



DrewReview

**An independent review of
South Yorkshire Police's
handling of child sexual exploitation
1997 – 2016**

**Professor John Drew CBE
23 March 2016**

Preface

I was appointed by the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire, Dr. Alan Billings, to carry out a review of South Yorkshire Police's handling of child sexual exploitation in the summer of 2015. My Terms of Reference are attached as an Appendix, and in a further Appendix I describe the methodology adopted for this review.

The Review was launched at the end of September of that year. We had originally planned to complete and publish the Review in early January 2016, but this period was extended in order to provide further opportunities for people wishing to contribute to the Review to do so.

I would like to thank everyone who has given up time to meet me and discuss the issue of child sexual exploitation in South Yorkshire with me. I have met more than 150 people, some on several occasions, during this Review and they have been unfailingly helpful. I know it has been painful for some to go through their experiences once more but I hope the learning to be had from this and other reports compensates this pain.

At no stage have I been placed under any pressure, inferred or direct, to reach any particular conclusions in this review. The conclusions are mine and mine alone, aided by the constantly helpful advice from my two principal advisors, Peter Spindler and Andrew Lockley.

*John Drew C.B.E.
18th March 2016*

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Chapter 1

Summary and recommendations

Addressed to the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire,
Dr. Alan Billings

I have divided the work of my Review into three sections.

[1] Has the police response to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation been adequate in the past?

[2] Has South Yorkshire Police (SYP) understood and acted on the findings of and recommendations in previous reports and inspections, in the media and during parliamentary questioning?

[3] Is the police response to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation adequate now?

[1] Has the police response to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation been adequate in the past?

My overall judgement is that the police response to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation in the past was inadequate, especially in Rotherham where I simply repeat the criticisms already made by Professor Jay and Louise Casey. Some, but only some, of this failure can be linked to the lack of awareness, nationwide, of child sexual exploitation in the early 2000s. Opportunities to explore the prevalence of sexual exploitation in more detail regularly presented themselves and were regularly missed. SYP did dedicate some resources from the earliest of days to combatting child sexual exploitation, most notably in Sheffield, where significant work was undertaken by a number of officers, both from SYP and their partners, particularly in the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service.

Rotherham

The history of this issue in Rotherham is set out very clearly in the reports of Professor Alexis Jay O.B.E.¹ and Louise Casey C.B.² and you were clear from the outset that you wanted me to focus on that part of my review that was looking into the past on the other parts of South Yorkshire. In addition, as I explain in

¹ Jay, A. (2014) *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham* Rotherham: Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

² Casey, L. (2015) *Report on Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council* London: Department for Communities and Local Government

Chapter 2, the parallel processes of the Independent Police Complaints Commission's investigation, the work of the National Crime Agency, and the continuing South Yorkshire Police investigations have all meant that there was a strict limit to the amount of work I could do in Rotherham. Nevertheless a significant number of people spoke to me about Rotherham, and their testimony supported entirely Jay and Casey's interpretation of the evidence: that is that there were serious failings of policing in Rotherham in the early 2000s.

There is evidence of improvement from about 2007 onwards, the date Professor Jay chose to use, but there were still significant failures after 2007 that left children without the protection to which they were entitled. Intelligence was available from a range of sources that should have been acted upon with great vigour.

The rest of South Yorkshire

In Sheffield the police were more actively engaged with the issue of sexual exploitation, starting with a joint operation, *Operation Insight*, in 2000. This greater engagement was because of the work done by the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service, a branch of Sheffield City Council's Social Services Department at that time, to get officers engaged in their work. In this regard I would like to pay tribute to a council employee, Ann Lucas³, who played a major role from 1997 onwards in patiently explaining to SYP officers the threat of exploitation and securing their engagement with the issue. I am left in no doubt that Ms. Lucas's personal drive and resilience, combined with that of the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service and a number of individual police officers who worked closely with the Service, made a significant impact even in these early days of combatting child sexual exploitation.

However, against today's standards, SYP's work was seriously under-resourced. The officers concerned described to me feeling that they were working in an "*under resourced vacuum*". Several attempts were made to explain the problem and the need for more resources to senior police officers, and these attempts appear to have fallen on deaf ears. Indeed the most senior officers from this time whom I have interviewed state that they were not aware of either the issue or the need for additional resources. A generous interpretation of this situation would be to say that the senior command lacked professional curiosity and were focused instead on other areas of police performance, partially because they were being directed so to do by government and Home Office direction.⁴

I received less evidence about Barnsley and Doncaster. My general conclusion is that in Barnsley both the Police and its partners were moving towards an understanding of the problems of child sexual exploitation during this time, while in Doncaster the policing response was slightly better developed, not least

³ Ann Lucas had been appointed as a Child Protection Co-ordinator for Sheffield City Council Social Services Department in 1996. She led the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service from 2001 to 2012.

⁴ I rehearse these arguments in more detail in Chapter 4.

because of the trust that had been developed with the charity StreetReach during the 1990s.

[2] Has South Yorkshire Police understood and acted on the findings of and recommendations in previous reports and inspections, in the media and during parliamentary questioning?

I am satisfied that SYP has understood and acted both on the general direction of previous criticism and also on most of the specific recommendations of previous scrutinies of its performance. This is reflected in the considerable progress that has been made. This is monitored by the force in an Action Plan, regularly updated, which sets out what needs to be done and charts progress.

The most immediate problem presented in preparing the Action Plan has been the very large number of investigations into SYP's handling of child sexual exploitation and the fact that this has generated at least 220 separate recommendations. Against this background it is perhaps not surprising that the Action Plan is not as clear as it could be. The overarching strategy that sits above it could also be further improved.

I am satisfied, however, that SYP has responded well to the major challenge of raising the profile of child sexual exploitation. I also analysed the progress made in the areas of:

- Tasking and analysis
- Multi-agency safeguarding
- Training
- Resourcing (staff welfare)
- Raising awareness about child sexual exploitation
- Investigation
- Online child sexual exploitation
- Further development

Although good progress has been made in all of these areas more work needs to be done to ensure the force priority - to combat child sexual exploitation - is demonstrated by all officers and staff.

[3] Is the police response to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation adequate now?

I believe that the police response to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation is now adequate. Indeed, some recent work undertaken by SYP appears to me to be of high quality. I describe these in the body of Chapter 7. There are also some areas that need further attention to improve the overall police response. I describe these and return to them when I make recommendations to you in Chapter 10.

Generally I found a police force led by individuals who were determined to learn from the past; who had allocated significant additional resources to the tasks of catching up from a previously poor position; who were well thought of by their partners not only at a strategic level, but also amongst the staff at the grass roots; and who were beginning to see some of this change of direction reflected in a higher level of successful prosecutions of offenders, the previously low level of which had so concerned the Home Affairs Select Committee two years ago.

I found strengths, but also weaknesses, in their work with victims of child sexual exploitation, and in their engagement with victims, survivors and their families. I also share the frustrations of everyone I met at the slow pace of investigations into disciplinary and other matters. I cannot emphasise too strongly the harmful impact that this is having on victims and survivors, on police officers and staff, and on public confidence in policing. These are not being handled by SYP so this is not a criticism of the force.

Lastly, I concluded there is a need for further improvements to be made in the areas of intelligence gathering, management oversight of casework, and learning from their workforce, especially those officers and staff who have recently joined SYP from outside.

Assurance about the past

You asked me whether you could draw assurance from this review that the scale of failure revealed in Rotherham did not take place in the rest of South Yorkshire.

This is a difficult question to answer but I shall try.

I did not receive any direct accounts from victims and survivors or from other people that would lead me to believe that the scale of failure in Rotherham was repeated elsewhere. I think you can draw some assurance from this, but perhaps only limited assurance. Although we sought to publicise my review, and our website allowed people relatively easy access to me, there are bound to be people who did not hear about the review. Furthermore many victims and survivors, including some that I met, did not really want to talk about the past for reasons I understand. There was a limit to how far I was prepared to push people. Lastly, there is scepticism about such reviews: positive examples like the Jay and Casey reports may not have shifted this significantly. One victim, explaining her decision not to meet me, wrote, *'I just give up on Police totally... just seems like it happens everywhere but nothing gets done.'*

Having written this, I should also record that survivors living far away from South Yorkshire, including as far away as the United States, made contact with me. So the review did have a 'reach' and there is some assurance to be drawn from the fact that their direct accounts, while mainly critical of SYP, nevertheless did not reveal the sort of systematic failure and denial found in Rotherham.

Beyond the accounts of victims and survivors I met a large number of people who were able to describe the history in Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield. In these discussions I was not given evidence of failures as extreme as those in

Rotherham. I believe that most of the people I met would have told me if they knew different because the underlying tone of these interviews was critical of SYP. In most instances I asked very specific questions on this, as you would expect.

Proportionately my review could not cover as many people as the numbers who met Alexis Jay or Louise Casey's teams⁵ in Rotherham alone, but the costs of trying to replicate the scale of their reviews of just one town across the whole of South Yorkshire would have been very high indeed.

My conclusion on this point of assurance is therefore: that you can draw some reassurance from this review that the rest of South Yorkshire did not encounter the extremes of failure and denial that it is now accepted took place in Rotherham, especially in the ten years from 1997. What you will find in the rest of this report, however, is not a happy story either. Some very good work was done by individuals and groups to try to keep children safe from sexual exploitation. While this became more comprehensive, and was adequate from about 2013, many mistakes were made along the way and SYP, in particular missed a number of opportunities before then taking stock and increasing the very low priority that it was giving to this issue for much of the period up to 2011.

Recommendations

I make 11 recommendations to you arising from my investigations. These are listed with brief explanations in Chapter 10, and are also referred to in the main text of the report, but they are:

SYP's Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan

[1] I recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to undertake a comprehensive stock take, of all reports and investigations to date, using gap-analysis methodology to review the findings. This would then form the basis for a new, thematic Action Plan, clear milestones and measurable, timed objectives, linking to the wider force Child Sexual Exploitation plan, as well as the plans of each Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)⁶.

and

⁵ The Jay Inquiry interviewed over a 100 people either individually or in groups, while the Casey Inspection carried out over 200 meetings.

