

"This report ... has uncovered for the first time the extent to which children in England are being sexually exploited ... Each and every one of us owes it to her and all other victims to listen, to believe and to act to stop this terrible abuse. Using the warning signs lists, produced in this report, is the first step to identifying and protecting children."

(Sue Berelowitz, Foreword)

Note. This document seeks to capture the key findings and reproduces the recommendations, using the language in the report.

Summary of Key Findings

Number of Children Abused or at Risk of Abuse (p9)

...at least 16,500 children were identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation during one year and 2,409 children were confirmed as victims of sexual exploitation in gangs and groups from August 2010 to October 2011

Evidence indicates that in any given year the actual number of children being abused is far greater than the 2,409 that have been confirmed.

16,500 children from across England were identified as being at high risk of child sexual exploitation during the period April 2010-March 2011.

The Nature of the Problem (pp11-12)

Sexual abuse involved vaginal, anal and oral penetration....

In the call for evidence submissions, oral rape was reported most frequently, followed by anal rape. Vaginal rape was the least frequently referenced form of abuse. ...

Physical abuse, inflicted by the use of violence, has been found in both groups and gangs....

Emotional abuse was identified in various forms throughout ... The most prominent form involved victims living in a state of anxiety and acute fear of their abusers.

Who are the Victims? (p14)

The vast majority of victims identified were girls.

The characteristics common to all victims are not their age, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation, rather their powerlessness and vulnerability.

28% of victims ... were from black and ethnic minority backgrounds.

The majority of sexually-exploited children are living at home when their abuse begins... A disproportionate number are living in residential care compared to the total number of children in care.

Of the 2409 victims reported in the call for evidence process, 155 were identified as also being perpetrators of child sexual exploitation.

Who are the Perpetrators? (p15)

Gender is the single most significant identifying feature of perpetrators; of the total number of perpetrators identified in the call for evidence, 72% were male [and] 10% were female.

The evidence submitted identified perpetrators who ranged in age from 12 to 75.

Individuals classified as 'White' form the largest group of perpetrators in both gangs and groups. BME individuals, particularly those loosely recorded or reported as 'Asian', are the second largest category of perpetrators reported via the call for evidence.

Recommendations

Immediate Actions (p16)

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

Recommendations requiring urgent implementation (pp16-17)

Identification of Victims

2. Coordinated by the local safeguarding children board, and using the self-assessment tool produced by the University of Bedfordshire, all local areas should conduct their own audit of CSE based on the list of

warning signs and vulnerabilities produced in this report.

3. All police forces should work with partner agencies, including third sector specialist organisations, to log information on the girls and young women linked to gang members, and then risk-assess these young people for sexual exploitation.
4. All those identifying victims of child sexual exploitation should review their processes to ensure that intelligence or individual indicators used to proactively find victims children are not leading to biased identification. They should also liaise with agencies, including specialist third sector organisations, that are working with under-represented children and young people to ensure their identification of all those who are vulnerable or at-risk.

Identifying Perpetrators

5. Police forces should review their local multi-agency intelligence collection processes and existing information to proactively identify perpetrators of CSE.
6. Police forces should use multi-agency intelligence to proactively profile local risk, as well as to direct enforcement and disruption activity.
7. LSCBs should agree policies and procedures for ensuring partner agencies including children's social care services, YOTs and police work cooperatively to identify and deal with children and young people who are both victims and perpetrators of CSE. These procedures should be incorporated into each LSCB's CSE strategy and monitored for effective practice.

Data gathering and information sharing

8. The Department of Health should issue guidance to all health agencies to ensure effective information-sharing so that victims of child sexual exploitation, and children at risk of CSE, are identified.
9. All agencies should adopt an agreed method for recording the ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability of victims and perpetrators of child sexual exploitation.
10. Youth offending services should share information on either or both victims and perpetrators of child sexual exploitation with other agencies, given the intelligence held on their assessment tools.
11. Police forces should improve their recording of sexual offences to enable the recording of multiple perpetrators and allow for a CSE flag.

Recommendations to be implemented as soon as possible (pp17-18)

Recognition and awareness-raising

12. Every LSCB should ensure that the core training delivered to all professionals who come into contact with children and young people should include information on warning signs, and impact, of child sexual exploitation, to ensure victim identification, and should outline an implementation plan for training as part of their 2013/14 business plan.
13. A review of all legislation and guidance which makes reference to children as 'prostitutes' or involved in prostitution should be initiated by the Government with the view to amending the wording to acknowledge children as sexually exploited, and where appropriate victimised through commercial sexual exploitation.

rEDUCED pOLICY cOMPANY

The Reduced Policy Company has been established to make policy documents more accessible to the professional and lay reader. More information is available at www.reducedpolicycompany.com

© Chris Waterman