

This isn't something that has just appeared, but the extent of it hasn't been recognised and we are underestimating the problem. The cleverer we are about it, the more horrified we are likely to be by what we discover." Tim Loughton, Children's Minister

"The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre is publishing this thematic assessment to increase people's understanding of this appalling crime. I believe that government, communities, agencies, charities and others will – with the benefit and burden of knowledge – work with a passion to prevent child sexual exploitation, protect victims and the vulnerable, and pursue the perpetrators."

Peter Davies, Chief Executive Officer

Objectives

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

Recommendations

Note: The recommendations are grouped at the end of the report (pp 95-96). Some recommendations have been shortened but retain the language in the report.

1. Victims

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

2. Multi-agency working and front line services

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

3. Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

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

4. Data recording

- All front line agencies should develop ways of capturing and recording data relating to known or suspected cases of sexual exploitation. LSCBs should coordinate the development of a template for capturing information
- Police forces should proactively gather intelligence and develop regular problem profiles of child sexual exploitation.

5. Research

- This assessment has identified many significant gaps in current knowledge of child sexual exploitation and the 'localised grooming' profile. Although many of these gaps in knowledge can be addressed through the improvements in data collection there are specific gaps in knowledge which must be addressed through further research.
- Offender psychological profile
- Offenders convicted for offences related to child sexual exploitation should be subject to intensive debriefing for the development of a psychological profile. This requires long-term, detailed qualitative research
- National assessment of child sexual exploitation
- This assessment is unavoidably limited by the absence of adequate measures for collecting information relating to child sexual exploitation by all agencies at a local levelit would be possible to repeat this assessment and gather a much greater quantity and quality of data.This assessment is repeated in 2-3 years.
- Peer exploitation
- Peer exploitation has not been addressed. Given the relative youth of many of the offenders, there is a need for further research to assess the potential role of peer exploitation. The Office of the Children's Commissioner has initiated a research project on gang-associated sexual exploitation /abuse of children and young people
- The sexual exploitation of boys and young men
- This aspect of sexual exploitation is largely hidden and unknown, though it is clear that boys and young men are currently being sexually exploited in the UK. It is therefore recommended that further research is conducted on this particular group.
- Victims from minority ethnic communities
- Existing research has had little insight into experiences of child sexual exploitation in minority ethnic communities. It is recommended that research is conducted with minority ethnic communities to improve understanding in this area.....

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