⁶ Local Safeguarding Children Boards were established in every local authority area in 2004 as a result of the enactment of the Children Act 2004. They bring together all the key agencies involved in safeguarding children and have a range of roles and functions, including scrutinising local arrangements for keeping children safe. The arrangements succeeded the previous Area Child Protection Committees.

[2] I recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to reconsider the resource allocation for the task of compiling and reviewing the Action Plan, and associated work.

Engagement with victims, survivors and their families

[3] I recommend that you review the existing arrangements for formal meetings between SYP and representatives of victims and survivors, including their families.

and

[4] I recommend that you research the operation of this scheme in Greater Manchester and consider, with the four LSCBs, whether this would also improve engagement with victims, survivors and their families.

Learning Lessons Reviews

[5] I recommend that you request the relevant LSCBs to commission 'Learning Lessons Reviews' after the conclusion of each major investigation, starting by making such a request to Rotherham LSCB now even though the conclusion of the recent trial in Sheffield Crown Court does not conclude *Operation Clover*. I also recommend that you press each LSCB to ensure that the views of victims, survivors and their families are central to each such review.

Intelligence gathering

[6] I recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to review these arrangements as a priority so that he can assure you that intelligence is handled promptly and appropriately. Such a review would seem to lend itself to being conducted by a neighbouring force or by the College of Policing.

Making full use of the knowledge and experience of recruits from other forces

[7] I recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to convene a standing 'New Voices' group, with revolving membership, both to capture first impressions and also to work as directed on specific short term projects. The Chief Constable should be asked to consider allocating the responsibility of meeting with this group to a member of the senior leadership team, thereby signifying the importance of such a group.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

[8] I recommend that you monitor progress with this as a standing item at your Governance and Assurance Board⁷.

Investigation and supervision

[9] I recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to consider implementing a standard operating procedure for the investigation of child sexual exploitation and the management of intelligence related to it. A checklist for investigators and their supervisors could be developed to ensure a consistent approach is maintained across South Yorkshire.

Governance

[10] I recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to produce a clearly documented command structure for you, supported by reference to the LSCBs and any other stakeholder arrangements (including those for victim, survivor and family engagement, see previous recommendation) focusing on the strategic rather than operational response to child sexual exploitation.

The response to intelligence reports produced by Dr. Heal between 2003 and 2006

[11] I recommend that you keep under review the examination of the response to these reports so that you can be reassured that any further lessons from this are learnt.

John Drew
18th March 2016

⁷ The Governance and Assurance Board is the six-weekly meeting between Police and Crime Commissioner and key members of the Senior Leadership Group of SYP where he holds the Chief Constable to account for performance and delivery against the Police and Crime Plan.

Chapter 2

Scope and limits of the Review

Terms of Reference

This review was commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire, Dr. Alan Billings, against the background of the earlier reports by Professor Alexis Jay, OBE, and Louise Casey, CB, into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham.

Introducing the review Dr. Billings wrote *"I have commissioned Professor John Drew to conduct a fast, but thorough review and to provide a report which satisfies me that South Yorkshire Police has genuinely acknowledged and fully addressed non-recent, as well as present day, occurrences of child sexual exploitation. I need to be reassured that robust plans are in place so that nothing like this can happen again."* Dr. Billings gave me extensive Terms of Reference. These are included in full at Appendix 1.

The heart of the review is contained in the two main aims:

'The aim of the Independent Review is to make certain:

- a) that South Yorkshire Police (together with its partners) has understood and acted on the findings and recommendations raised in all previous reports and inspections, in the media and during parliamentary questioning; and*
- b) that the police response to safeguarding children and young people has been and is adequate across the whole of South Yorkshire, not just in Rotherham.'*

In writing this report I have rearranged, in consultation with Dr. Billings, these aims slightly by splitting the second aim into two, so that one part of the report deals with my assessment of the adequacy of the police response in the past (*'has been ... adequate'*?) and another with the present (*'is adequate'*?). The questions for the review to answer then become:

Has the police response to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation been adequate in the past?

Has South Yorkshire Police (SYP) understood and acted on the findings of and recommendations in previous reports and inspections, in the media and during parliamentary questioning?

Is the police response to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation adequate now?

The Jay and Casey Reports, although largely about Rotherham, have been primary points of reference for this review but they are by no means the only

reviews that have taken place of SYP's response to child sexual exploitation. Other reviews that I have considered are listed in Appendix 4.

One final point on the Terms of Reference: I should make it clear that I also confirmed early on with Dr. Billings that this was a review of SYP and not of its partners in South Yorkshire (there is a slight ambiguity in one of the Terms of Reference).

Four constraints on this review

I operated under considerable constraints both because of the existence of two other reviews of SYP that were also taking place during the period of my review; because of pending prosecutions (*Operation Clover*) relating to allegations of child sexual exploitation⁸; and because of the early stage reached in various legal actions against SYP and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

1. Investigations by the Independent Police Complaints Commission

So far as the two other reviews are concerned, the first of these is the investigation of complaints into SYP officers by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). Although I did receive helpful briefings from the IPCC during the review, I did not seek access to the detail of these investigations except in the most general of terms. As a consequence there is, I would imagine, a wealth of material about policing in South Yorkshire that I have not seen.

More than this, the outcome of the IPCC investigations will undoubtedly create further 'lessons' for SYP. It is a great frustration to all involved, not least the IPCC itself, that these investigations are taking so long. At worst this will breed cynicism in the public that the police cannot be held to account when their practice is poor. At best it still means that important lessons cannot be considered within a reasonable time of the events. I do not think anyone is happy with this state of affairs. I want to emphasise the damage that these delays have on public confidence in policing.

With their agreement I have summarised the current state of the IPCC's various investigations in Chapter 9.

⁸ The first consequence of Operation Clover was the conviction of Arshid Hussain, Basharat Hussain, Bannaras Hussain, Qurban Hussain, Karen MacGregor, and Shelley Davies at Sheffield Crown Court on the 24th February 2016, following a two-month trial.

2. Investigations by the National Crime Agency

The National Crime Agency (NCA)⁹ is carrying out the other review under the title *Operation Stovewood*. The NCA has been working in South Yorkshire as a result of a formal request made by the Chief Constable of SYP, David Crompton, to the Director General of the National Crime Agency to host an independent criminal investigation into outstanding offences of child sexual exploitation highlighted by the Jay Inquiry¹⁰. In 2015 the NCA produced a detailed report, an examination of initially three¹¹ operations undertaken by SYP between 2013 and 2014. I refer to this in Appendix 4.

The NCA has produced a briefing report for this review on *Operation Stovewood* that explains the role of the NCA, the invitation to investigate, terms of reference, their two phases of activity, their leadership arrangements and priorities, a summary of current operational activity and a case study. The NCA have helpfully agreed that I can produce this in full, and it is presented as Appendix 5 of this report.

It would not be appropriate for me to refer further to the work of the NCA, other than to summarise the report that they presented to SYP in April 2015, which I do at Appendix 4.

3. Continuing operations led by South Yorkshire Police

The third constraint relates to continuing police operations. At the beginning of the review I was briefed on the plan that there was likely to be a series of prosecutions throughout (and beyond) the review period, the first case related to *Operations Clover* and *Thunder*. The consequence of the principal operation, *Clover*, so far has been the convictions secured at Sheffield Crown Court in February 2016.

The existence of these operations has meant that I was asked to avoid any risks of contamination of evidence by not meeting witnesses involved in this trial, or any other trial scheduled around the time of my review. Witnesses were briefed similarly. These were sensible restrictions but they did mean that fewer people were able to provide a victims and survivors perspective. I had neither hesitation nor choice in complying with this request.

⁹ The National Crime Agency was established in 2013 to '*lead UK law enforcement's fight to cut serious and organised crime.*' It has a range of other specific roles, see next footnote

¹⁰ The request for assistance was made under Section 5 (3) and (4) of the Crime and Courts Act. The request was made in recognition of the operational independence of the NCA from South Yorkshire Police, the intention being to achieve confidence and independence in the investigation of the outstanding allegations highlighted in the report of Professor Jay, *op cit*.

¹¹ Post publication correction – The NCA have asked me to clarify that, at the time of publication, this figure was 3. In the original report I wrote '(but later four)' – JD 24.3.16

4. Legal action against South Yorkshire Police and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Finally, SYP and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council have been given notice by a number of individuals of their intention to bring legal action in the civil courts against them for negligence, failure to act, and breaches of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights¹². These claims are in the very early stages but again I have no doubt that if any are successful there will be lessons to be learnt from them. Because of the confidential nature of these cases I do not know the detail of their content.

The consequence of these constraints

All of these processes meant that there were areas I could not explore fully and learning that will eventually emerge that I could not consider. I mention this because I do not believe I was able to discharge completely the brief described by the House of Commons' Communities and Local Government Committee when it resolved in March 2015 that:

*'In our view South Yorkshire Police would benefit from an inspection into its handling of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham along the lines of that conducted by Louise Casey. It would ensure that the Police are fully held to account.'*¹³

My understanding is that the IPCC and the NCA investigations will not be completed until well into 2017, at the earliest. There is an obvious need for a review to be completed before then. I believe that I have been able to discharge that responsibility, while acknowledging that I have operated under some significant constraints.

¹² Post publication correction – Please note that I have corrected this reference. My original reference was to section 3 of the Human Right Act – JD 24.3.16

¹³ House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee (2015) *Child sexual exploitation in Rotherham: Ofsted and further government issues* London: The Stationery Office

Chapter 3

What is child sexual exploitation?

Survivors and family members' account of child sexual exploitation

Towards the end of my Review a national conference '*Coming out of darkness*' was organised in Leeds. A group of survivors and family members from Rotherham¹⁴ prepared an audio recording of their experiences of child sexual exploitation for the conference. I would invite the reader to spend a moment reading this, see Appendix 6, before continuing to read the rest of this Chapter.

The current definition of child sexual exploitation

There is nothing new about children being exploited for sex¹⁵. What is new is the knowledge and focus on child sexual exploitation that has developed principally in the last twenty years. With this focus has come a growing awareness that the label of 'child sexual exploitation' should cover a wide variety of forms and behaviour. This is particularly the case as we move further into the era of digital and social media.

