services will have with the Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).

## Appendix 1

### Signs of vulnerability<sup>61</sup>

Given the evidence on the impact of CSE, the researcher on the OCC Inquiry team conducted analysis of the evidence gathered on known cases of CSE in gangs and groups (call for evidence, site visits, evidence hearings, interviews with children and young people) and identified the following typical vulnerabilities in children prior to abuse:

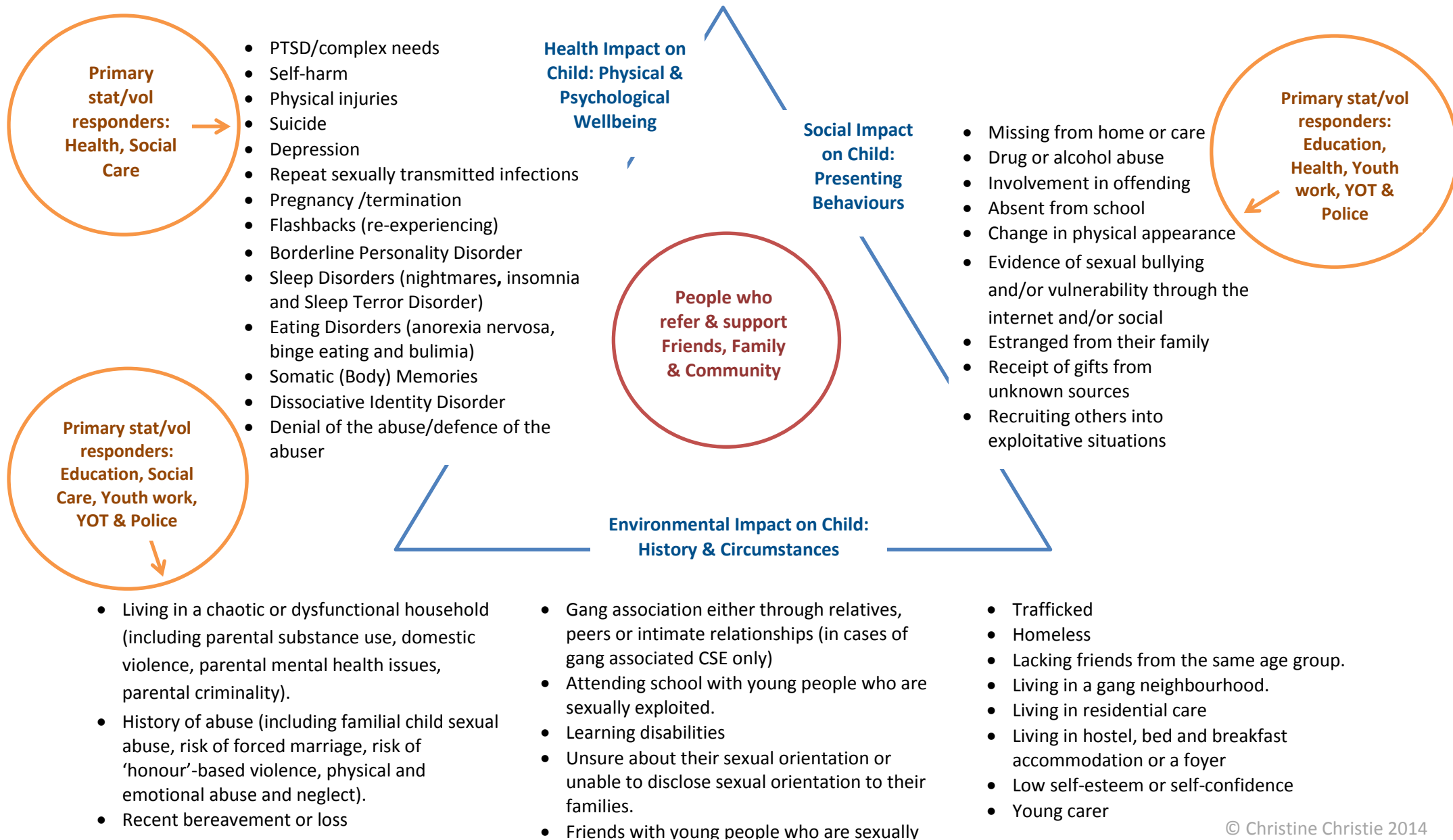
- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality).
- History of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of honour based violence, physical and emotional abuse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

Evidence shows that any child displaying several vulnerabilities from the above lists should be considered to be at risk of sexual exploitation. Professionals should investigate to determine the risk, while taking preventative and protective action if required. These vulnerabilities are included in the *Health Working Group Report on CSE Assessment Triangle* in appendix 2.