In 2008 the National Working Group Network for Sexually Exploited Children developed the following definition of child sexual exploitation, which was adopted in 2009 by the Government in supplementary guidance to "Working Together to Safeguard Children"¹⁶.

'The sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of performing, and/or others performing, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition, for example by persuading them to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones with no immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.'

¹⁴ The Swinton Lock Rotherham Post Abuse Steering Group

¹⁵ See for example accounts in Hollington, K. (2014) *Unthinkable* London: Simon & Schuster

¹⁶ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation* London: DCSF

During this review the Home Office and Department for Education were consulting on the adoption of a revised statutory definition.¹⁷

Louise Casey brings a part of this statutory definition alive in her inspection report on Rotherham and it is worth reading again what she has to say.

'CSE is a form of child abuse in which the perpetrators develop total control over their victims. It starts with a grooming process, in which victims are showered with gifts and attention. They are treated like adults, for example, by being taken out in cars. The young person can believe that the perpetrator is their boyfriend and that they are in love. This is a powerful thing, especially for young children or young people who may have difficult family backgrounds and crave for love and attention. As a result, they do not complain. The grooming process isolates the victim from friends and family.'

*'At some point, drugs, alcohol and sex may be introduced. They are forced not only to have sex with their abuser but sometimes other men too. This is coupled with more overt coercion, threats and violence. By now, victims may be dependent on drugs and alcohol, afraid of their abuser, isolated from their family and scared that they will not be believed or that worse may happen to them or their families if they complain.'*¹⁸

Facing up to the challenge of child sexual exploitation

In South Yorkshire I am clear that there were individuals and groups pressing for greater priority to be given to the issue before 2014, but they were largely unsuccessful, as no doubt will have been their counterparts elsewhere.

Some balance is needed here in reaching judgements about the past from today's vantage point. Some are less tolerant of past failures than others. Writing to the Independent Chair of Oxfordshire's Local Safeguarding Children Board in March 2015, three Ministers stated *"we do not accept explanations that child sexual exploitation was not 'widely recognised' nationally at the time [2005]. 'One does not need training in CSE to know that a 12-year-old sleeping with a 25-year-old is not right, or that you don't come back drunk, bruised, half-naked and bleeding from seeing your "friends"."*¹⁹ This could have been written of the worst cases of abuse that took place in Rotherham at this time, and it is important that we do not underplay the national failure to respond to these instances of abuse. At the same time it needs to be said that by no means all the instances of exploitation were, or are, as horrifying or as obvious as these.

¹⁷ This consultation closed on the 11th March 2016.

¹⁸ Casey (2015) p.15

¹⁹ Letter to Maggie Blyth, Chair of Oxfordshire Local Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) from Edward Timpson MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, Lynne Featherstone MP, Minister of State for Crime and Prevention, and Dr. Dan Poulter MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, 3rd March 2015 – the example provided is from the Serious Case Review Report into Operation Bullfinch published by OSCB, see para 8.50.

The adoption of the formal definition of child sexual exploitation has contributed to the transformation of the way the issue of child sexual exploitation is understood and combatted. Sixteen years ago the term 'child prostitute' was commonplace both in public policy and amongst child protection agencies. With it in most places went a lack of sympathy towards the victims of such exploitation, and a tendency to treat children as though they were adults. The consequence was that this aspect of exploitation was rarely seen as a priority.

In addition the grooming processes around sexual exploitation were not widely understood and the importance of such activity was underplayed by all safeguarding agencies, with a consequence that only limited work was done to identify or combat such exploitation until recently, despite this phrase being adopted by the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service in 2000.²⁰²¹

For these and other reasons safeguarding agencies throughout England have been slow to develop their response to child sexual exploitation. As an example, the Children's Commissioner for England concluded as recently as November 2013 that almost half of all Local Safeguarding Children's Boards were unable to report how many victims of exploitation had been identified in their areas²², and while, two years later, the Deputy Children's Commissioner wrote that progress was being made, she concluded that *'there are still too many places where those who have responsibility for the protection of children are failing to face up to the realities of CSE'*.²³

There is no doubt that tackling child sexual exploitation has required a major mind shift from all agencies and professionals. Independent assessments of this issue in Doncaster²⁴ and Sheffield²⁵, published in responses to the Jay Report, paint detailed pictures of the range of bodies that have needed to make combatting child sexual exploitation their priority.

Within this the police challenge has been very great. Police officers will meet children who are victims but do not recognise that they are being exploited. Some will be very hostile to the police and other authorities, and identify first

²⁰ Lucas, A. et al (2004) op cit.

²¹ A very clear account of grooming is provided by Emma Jackson in Jackson, E. (2012) *Exploited* London: Ebury Press

²² Berelowitz, S. et al (2013) *"If only someone had listened"* *The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups Final Report* London: Office of the Children's Commissioner (England).

²³ Office of the Children's Commissioner (2015) *"If it's not better, it's not the end"* – *Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups: One year on*. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner (England)

²⁴ Harris, J. (2014) *Responding to Child Sexual Exploitation in Doncaster: Assurance review by the independent chair of the Doncaster Safeguarding Board (DSCB)* Doncaster: DSCB

²⁵ Houghton, K. (2104) *An Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation Services in Sheffield: Overview report November 2014* Sheffield: Sheffield Local Safeguarding Children Board

with the perpetrators. It can take months, and in some cases years, of patient work with victims before they are able to acknowledge what has happened to them. This is not the timescale within which police forces are customarily expecting to conform. At times forces will also have observed very inadequate responses from other public bodies to these children and it is understandable in such circumstances for a degree of thinking along the lines ‘if this doesn’t matter to them why should it matter to me?’. In the past all of these features may have played their part in discouraging police officers from developing proper responses to sexual exploitation (see Chapter 4).

The challenge of tackling child sexual exploitation also requires agencies and individuals to think about issues such as the proper limits for sexual activity involving children, as well as the degree to which children are developing their own rights and self-direction (what academics call ‘agency’). These are not easy issues and it would be naive to imagine there is complete unanimity in our society at this current time.

However, this is not an issue from which the police, or any other bodies concerned with safeguarding children, can back away. Long-term and, in some cases, permanent damage is being done to children by the perpetrators of exploitation. Crimes of rape and child abuse are being committed and even in the less dramatic cases profound damage can be done to a child’s sense of self-worth and confidence. The girls and boys who are the victims of child sexual exploitation are robbed of their childhood.

In Appendix 4 of her report Professor Jay set out a timeline starting in 1984 showing the emergence of child sexual exploitation as a social problem. I consider it is important to understand this history in re-examining the past performance of SYP in this area of work.

Statistics on child sexual exploitation in South Yorkshire today

SYP now have a wealth of data to demonstrate the scale of child sexual exploitation²⁶ in their area today.

District	2013	2014	2015
Barnsley	91	190	200
Doncaster	127	181	151
Rotherham	107	164	289
Sheffield	107	223	243
Other ²⁷	5	33	28
Total	437	791	911

Table 1. Number of referrals identified as potential child sexual exploitation received by year and district

²⁶ SYP uses the 2008 definition provided at the beginning of this chapter.

²⁷ ‘Other’ in this context describes referrals about children living in South Yorkshire which are dealt with by other police teams not the specialist, district based, teams.

This table is important in three ways. First, it shows that more cases are being found, most likely because of the success of awareness building (see Chapter 6). Secondly, where the figures look disproportionate to the size of the local child populations, as for example in the case of Rotherham, this will at least partly be due to specific police operations that have proactively uncovered more exploitation. Finally, it is worth noting that although referrals have rapidly increased in the last eighteen months, they were not insignificant in 2013, a pointer, I think, to the progress that SYP and its partners had made before the major investigations were launched.

Noticeable spikes²⁸ in numbers of referrals occurred in September 2014, probably linked to the publication of the Jay Report; in February and March 2015, possibly linked to a specific police operation and then the publication of the Casey inspection report; and in December 2015 and beyond as a consequence of specific police operations which, because they are continuing, I am not able to describe.

While the number of referrals gives one impression of the workload for SYP, another way of analysing the incidence of child sexual exploitation is to examine the statistics for recorded offences that have been identified as involving child sexual exploitation. Obviously not all referrals lead to the ability to identify specific offences.

District	2013	2014	2015
Barnsley	22	38	40
Doncaster	73	76 ²⁹	41
Rotherham	39	63	94
Sheffield	68	54	56
Total	202	231	231

Table 2. Number of recorded offences identified as potential child sexual exploitation received by year and district

These statistics are much more heavily influenced by the existence of specific operations, including historic investigations and are probably only of importance in showing the proportions of referrals that can later be linked to actual offences.

²⁸ 'Spikes' means abnormal rises in numbers of referrals.

²⁹ This figure is now thought to be an exaggeration caused by inaccurate coding in Doncaster that year of interfamilial abuse as child sexual exploitation.

Breaking down these figures by offence type provides a detailed picture of the type of offences being recorded.

Offence type	Total
Rape and attempted rape	194
Causing or inciting sexual activity	151
Sexual activity	135
Sexual assault	84
Meeting following grooming	30
Abduction, travel or trafficking	22
Exploitation relating to payment	20
Causing a child to watch a sexual act/Engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child	12
Violence	9
Indecent images	8
Other	7
Harassment and distress	5
Exposure and voyeurism	4
Total	681

Table 3. Breakdown of identified child sexual exploitation by offence type, January 2013 to January 2016³⁰

Information on the number of referrals received (Table 1) and the conversion of these referrals into identified offences are important ways of illustrating the scale of the challenge facing SYP and its partners in combatting child sexual exploitation. However, the action taken by the police within this information is also of central importance in gauging how adequate SYP's response has been.

³⁰ Note that the time period for Table 3 is slightly longer than that for Table 2, hence the total number of identified offences is different.

Offence outcome	Total
Charged	177
Summoned	22
Simple caution	12
Youth caution	2
Taken into consideration – previously reported by complainant	1
Further action to be taken by another agency	4
Restorative disposal/community resolution (10-17 year old)	2
Victim/witness dead/too ill to give evidence	1
Named suspect not identified	3
Victim did not support police action	50
Crown Prosecution Service declined to proceed with prosecution	38
South Yorkshire Police did not proceed, problems with evidence	87
No suspect could be identified	57
The offender has died	1
Total	457³¹

Table 4. Breakdown of outcomes in relation to identified child sexual exploitation offences, January 2013 to January 2016

SYP have also been producing statistics on the use of Child Abduction Notices³² since 2015.³³ This shows that in 2015 the force served 161 child abduction notices. While these statistics, both those in the Table and the information on child abduction notices are important in demonstrating a significant level of prosecution and other outcomes to investigations, I have been unable to find similar information from other forces with which to make direct comparison due to different interpretations being made of the definition of child sexual exploitation. The National Police Chiefs Council is working on this problem at the moment. This is also true of the other Tables in this section but is arguably more important in relation to outcomes.

³¹ This smaller figure, when compared with that in Table 3, is explained by the compression that takes place when an offence involves more than 1 suspect. For example, if three suspects are identified, one of whom is charged, another cautioned and the third released for another reason, then the offence will be classified as ‘charged’.

³² ‘Child abduction notices’ are a valuable safeguarding measure used when children under the age of 16 (for 18 of in local authority care) place themselves or are place in danger. They are issued to adults who are found without lawful authority in the company of a child. They were first introduced by the Child Abduction Act of 1984.

³³ Prior to the beginning of 2015 this information was held in a way that could not be retrieved for statistical purposes.

Lastly, the police produce statistical profiles both of victims/complainants and suspects.

So far as victims are concerned, there is information on gender, age, and ethnicity.

On gender the victim/complainant profile is strongly weighted towards girls, with the force recording a 90:10 split between girls and boys. Accounts from survivors who are boys suggest that it may be even more difficult for them to come forward to describe exploitation than it is for girls.

In respect of age the figures are as follows:

Age	Number	Percentage of total
0-5	20	3%
6-9	46	7%
10-11	71	10%
12	85	12%
13	119	17%
14	168	24%
15	117	17%
16	45	7%
17	19	3%
Total	690	

Table 5. Breakdown of victim/complainants by age³⁴ between January 2013 and January 2016

³⁴ 'Age' in this context means the age at which the sexual exploitation is judged to have begun.

So far as ethnicity is concerned, the figures are:

Ethnicity	Percentage of total
White British	73.3%
Any other white ethnicity	2.9%
Black African	0.9%
Any other black ethnicity	0.7%
Asian Pakistani	0.3% ³⁵
Any other Asian ethnicity	0.6%
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	0.4%
Mixed White and Asian	0.1%
Any other Mixed Background	0.3%
Any other ethnicity	0.3%
Not stated or left blank	20.1% ³⁶

Table 6. Victim/complainant defined ethnicity³⁷, January 2013 to January 2016

These two Tables confirm the predominant picture of the ethnicity of victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation, namely that they are predominantly white British and that the peak age for the onset of exploitation is between 13 and 15.

I am aware of a rising number of investigations, both in South Yorkshire and elsewhere, that are focused on children from other communities but as yet these do not feature with much statistical significance, perhaps reflecting the still hidden nature of such exploitation.

Lastly SYP produces figures on the age and ethnicity of suspects.

³⁵ Percentage rounded to one decimal point

³⁶ Percentage rounded to one decimal point

³⁷ These are the categories that the victim/complainant has chosen.

So far as age is concerned, the figures are:

Age	Number	Percentage of total
Under 10 ³⁸	2	0.3%
10 - 14	28	4.9%
15 - 19	166	28.9%
20 - 24	116	20.2%
25 - 29	75	13.1%
30 - 34	50	8.7%
35 - 39	41	7.1%
40 - 49	58	10.1%
50 - 59	22	3.8%
60 - 69	15	2.6%
Over 70	1	0.2%

Table 7. Age of suspects of identified child sexual exploitation offences, January 2014 to January 2016

Ethnicity of suspects, as defined by the police, is as follows:

Ethnicity	Percentage of total
White, North European	65.1%
White, South European	2.4%
Black	3.7%
Asian	19.1%
Other	4.3%
Not known or recorded	5.3% ³⁹

Table 8. Ethnicity⁴⁰ of suspects of identified child sexual exploitation offences, January 2014 to January 2016.

³⁸ Please note the Age of Criminal Responsibility is 10 but police forces are required to record the age of suspects regardless of this restriction.

³⁹ Percentage rounded to one decimal point

⁴⁰ Ethnicity is defined using police operational categories.

Chapter 4

Has the police response to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation been adequate in the past?

Judgement and summary

My overall judgement is that the police response to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation in the past was inadequate, especially in Rotherham where I simply repeat the criticisms already made by Professor Jay and Louise Casey. Some, but only some, of this failure can be linked to the lack of awareness, nationwide, of child sexual exploitation in the early 2000s. Opportunities to explore the prevalence of sexual exploitation in more detail regularly presented themselves and were regularly missed. SYP did dedicate some resources from the early 2000s to combatting child sexual exploitation, most notably in Sheffield, where significant work was undertaken by a number of officers, both from SYP and their partners, particularly in the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service.

Professor Jay, Louise Casey, and the Home Affairs Select Committee have all concluded that, in Rotherham, the SYP's safeguarding of children and young people from child sexual exploitation has been inadequate in the past. I reach the same conclusion, having had the opportunity to review their evidence and also to discuss the issue with key people working in Rotherham at the time.

The evidence in relation to the rest of South Yorkshire is more complex to evaluate. In Sheffield both the police and their partners began to take action to combat sexual exploitation from 1996. I have not seen evidence of wholesale failure like that described by Professor Jay and Louise Casey in Rotherham. In the early days the Sheffield approach was seen as at the leading edge of work in this field. Into the 2000s one person who provided support for vulnerable children in Rotherham described regularly seeking advice from police officers in Sheffield whom she told me were more sensitive and helpful than their Rotherham counterparts.

However, from both practitioners and operational managers I have also heard convincing evidence that more needed to be done. I provide further detail of this later in this chapter. So far as the police were concerned, attempts by specialists to draw the problem to the attention of more senior police officers were unsuccessful.

I have also considered what was happening in Barnsley and Doncaster at this time. I received less evidence here. I have spoken, however, to a number of sources about this period but would not pretend that my understanding of the past in Barnsley and Doncaster is as extensive as is my knowledge of Rotherham and Sheffield. My general conclusion is that in Barnsley both the police and its

partners were moving towards an understanding of the problems of child sexual exploitation during this time, while in Doncaster the policing response was slightly better developed, not least because of the trust that had been developed with the charity StreetReach during the 1990s.

So, judged by today's standards, the *scale* of response fifteen years ago was inadequate across the whole of South Yorkshire. The response to both the crimes and to the victims appears to have been more adequate in Sheffield than it was in Rotherham, but there are no grounds for complacency about this. I found clear evidence, which I set out in more detail below, of missed opportunities to do more to combat exploitation in Sheffield. The limited evidence in respect of the position in Barnsley and Doncaster cannot be taken, in my judgement, to be evidence that there was no problem with sexual exploitation there. Indeed several survivors from Rotherham describe being taken across the whole of South Yorkshire, and far beyond, in order to be abused.

In 2009 Professor Jenny Pearce wrote about local authorities '*relying on one or two isolated individuals with a mission to raise attention about the problems [of child sexual exploitation]*'⁴¹ and this description would fit SYP between 2000 and 2010.

Police policy in 1998

From 1998 SYP had developed what Professor Jay has assessed as '*good inter-agency structures*' for responding to '*children being exploited through prostitution*', as well as procedures that identified the victims as children and the prosecution of perpetrators as a priority⁴². A constable in SYP and a child protection coordinator working for Sheffield City Council had developed these jointly. The late Irene Ivison assisted them in this.⁴³

The most obvious limitation of this policy was that it was set in the context of prostitution, a point to which I return later.

The first procedure was designed to bring children abused through prostitution into the child protection systems of the time. It was focused on young people picked up by the police for soliciting but also gave risk indicators and identified how professionals should make referrals to child protection workers and the

⁴¹ Pearce (2009) p. 11

⁴² Jay (2014) p. 57

⁴³ Irene Ivison was a founder member of CROP (Campaign for the Removal Of Pimps), which she had helped found following the murder of her 17 year old daughter Fiona in Doncaster on the 17th December 1993. From the age of 14 Fiona had been groomed by an older man who had sexual relations with her, gave her drugs and alcohol, and took her away from family and friends. Ms. Ivison had sought help from SYP and Sheffield City Council during this time but this had not disrupted this grooming. A harrowing account of Fiona's short life was written by her mother – Ivison, I. (1997) *Fiona's story – A tragedy of our times* London: Virago

police. Strategy meetings, involving police and social services were to be held on each child so referred.

Professor Jay comments that the link between prostitution and sexual exploitation was commonplace in the 1990s, and I agree with her. She adds that the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board was still, in 2005, referring to child prostitution and that this term should have been rejected by that time.

More significantly, though, Jay and others describe a gap between procedures and practice, which had the effect of leaving vulnerable children without adequate protection.

The policing of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham 2000 – 2007

There had been concerns about child sexual exploitation in Rotherham dating back to the 1990s. The borough council funded the creation of 'Risky Business', a voluntary organisation specifically set up to work with children being exploited, or at risk of such exploitation, in 1997. This was a very forward-thinking decision.

However, as both Professor Jay and Louise Casey have described in detail neither the council nor SYP capitalised on opportunities which should have enabled them to get a grip on the exploitation.

The Home Office Research in Rotherham, 2000-2001

One example of this is provided by the fate of research commissioned by the Home Office, and begun in 2000⁴⁴, aimed at providing an evidence-base for tackling street prostitution. Research in Rotherham, to be carried out by a Research and Development Officer employed by Rotherham Council and evaluated by the University of Luton, was included in this project, with a particular focus on perpetrators of abuse and specifically on the detection, investigation and prosecution of offenders, although the research also described more generally the prevalence of child sexual exploitation.

Professor Jay's report provides a detailed account of the fate of this research, a key element of which was that the researcher, as her concerns about the response of the police and the council to victims of exploitation grew, decided to write to the Chief Constable and the relevant District Commander of SYP to draw these matters to their attention. She also submitted a draft report to the Home Office that outlined these⁴⁵.