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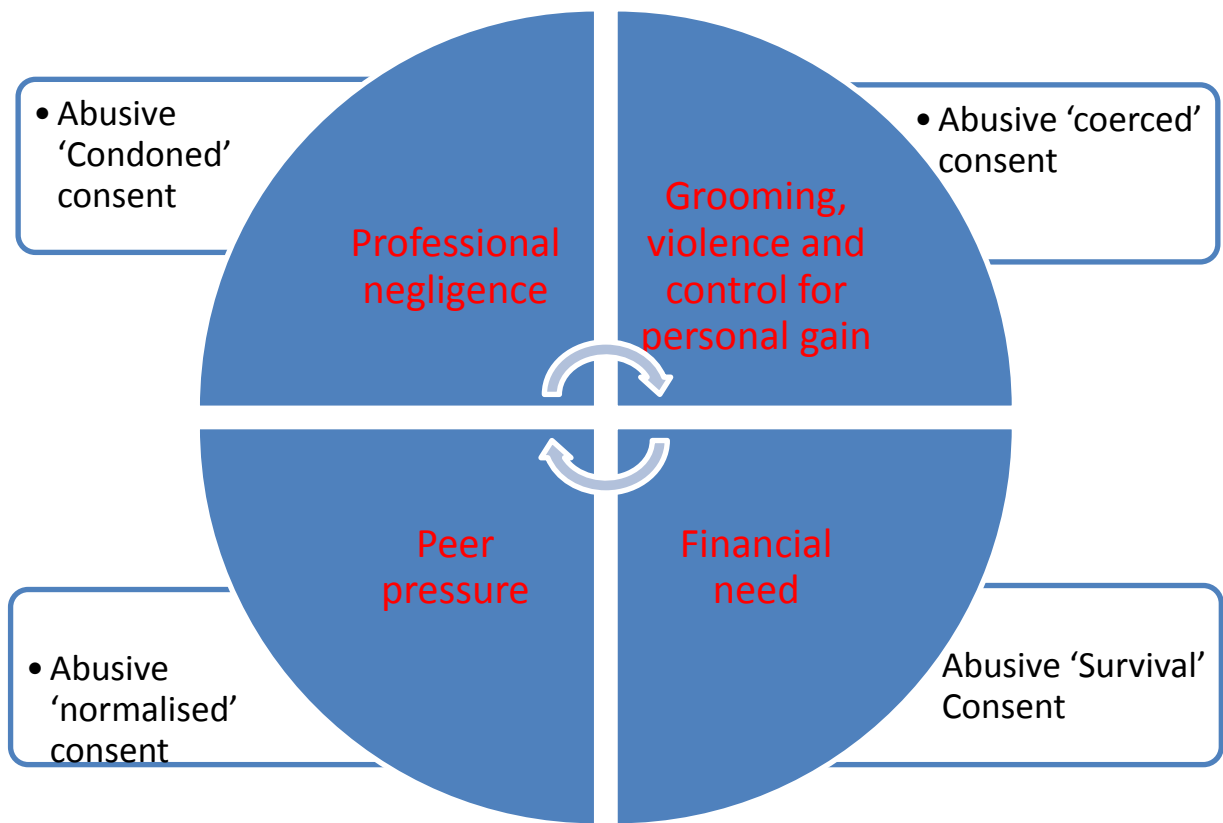
<sup>61</sup> *I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world.* Interim Report. The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (2012)

## Appendix 2 Health Working Group Report on CSE Assessment Triangle



### Appendix 3

#### The Social Model of Consent



Pearce, J *Contextualising Consent in child sexual exploitation* in Melrose, M and Pearce, J *Critical Perspectives on Child Sexual Exploitation* (2013) Palgrave Macmillan

## Appendix 4

### The review team

#### *Christine Christie*

Christine is Director of Chanon Consulting, an independent safeguarding consultancy offering improvement support to children, young people and adults' social care/safeguarding and community safety domestic abuse services. Christine has 20 years' experience of working in children and families social care in local and central government and the voluntary sector. Consultancy work includes: redrafting the *DH Responding to domestic abuse handbook*, research into out-of-borough placements for LAC, repeat care proceedings, services for children affected by domestic abuse, trafficked children and children harmed through faith and belief abuse. Christine drafted the *Health Working Group Report on Child Sexual Exploitation (DH, 2014)*, and recently managed a London Safeguarding Children Board. Chanon Consulting also provides ongoing strategic and operational support for the voluntary sector, with a particular focus on developing seamless local integration with statutory sector children's and domestic abuse services.