It is the view both of staff employed by the Risky Business project at the time, and of the researcher, that they were told by senior staff working then for both

⁴⁴ Although the overall research was described at the time by the Home Office as being aimed at providing an evidence base for tackling street prostitution, the work in Rotherham was focused elsewhere as street prostitution was not seen as being a problem. From the outset, and unusually for the time the research in Rotherham referred to 'child sexual exploitation'.

⁴⁵ Jay (2014) paras 10.2 to 10.19

the Council and SYP they were exaggerating the scale of the problem. The researcher was later accused of gross misconduct by Rotherham Council, a charge that was not upheld. When the researcher's fixed-term contract came to an end no attempt was made to extend it. Her manager later told Professor Jay that the researcher had been very badly treated and subjected to a great deal of personal hostility and anger⁴⁶.

The Home Affairs Select Committee has later heard further evidence about this period. In the course of this, the researcher described, as she later repeated to me, two instances of contact with police officers that alarmed her greatly. Generously she has concluded that she cannot be entirely certain of the intentions of the officer in the first contact, but in the second she is clear that she was being threatened, with the aim being that she should stop working with children who were being sexually exploited. She did not know the officers involved in the second exchange, and so no further investigation of these incidents has been possible.

In the course of this review I have also been able to speak to representatives of the University of Bedfordshire⁴⁷ about their perception of these events. They added important details to my understanding of this episode. In evaluating the researcher's work the University, too, had developed growing misgivings about the local commitment of the police and Council in Rotherham to tackle child sexual exploitation. The University decided to withdraw from the project and wrote an 'Interim Progress Report' to the Home Office to this effect, citing amongst other things their view that: [1] there was an absence of a specialist 'vice' or exploitation police unit in Rotherham; [2] agencies in Rotherham did not believe that they had a problem with child sexual exploitation; [3] agencies were not committing adequate resources to the project; and [4] agencies were demonstrating a judgemental attitude towards the girls who were being exploited.

The Home Secretary made a commitment to the House of Commons in 2015 to review the reports the Home Office had received and the responses to these. The work to review this continues and so the Home Office understandably believes it would be inappropriate to make public their interim findings.

Of this whole episode I agree entirely with Professor Jay that *'if the senior people concerned had paid more attention to the content of this report, more might have been done to help children who were being violently exploited and abused.'*⁴⁸ 'Senior people' in this context clearly includes SYP and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, and may yet include others.

⁴⁶ Jay (2014) para 10.17

⁴⁷ The University of Bedfordshire was created in 2006 by order of the Privy Council, following the merger between the University of Luton and De Montford University's Bedford campus.

⁴⁸ Jay (2014), para 10.18

Specifically the examples of poor practice and negative attitudes that the researcher summarised in her report to the police, and which Professor Jay summarises at paragraph 10.8 of her report, should have provided SYP with an opportunity to think again about its approach. Instead I am satisfied that there were good reasons for the researcher to believe she was being ‘warned off’ from making these findings more widely known.

Continuing police contact with agencies in Rotherham

Further opportunities to get a grip on exploitation was afforded by the continuing contact between SYP and partners (including Risky Business) in Rotherham, through a variety of forums including the ‘Key Players’ group (up to 2003) the Sexual Exploitation Forum, the Sexual Exploitation Steering Group and the current LSCB’s child sexual exploitation sub-group. Professor Jay provides detail of how these arrangements worked.⁴⁹ I have also been told of regular liaison around specific cases of vulnerable children. Specifically the former leaders of the Risky Business project have described to others and me how they provided SYP with over 8,000 separate pieces of information about vulnerable children. I have seen typical examples of these.

Essentially very regular opportunities arose for the police to reconsider the priority they were giving to child sexual exploitation. I could not find evidence that this priority was reviewed at a senior level in the period up to 2007.

The policing of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham 2007-2014

The response of SYP in Rotherham appears to have begun to change in the latter half of the 2000s. This is both Professor Jay’s judgement and the view of testimony that I have received from people working with victims and survivors. Changes were initially quite small but they were discernible to those working in the area. Often they are linked in people’s minds to the arrival of specific officers who displayed a greater openness to think again about the issue.

Little purpose is served by trying to date this precisely but it is important to acknowledge that some progress was made, even though there were also very significant failures. In her report Professor Jay found evidence that police were more pro-active by 2007. She writes *‘Senior Police Officers had established good liaison arrangements with Risky Business and progress was being made in protecting the children and investigating perpetrators.’*⁵⁰

In that year SYP officers, along with those from Rotherham Council, were praised by a trial judge for their handling of a case that led to a successful prosecution.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Jay (2014) Chapter 6

⁵⁰ Jay (2014) para 8.3

⁵¹ Jay (2014) para 8.4

Operation Central and its aftermath

In December 2008 SYP launched *Operation Central*, which was an investigation into offences committed against four girls in Rotherham, three aged 13 and one 16 at the time of the offences. Charges were brought against eight men aged in their twenties, and five convictions were secured in November 2011. The men were sentenced to over thirty-two years in prison. Although mistakes were made during this operation, most notably in the case of the arrest for a public order offence of a 13-year-old victim who was found drunk at 3 a.m. in a semi derelict house with a large group of adult males who were grooming her, the operation as a whole was judged successful. Officers involved in *Operation Central* whom I interviewed were keen to point out that *Central* was one of the first successful prosecutions brought anywhere in the country in respect of child sexual exploitation⁵².

The LSCB commissioned a 'Learning Lessons Review' (see Appendix 4).⁵³ I make a **recommendation** on the potential benefit of such reviews at the close of operations.

I recommend that you, the Police and Crime Commissioner, request the relevant LSCBs to commission 'Learning Lessons Reviews' after the conclusion of each major investigation, starting by making such a request to Rotherham LSCB now even though the conclusion of the recent trial in Sheffield Crown Court does not conclude *Operation Clover*. I also recommend that you press each LSCB to ensure that the views of victims, survivors and their families are central to each such review.

Accounts of what followed differ, some believing that *Operation Central* did not prove to be the springboard that it might have been for subsequent operations. One commentator told me that in her view '*Central fell into the Police's lap and they didn't appreciate how difficult it would be to repeat its success*'.

From within the police force there was some frustration at the low level of resources committed to the operation, although this does not feature in the Learning Lessons Review. I understand that requests within the force for additional resources were turned down, and the breaking of the 'Baby P' story during the operation led to a rise in child abuse investigations and the need for some of the resources for *Operation Central* to revert to the police child abuse team in Rotherham. The Senior Leadership Group in South Yorkshire acknowledges these weaknesses now.

The succeeding investigation, *Operation Czar*, was launched in January 2010 while *Operation Central* was still running. It centred on a group of about nine girls and 3 perpetrators. For various reasons the operation did not lead to any

⁵² *Operation Retriever* in Derbyshire took place in much the same time window.

⁵³ See also an article by the independent reviewer, Stevens, M. (2004)

Rotherham's sex abuse scandal reveals failure at the heart of government Posted on opendemocracy.net 31.8.14

prosecutions⁵⁴ although Child Abduction Notices were issued and Taxi licenses revoked. No Learning Lessons Review was conducted after this second operation and it was wound up in March 2010. A further operation, *Operation Chard*, ran from September 2010 to July 2011 but despite gathering 180 witness accounts from 20 girls and arresting 15 alleged perpetrators I am told that the Crown Prosecution Service felt the evidence was not robust enough to provide a reasonable chance of a successful prosecution.

Growing scrutiny

In 2012 and 2013 there was increased scrutiny of what was happening in Rotherham, spearheaded both by articles in The Times newspaper written by Andrew Norfolk^{55 56} and by the attention of the Home Affairs Committee of the House of Commons. The then Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire, Mr. Shaun Wright, commissioned a sequence of reports (including inspection work by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, into sexual exploitation in South Yorkshire).

Operation Clover was launched in August 2013 partly in response to articles in The Times written by Andrew Norfolk.

The Home Affairs Committee published their report into 'child sexual exploitation and the responses to localised grooming' in June 2013. The committee had heard evidence from SYP of nearly 20 steps that had been taken to improve the response to child sexual exploitation. They also considered evidence from Andrew Norfolk. They criticised the lack of prosecutions in South Yorkshire when compared to Lancashire. *'We have heard evidence that South Yorkshire Police have previously let down victims of localised grooming and child sexual exploitation – as a result, we would expect the force be striving to redeem their reputation'*.⁵⁷

Rotherham Council commissioned Professor Jay to establish what had happened. At the end of eight months of intensive work, Professor Jay concluded that *'Over the first twelve years covered by this Inquiry [1997 to 2009], the collective failures of political and officer leadership were blatant. From the beginning, there was growing evidence that child sexual exploitation was a serious problem in Rotherham... stark evidence came in 2002, 2003, and 2006 with three reports known to the Police and the Council.'*⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Jay refers to professional jealousies between youth work and social work in Rotherham, Jay (2014) para 9.12, another account I received pointed to the failure to engage with, and win the confidence of, the witnesses in *Czar*.

⁵⁵ Andrew Norfolk is the Chief Investigative reporter at The Times. Between 2013 and 2015 he has won 5 national awards for his investigative reporting.

⁵⁶ Examples of Andrew Norfolk's reporting in this period can be found in The Times on 15.1.11, 2.12.11, 7.6.12, 24.9.12, 25.9.12, 17.10.12, 23.8.13, and 29.10.14

⁵⁷ Home Affairs Select Committee (2013) *Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming* London: The Stationery Office

⁵⁸ Jay (2014) p. 1

Professor Jay was equally critical of SYP. *'There were very many historic cases where the operational response of the Police fell far short of what could be expected.'*⁵⁹ However, she also concluded that by the time of her Inquiry, 2013 to 2014, *'It was clear that tackling child sexual exploitation was now a priority for South Yorkshire Police.'*⁶⁰ She added *'we considered that the Police were now appropriately resourced to deal with child sexual exploitation and had a clear focus on prevention, protection, investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators. We also found that police officers on the ground had a good child-centred focus and demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement.'*⁶¹

The Leader of the Council immediately resigned. However, when Louise Casey arrived to inspect Rotherham in September 2014, a month after the publication of the Jay report, she found *'a Council in denial. They denied that there had been a problem, or if there had been, that it was as big as was said.'*⁶²

Louise Casey's criticisms were not restricted to Rotherham Council. Of SYP she wrote *'It seemed to Inspectors that police activity was unexpectedly low in response to these issues, and historically has been poor. There has been a flurry of recent action by the police on criminal investigations and prosecutions, which is to be expected given the high level of public scrutiny and the focus afforded by the new Police and Crime Commissioner [Dr. Billings had been elected at the end of October 2014 following the resignation of Mr. Wright]. However, Inspectors remained concerned that once public scrutiny wanes there is a danger that historic inertia will prevail.'*⁶³ This judgement is to a degree at odds with that made by Professor Jay, in that Professor Jay had found improvement dated back to 2007, rather than just a flurry of recent action.

Casey highlighted two concerns about policing:

'Procurement of evidence

'There has been excessive dependence on victims' disclosure and verbal evidence to proceed with prosecutions, placing an intolerable pressure on vulnerable young people ...

'Inspectors would encourage the use of other approaches, which are beginning to be considered – such as so called 'victimless prosecutions' – in future.'

and

'Treatment of victims

⁵⁹ Jay (2014) para 8.1.

⁶⁰ Jay (2014) para 8.5

⁶¹ Jay (2014) para 8.8

⁶² Casey (2015) p. 5

⁶³ Casey (2015) p. 128

'The police's historic attitude towards, and treatment of, victims has been unacceptable. Young people's testimonies are ignored, victims are not offered necessary protection, and perpetrators are at liberty to continue their activities. This behaviour by SYP perpetuates the cycle of abuse and psychological distortion suffered by the victims, by reinforcing the message that no crime has been committed, and that they are to blame for their own treatment.

*'Inspectors are concerned that this attitude continues in the police to this day, with the treatment of current victims remaining at an unacceptably low standard.'*⁶⁴

Writing in February 2015 Louise Casey welcomed the investigations of the IPCC and the NCA and hoped that these investigations would deliver justice for the victims. I summarise the latest position with the IPCC in Chapter 9, and reproduce the NCA's briefing to me in Appendix 5.

As Louise Casey had begun her inspection in September 2014, there were further developments led by the Home Affairs Select Committee.

At evidence hearings in September 2014, the Select Committee had roundly criticised both Rotherham Council and SYP. Following these sessions Rotherham Council's Chief Executive, Martin Kimber, and Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services, Joyce Thacker resigned. Shaun Wright, by now South Yorkshire's Police and Crime Commissioner but previously a Rotherham Councillor and formerly a Cabinet Member for Children's Services on the Council, resigned on the 16th September 2014.

The policing of child sexual exploitation in the rest of South Yorkshire 2000-2015

Early days in Sheffield

Initial discussions about children being sexually exploited had begun between child protection specialists in the City Council and SYP as early as 1996. A multi-agency forum to respond to sexual exploitation was first set up in Sheffield in 1999. In 2000 information on children being exploited was presented to the Chair of the Sheffield Area Child Protection Committee and others, SYP, Sheffield City Council, and the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) launched a joint operation, *Operation Insight*. This looked at the circumstances of 80 children, with an emphasis on prevention as well as disruption and prosecution. It was the first such operation in South Yorkshire.

⁶⁴ Casey (2015) p. 128

Operation Insight

Operation Insight was launched in March 2000. It was a joint operation between Sheffield City Council Social Services, SYP (officers from the Escafeld House Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Unit and from the then West Bar Plain Clothes Department), and the NSPCC. It arose from a concern that a number of girls aged 13-14 were at risk of sexual exploitation.

During the course of the operation a clearer picture arose of the circumstances of 80 girls living in Sheffield. The majority of these girls were aged 16-17, although a younger group was also included.

Although one focus of the operation was on '*young women involved in prostitution*' [the language used at that time], the operation developed a definition of sexual exploitation, for example by examining the links with older 'boyfriends'. Writing about the operation in 2004 five members of the Insight Team wrote "*we came to regard links with older men and sexual activities with these men, as 'sexual exploitation'*".⁶⁵ The operation made extensive use of Child Abduction Notices to disrupt sexual exploitation.

This was a leading edge operation for its time.

In 2001 a sexual exploitation project was established in Sheffield. Officers from SYP were involved in this, but only on a part-time basis, in other words they retained other duties and their work was done on top of their other commitments. Nevertheless, this approach was innovative and worthy of praise.

In 2002 a police crime analyst was deployed to work with the sexual exploitation project for the first time. She produced a report, which I am told made recommendations for further action. I have not been able to find out what happened with this report.

The intelligence reports produced by Dr. Heal

In the same year, the first of four reports was produced by Dr. Angie Heal⁶⁶, who had been employed by SYP as a Drug Strategic Analyst from June 2002. Three

⁶⁵ Lucas, A, Lothian, F., Victor-Jefferson, M., Byerley, A. and Didlock, N. in Melrose, M. (ed) with Barrett, D. (2004) *Anchors in Floating Lives; Interventions with Young People Sexually Abused Through Prostitution* Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing

⁶⁶ Heal, A. (2002) *A Strategic Assessment of Crack Cocaine Use and Supply in South Yorkshire* Sheffield: South Yorkshire Police and Partnerships

further reports followed in 2003⁶⁷, in 2005⁶⁸ and in 2006⁶⁹. The latter three reports, amongst other things, commented on a growing problem with the exploitation of children in each district of South Yorkshire. Although they clearly describe a greater problem in Rotherham and Sheffield than elsewhere, they offered no grounds for complacency about the situation elsewhere in South Yorkshire.

Both the Jay and Casey reports describe the value of these reports in providing some intelligence about the prevalence of child sexual exploitation across South Yorkshire. I agree with this view, although it is also worth acknowledging that, from a police perspective, these reports possibly did not present the evidence for new action from the police in as compelling a way as they might. Since the work was sponsored by senior police officers, to make this observation is not to criticise Dr. Heal. As a layperson, I found each report compelling in itself, and having re-read the 2003 report while finalising this report I still find the specific account of one girl's experiences contained in it deeply shocking.

These reports represented a moment at which SYP could and should have taken stock of what was being notified to it about the exploitation of children and could have commissioned further work to respond to this. However, it would appear that it was not until four years later that a more detailed intelligence report, with specific recommendations for action, was produced.

I would normally have examined more thoroughly what response was made to Dr. Heal's reports but during the course of my review the IPCC was considering whether it had the locus⁷⁰ to investigate this issue, which had the effect of placing this *off limits* so far as my review is concerned. I understand that a way forward has now been agreed with SYP's Chief Constable.

I make a **recommendation** on this issue.

I recommend that you, the Police and Crime Commissioner, keep under review the examination of the response to these reports so that you can be reassured that any further lessons from this are learnt.

Sheffield - 2003 to 2006

From 2003 the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Project, with support from individual police officers, continued to operate and, at the same time, draw to the attention of more senior police officers and others the threat posed by sexual

⁶⁷ Heal, A. (2003) *Sexual Exploitation, Drug Use and Drug Dealing: The current situation in South Yorkshire* Sheffield: South Yorkshire Police and Partnerships

⁶⁸ Heal, A. (2005) *Drugs Information Summary: Report form South Yorkshire Agencies* Sheffield: South Yorkshire Police and Partnerships

⁶⁹ Heal, A. (2006) *A Problem Profile: Violence and Gun Crime: Links with Sexual Exploitation, Prostitution and Drug Markets in South Yorkshire* Sheffield: South Yorkshire Police and Partnerships

⁷⁰ 'Locus' in this context means whether the IPCC believed they were the organisation with the right or capacity to carry out such an investigation.

exploitation. Wrongly, in my view, additional policing resources were not forthcoming. A familiar issue was that the children who were victims of exploitation were usually reluctant to make a complaint to the police. In 2005 one child of 13 was involved in a prosecution, but this case collapsed in court when a key witness failed to attend.

In 2004 mainstream funding was secured for the project and it was transformed into the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service. From that date onwards the Service have produced clear annual reports that are available from the Sheffield LSCB⁷¹. These reports, which are in my view models of excellence, provide clear evidence that active work was taking place both to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and to work with victims and survivors throughout this period. This work included engagement from officers and staff of SYP. Levels of referral to the service steadily built up over this period, and by 2013 are broadly equivalent to the number of referrals reported in that year by SYP⁷². I would counsel some caution in drawing conclusions from this but it certainly shows a much higher level of awareness, acknowledgement, and engagement with the issue of child sexual exploitation in Sheffield than is reported as being the case in Rotherham⁷³.

In 2006 I have been told that a meeting took place with two senior police officers concerning the case of 15 children who were being sexually exploited and allegedly raped and beaten by a large group of men. No extra resources were forthcoming from this meeting, and I have been told that the most senior SYP officer present said that sexual exploitation was not a priority for the force. I have not been able to verify this from the person to whom these remarks are attributed as he declined to meet me. I have not been able to go into further details, as the matter is subject to investigation by the IPCC.

A further 'problem profile' report was produced for the police's Director of Intelligence also in 2006, perhaps as a consequence of this meeting. As with the reports prepared by Dr. Heal, this was a further opportunity for senior officers in the SYP to get a proper grip on the issue. As with the Heal reports, this opportunity appears to have been missed.

⁷¹ The first report is for 2004-2005. No report was produced in 2012 but reports were reinstated in the next year.

⁷² For these, see Table 1 in Chapter 3

⁷³ The exception to this is, of course, the Risky Business project.

Within existing resources the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service and a South Yorkshire inspector did set up the Sexual Exploitation Enforcement Group (SEEG) which met monthly to discuss specific children and focus on enforcement and disruption⁷⁴, but neither of the two principals involved felt, or feel now, this was as full a response as the circumstances required. However, the consensus expressed to me was that SYP at this time was very focused on national policing priorities and targets and child sexual exploitation did not feature amongst these. I rehearse this argument further at the end of this chapter.