Prior to setting up Chanon Consulting Christine was Director of Services at CAADA. She designed and launched the DfE-funded Young People's Violence Advocacy Programme (addressing sexual exploitation, gangs, cyberstalking and HBV). At NSPCC she led on safeguarding strategy and service development for children living with domestic abuse and parental mental ill health/substance misuse. She held safeguarding positions at London Councils and the Department of Health, where she worked on the VAWG Taskforce, the Stern Review on Rape reporting, the Sexualisation of Children Review, the *Protection of Children Review, Working Together* and the CAMHS national steering group.

Christine managed the London Safeguarding Children Board and wrote the *London Child Protection Procedures*. She was responsible for Action for Children's 5-year regional strategy, line-managing variously, a large Sure Start and a serious case review service. She drafted the *Children's National Service Framework* for DH in 2004. Before that she commissioned children's services for a London borough, managed provision of LAC placement's, post-adoption and SEN services.

#### *Dr Helen Beckett*

Helen is the Deputy Director, 'The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking', Institute of Applied Social Research, University of Bedfordshire; and a Senior Research Fellow; Institute of Applied Social Research. She has fifteen years experience of undertaking research and policy work on children and young people's issues, across the statutory and voluntary sectors and academia.

Helen was the project manager for the two-year research into gang-associated sexual exploitation undertaken for the Office of The Children's Commissioner for England's (OCC) 'Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups' (2011 to 2013) and the 2014 review of responses to CSE in London. She undertook the first piece of research into CSE in Northern Ireland and is currently working on research into young people's experiences of criminal justice processes in CSE cases, an in-depth literature review on CSE and related issues and a series of evaluations for CSE services.

Helen's current membership of professional bodies/advisory groups includes: Vice-Chair of British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (BASPCAN) Northern Ireland Branch, Trustee and Board Member for De Paul Ireland (a homeless charity) and lead representation for the International Centre on the Institute of Applied Social Research Ethics Committee, University of Bedfordshire. She also sits on a range of different policy working groups and research advisory groups on CSE and related areas.

Helen contributes to teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level at the University of Bedfordshire and is currently developing a new Masters unit on CSE and a series of external training courses on the subject. She regularly trains and presents on CSE and other forms of sexual violence in adolescence.

### *Professor Jenny Pearce OBE*

Jenny Pearce is Professor of Young People and Public Policy at the University of Bedfordshire, UK, where she is Director of the 'International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking'. The centre was recently awarded the Queens Anniversary Prize for applied research on child sexual exploitation influencing safeguarding policy and practice (2013).

She is co-founder of the 'NWG Network: tackling child sexual exploitation' and the UK 'Child Sexual Exploitation Research Forum'. She is a member of the Policy Steering Committee of 'Eurochild' and co-chair of their reference group on child participation. She has worked as a rapporteur with the Council of Europe 'One in Five' Campaign to stop sexual violence against children and was a panel member for The Office of The Children's Commissioner for England's (OCC) 'Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups' (2011 to 2013), working as Principle Investigator for their research into sexual violence in gang affected neighbourhoods.

Jenny is currently managing a number of research projects focusing on preventing sexual violence against children including The 'Our Voices' Project: an Oak Foundation and University of Bedfordshire funded European Network promoting children's participation in preventing sexual violence. She is developing a UNESCO University Twinning and Network Scheme focusing on international efforts to prevent sexual violence against children. She is associate editor with the journals 'Youth and Policy' and 'Child Abuse Review'.

Jenny has researched and published on a number of topics related to child protection, child sexual exploitation and child trafficking. She trained as a teacher, and has worked in schools, youth justice and youth and community work. She works in partnership with young people, NGOs and statutory services to develop opportunities for training, research and curriculum development on child welfare and child protection.