Towards the end of 2006 the assistance of the newly established United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC)⁷⁵, based at that time in Sheffield, was gained to undertake a full intelligence review and, armed with this, there was a change of direction in SYP and Operation Glover was launched.

Sheffield - 2007 - 2013

Operation Glover has been described to me as the first properly resourced large-scale operation since *Operation Insight* and it led to the conviction of one man for sexual offences and five others for other offences. However, at the conclusion of this prosecution, and after only six months, the operation was closed down, against representation within their agencies from council and police officers who felt that they were only beginning to touch the tip of this issue.

One of the constables involved in *Operation Glover* believes he sent a 'Finalisation Report' to a chief superintendent concerning this decision. He has shown me a copy of this document. The person to whom it was addressed has declined to meet me so I have not had the benefit of his account of this period, nor have I been able to review the comment allegedly made by a more senior officer to this constable and a sergeant that they should "*wind your necks in*" for the same reason.

In the following year, 2007, a single, part-time officer was attached to the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service. I believe this was the first time a SYP officer

⁷⁴ 'Disruption' in this context refers to the range of approaches that the police and their partners can take that generally discourage perpetrators of child sexual exploitation or make it more difficult to engage in exploitation, but yet fall short of actual prosecution for the main criminal offences in this area of work (see Table 3 for a breakdown of the principal child sexual exploitation related offences). Policing examples include high visibility patrols, spot checking, use of other legislation to prosecute perpetrators for other offences, use of Child Abduction Notices, covert tactics, and other 'attritional measures'. Examples of disruption undertaken by other agencies can include use of licensing powers and trading standards checks, housing and identity checks, and shared briefings on 'hotspots'.

⁷⁵ The United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) is part of the Organised Crime Command of the National Crime Agency. It works to combat human trafficking by coordinating the work of a wide range of partners and stakeholders both nationally and internationally.

was deployed in a dedicated role combatting child sexual exploitation. This officer laboured under a significant workload, and was not provided with specific training, role profile, or the usual technical infrastructure. Proper cover arrangements when the officer was not at work did not exist either. Nevertheless the role was successful in securing a conviction in a very complex case⁷⁶; in developing disruptive policing, for example through the use of child abduction notices and by engaging in licensing issues with the relevant authorities; and in training other staff and raising awareness of the issue.

At this stage the single, part-time officer was receiving between 75 and 100 new referrals per year, a figure that stands comparison with current referral rates. In 2008 the officer requested that a marker in relation to child abduction notices be placed on the Police National Computer (PNC) system but this was rejected. I am told that this was a consequence of the national policy at that time, but this was not explained to the officer, breeding frustration. A further year passed before this was agreed.

A further investigation, *Operation K-Safe* was launched in 2009, part funded by a contribution from Sheffield City Council. Operational lead for this was allocated to a sergeant, assisted by two police officers on temporary deployment⁷⁷. This allocation was extremely limited. While a number of arrests were made and child abduction notices served, the operation appears to have been thwarted both by its low priority within SYP and the small amount of resources allocated to it. At one stage the two temporary officers were redeployed, leaving the sergeant running the operation on his own. I have also been told that the operation continually struggled to get the basic resources to support the staff, and that the resources provided were there on a very piecemeal basis. This appears to contrast not only with *Operation Retriever* being run by Derbyshire Police (which SYP officers had visited) in this time frame, but also with the resources that SYP had provided to *Operation Central* in Rotherham.

In an attempt to gain more senior support for *Operation K-Safe* an initial intelligence report or memorandum was prepared with support from an intelligence officer. I have read this. The memorandum makes it clear that there are intelligence gaps that needed to be filled. There was no support for this.

There is an important point to be made here about the scale of support for these initiatives. On the one hand SYP should be congratulated for allocating resources to these investigations, but on the other it is very clear now that this allocation was in no way adequate. That should have been evident to more senior officers but I have been left with the impression that senior officers' focus was in a completely different direction. I have not been able to examine the rationale for

⁷⁶ The perpetrator was found guilty on 28 of 34 charges and was sent to prison for 4 years.

⁷⁷ Some of the funding for *Operation K-Safe* came from Sheffield City Council, although this is a complex picture as the South Yorkshire Police had been funding the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service throughout this period.

this limited resource allocation because of lack of engagement with my review by two senior officers to whom I have already referred.

Operation K-Safe effectively drew to a close without any prosecutions being brought to court. This was deeply frustrating for those involved who felt the investigations should continue. It did not mean, however, that there were no prosecutions in this period. A separate, three year, investigation culminated in 2010 with a man receiving a seven-year prison sentence for rape and attempted rape of a child.

Some of the evidence gained during *Operation K-Safe* was used again in the next investigation, *Operation Alphabet*, which began in January 2012. *K-Safe* had, for example, been able to build up a list of 277 'people of interest', this being described at the time by an Intelligence Analyst assisting the operation as being 'a mixture of suspects, victims and other linked nominals'.

Operation Alphabet centred on the activities of a group of suspects whose activities in trapping children into exploitation had long been known to the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service and the specialist police officers. They were later prosecuted and two adults were convicted, receiving 26 years imprisonment between them. The Sheffield LSCB has commissioned a 'Learning Lessons Review' on *Operation Alphabet* but I am told this is not yet ready for publication. I have, however, spoken quite separately to a senior nurse and also to one of the witnesses in *Operation Alphabet* and both singled out two named SYP officers for outstanding work during this investigation.

In 2010, meanwhile, another Intelligence Analyst had produced a further Problem Profile. In our judgement this Profile produced the most compelling case so far for further action, and in setting out a series of recommendations, it was focused most clearly on further action. One insider told me she was confident that this was a 'seminal moment' in the raising of the profile of child sexual exploitation within SYP, even if it took more than a year for the new intelligence to filter through into discernable action.

This report was considered by the SYP's Public Protection Boards in February and again in November 2011, and after what appears to have been a rather protracted process a series of actions were agreed, including the appointment of a Child Exploitation lead to coordinate work within SYP and act as a conduit between the SYP and its various partners.

The same report was also considered, in summary form, at another meeting of senior officers and staff in September 2011. Decisions here included focusing training for officers on street skills relevant to engaging with victims of child sexual exploitation, and other ways of raising awareness of staff to the level of exploitation becoming evident. These appear to be important steps in raising the profile and priority of combatting child sexual exploitation, as is the fact that the September meeting was the first occasion on which a member of the senior leaders group – in this instance an assistant chief constable – was evidently present during a discussion on the sexual exploitation of children.

SYP's own figures for the number of child sexual exploitation specialists deployed by the force show a significant rise in 2012/13.⁷⁸

Sheffield - 2013 - 2015

In Sheffield *Operation Keg* began in 2013 following a thirteen-year-old girl going missing. The initial task was to find her but then focused on offences committed against her. In October five men were found guilty of rape, sexual activity, and human trafficking offences for which they were given a combined total of more than 28 years in prison. This was one of the first times that SYP had used human trafficking legislation in a case of child sexual exploitation.

In 2014 the Sheffield LSCB commissioned an independent assessment of child sexual exploitation services in Sheffield, in response to the publication of the Jay report. This is a thorough and detailed examination of the state of services in 2014. No specific recommendations for SYP came from this assessment although the author did refer to the difficulties that existed then in identifying the number of Child Abduction Notices issued in any period. This has now been resolved, as I describe in Chapter 3.

Barnsley

Many people whom I have talked to have told me that there was a commonly held view in the early 2000s that '*Barnsley did not have a problem with child sexual exploitation*'. One inspector told me he encountered this opinion as late as 2014.

The view seems likely to have come from an over-simplistic view of what was meant by child sexual exploitation. One person felt that there was a view that there couldn't be a problem with exploitation because there was no red light area in Barnsley. Another interpretation was there were no obvious examples of groups of men working together to exploit children. It may also be that there was in people's minds an association between exploitation and certain minority ethnic communities. If, the argument might go, there was no significant Pakistani heritage community in Barnsley then it would follow there would be no child sexual exploitation.

All of these arguments are deeply flawed. Child sexual exploitation does not only happen in towns that have red light areas. Child sexual exploitation is not principally carried out by groups of men acting together. Perpetrators are drawn from all different races and creeds. The specific *pattern* of child sexual exploitation will vary from one area to another; the *fact* of child sexual exploitation will not vary, as the current statistics provided in Chapter 3 show.

In 2003 Dr. Heal had found signs of an emerging acknowledgement of the issue in Barnsley and concluded that this was an issue '*that many people will be watching very carefully*'⁷⁹. In 2006 the Barnsley LSCB commissioned an

⁷⁸ See Table 8, Chapter 6.

⁷⁹ Heal, A. (2003) p. 28.

independent 'mapping exercise of the incidence of sexual exploitation', a reflection of the fact that not all were complacent about the threat. This exercise identified a number of children who were at risk of exploitation. It also recommended that a 'Child Sexual Exploitation Task Force' be set up, and this group started to meet following the presentation of the report in May 2006. This was at first a very operational group and one view is that its original membership was too junior to be able to commit resources to a fundamental change of approach. The task force did, however, continue to meet.

Dr. Heal's 2006 report⁸⁰ does not indicate much change from earlier findings, although she will, of course, have been dependent on others to identify sexual exploitation as an issue in the first place.

The independent consultant employed previously by Barnsley LSCB produced a follow up report in 2009, which I believe demonstrated⁸¹, following a trawl of agency records, that the problem had grown in the intervening three years. Examples were provided of children being trafficked from Barnsley to other parts of Yorkshire. Since these examples were readily identified by the separate agencies it must have been the case that there was some response to this issue taking place. But the consultant told me that she recommended that the pace of response, and particularly the sharing of information, needed to speed up, and there also needed to be more active engagement (bringing prosecutions, serving abduction notices) than she found.

There appear to have been a great many changes of key personnel in Barnsley and this makes it difficult to construct a coherent narrative. However, I have spoken to the Chair of the Barnsley LSCB between 2009 and 2012. He confirms the consultant's view that child sexual exploitation was not central to the Board's concerns in 2009.

By 2013, as SYP more generally raised the profile of its own response to child sexual exploitation, this was changing and in that year the current Chair of the LSCB formally reconstituted the task force as a sub-group of the LSCB, thereby raising the profile of both the group and the issue. I have looked at the current membership of this group and am satisfied that people of sufficient seniority are now members.

Doncaster

The position in Doncaster was different from that across the rest of South Yorkshire. Doncaster had had a red light area for many years, and during the 1990s the agencies working in this area began to note the arrival of girls as well as adults. SYP operated a specialist 'Vice Unit' in Doncaster at this time. I am told that good working relationships had already been forged between SYP, the Council, and the voluntary sector represented by a local charity StreetReach,

⁸⁰ Heal, A. (2006) op. cit.

⁸¹ A copy of this report was found too late for me to be able to read it. However, I have passages from the report read to me.

perhaps as a consequence of this.⁸² From about 1994 onwards there had been a monthly multi-agency group representing these parties. Late in that decade this became the 'Sexual Exploitation Multi-Agency Forum', itself a forerunner of the child sexual exploitation sub-groups that LSCBs now maintain.

I am told that there were successful prosecutions and also that abduction notices were used to disrupt exploitation, although actual statistics are hard to come by from this period.

Dr. Heal described the picture that she found in Doncaster in her two reports of those years. Her account and the picture I have described above are consistent, showing the beginnings of a concern about children no longer being seen as adults. She also describes the problem that exists to the present day of some of the girls at the centre of sexual exploitation not seeing themselves as being coerced in any way. This was a particular concern in Doncaster at this time. It did not, however, prevent some proactive policing, *Operation Abstraction* in 2009 targeting a man who trafficked children into the United Kingdom before sexually abusing them.

Ofsted inspected child protection arrangements in Doncaster in 2012 and concluded that the LSCB in Doncaster was compliant with statutory guidance for safeguarding children from sexual exploitation. The LSCB produced a child sexual exploitation strategy in 2013 and it is clear from statistics produced both by the LSCB and SYP that from that point at least there was significant engagement with the issue from all agencies in the town. The Independent Chair of the LSCB carried out a review in December 2014, which is a very comprehensive examination of the position in Doncaster at that time.⁸³

Operation Alloe began in Doncaster in 2014 and led to the conviction of one man for offences committed against eight boys. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison in July 2015.

Child sexual exploitation and abuse in South Yorkshire before this period

During the course of the Review I was also contacted by a number of victims and survivors who had often harrowing accounts to give about failures to investigate their complaints, dating back in one instance as far as the 1970s. It is impossible to draw any conclusion from these individual cases of the relative prevalence of child sexual exploitation before the 2000s but they did serve to remind me that the problem of child sexual exploitation and abuse is not a new phenomenon.

⁸² It should be noted in passing that, as I have already described in this chapter, the University of Luton had cited the absence of such a specialist unit in Rotherham as one of the reasons why it found the response there to child sexual exploitation as inadequate.

⁸³ Harris, J. (2014) op. cit.

In conclusion

I have attempted in this Chapter to summarise the complex history of SYP's past responses to child sexual exploitation. With more time it is possible that my understanding of the picture in Barnsley and Doncaster would have improved but in essence I believe the story to be as follows.

In Rotherham between 1997 and 2007, there were many failures, which have been extensively documented elsewhere. Researching the position during 2013 and 2014 Professor Jay concluded that the police performance began to change from 2007 onwards. I have heard evidence that would take me to that conclusion as well. This momentum of change, coming, we must be clear, from a very low base, gathered speed from 2012 as the stated priority attached by SYP to combatting sexual exploitation changed. Significantly enhanced resources followed, and the building blocks to an effective local response - a partnership between the police, the local authority, and the voluntary sector, with active engagement of victims, survivors and family members – began to be put in place. As recently as early 2015 Louise Casey found there was still much to be done.

In Sheffield the picture was different. The early decision by the Area Child Protection Committee to bid for and then fund the resources to create first a project and then a Sexual Exploitation Service meant that there was always some statutory response to exploitation in the city. I have charted the slow response of the SYP to play their part in this, and described missed opportunities when more could and should have been done to grasp this issue. But, thanks in no small measure to the personal commitment of a number of officers and staff, there was a police engagement with the issue from the late nineteen nineties. What this engagement lacked was the involvement of more senior officers until 2011. Again the pace of change sped up significantly from that date, and in particular from 2013.

In Barnsley SYP engagement was hampered by a limited view of what sexual exploitation might look like, which appears to have been shared across the whole partnership. Some work did take place but, from an admittedly limited evidence base, I would not consider this remotely adequate before 2013.

In Doncaster there are reasons to believe that the situation 'on the ground' was better than any formal examination of strategies and minutes might reveal because of the working links that had been established in the nineteen nineties in response to the issues in the town at that stage. It is clear that, by 2013, SYP were better engaged at every level in the response to child sexual exploitation than they had been before.

It is important to try to date the major changes in SYP's response, not least because of the link between this date and the publication of first the Jay and then the Casey reports. I think the reasonable case can be made for nominating 2013 as the key year of change, not only in terms of resources allocated and formal declarations of priority, but also in terms of how those present at the time, both within SYP and outside recall things. At the same time it is very clear that both

the Jay and then the Casey reports had a major impact on priorities and the momentum for change further increased after their publication.

One last thought: throughout this review I have wondered how to summarise the difference in policing between Rotherham and Sheffield. Towards the end of the review I met a chief inspector with experience of both districts. Of Rotherham he said he believed in the 2000s the crime of child sexual exploitation was seen by police officers as '*a burden*'. In Sheffield I am satisfied that there were always officers who saw it as their mission to combat the sexual exploitation of children. There is a world of difference between these two mindsets.

Chapter 5

Why was South Yorkshire Police slow to respond to the need to review and reprioritise the policing response to child sexual exploitation?

Judgement and summary

I received a variety of accounts of why SYP was slow to understand the threat, risk and harm posed by child sexual exploitation. I believe that the heart of the matter is to be found in five explanations, these being:

- **a lack of understanding about child sexual exploitation;**
- **too narrow a definition of child sexual exploitation;**
- **the distorting impact of national priorities which did not include child sexual exploitation;**
- **the impact of a top down culture combined with a lack of professional curiosity; and**
- **attitudes to young people.**

At the end of this Chapter I also speculate about the possible impact of:

- corruption, and
- the question of race and 'political correctness'.

Lack of understanding about child sexual exploitation

A first point on which most are agreed is that a majority of professionals simply did not understand child sexual exploitation, either the scale of exploitation or the way in which it influences the conduct of those who are being exploited, as a social problem in 2000. This was as true across the country as it was in South Yorkshire. The very phrase 'child sexual exploitation' was rarely used at first and, as I have already described, a satisfactory definition did not emerge until 2008. The earlier use of the phrase 'child prostitution' in official guidance⁸⁴ both limited the field for intervention and also risked attaching social prejudices about prostitution and women engaged in prostitution to these children who were victims of exploitation and abuse.

Having said this, I have already cited in Chapter 3 the view expressed by Ministers in 2015 that regardless of the absence of a satisfactory understanding of the nature of exploitation, certain offences should have been perfectly obvious in 2000, or indeed long before then, and professionals aware of children in these circumstances ought to have acted robustly to keep these children safe and prosecute perpetrators.

The lack of focus on child sexual exploitation had the effect of placing organisations like Risky Business and the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service, and individuals like the Rotherham researcher and Dr. Heal far outside of the

⁸⁴ For example '*Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution*' produced by the Department of Health in 2000.

mainstream, a hard place from which to influence the policy of statutory agencies. The same can be said of several police officers whom I met, and who developed an early awareness of the issue.

One area where I found clear evidence that SYP's response was deeply flawed relates to the issue of 'evidential disclosure'. All practitioners in this area would now agree that formal disclosures of exploitation are not achieved easily. Children need time both to understand that the behaviour of men whom they see, mainly, as boyfriends is exploitative, and even after that to feel sufficient confidence to disclose to a stranger the full detail of the exploitation they have been experiencing. In my meetings with officers of every rank in South Yorkshire I found convincing evidence that this is now well understood. However, one inspector described to me a conversation with a more senior officer recalling an incident in 2010 where he was told to wind down an investigation and '*take the Rotherham approach and just wait for disclosures*' as though these would just naturally arise in due course. That such a view was being expressed in 2010 is unacceptable. Six years previously, in May 2004, Chief Constable Terry Grange of Dyfed-Powys Police, the child protection spokesman at that time for the Association of Chief Police Officers, had written:

'Far too often we've metaphorically shrugged our shoulders and said that the girl won't make a statement – therefore there is no complaint, therefore we can't investigate it ... If an offence is alleged and it's an older man, investigate it. Find out everything you can about him and then decide what to do ... The police service depends on trust and officers that are saying they can't do anything, in my view, are breaching that trust.'

Too narrow a definition of child sexual exploitation

A related difficulty arises if a police force has too narrow a working definition of child sexual exploitation. I believe some officers certainly had this. For example, the view that child sexual exploitation was about red light areas, and was about gangs of men principally of Pakistani heritage, led not only the force but also probably the whole partnership to look for signs of exploitation in the wrong places. One superintendent, describing the exploitation challenge today in his area, characterised the local problem of revolving around '*white European males, in their mid 40s, making extensive use of the internet for initial grooming, often of boys, and not operating as gangs at all.*' This is a very different profile.

This leads me to the conclusion that at times too narrow a working hypothesis about the nature of child sexual exploitation will have delayed SYP's development of an adequate response.

The distorting impact of national priorities

Most of the evidence that I have received, both from within South Yorkshire and outside, suggests strongly that the existence of national police priorities focused on volume acquisitive crime such as burglary, robbery, and theft from motor vehicles meant that the policing of these areas were given such priority locally

that it was well nigh impossible for local police forces to attach importance to other emerging crimes in their areas.⁸⁵

I received a detailed paper⁸⁶ on this subject from Meredydd Hughes⁸⁷, the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire between 2004 and 2011, and Bob Dyson⁸⁸, his deputy and one time Temporary Chief Constable, who between them had been at the helm of SYP from 2002 to 2012. This was submitted at their initiative. Their argument was different. They were very aware of national targets and proud of the improvements that their force made towards the achievement of these during their periods in charge, for example reducing the incidence of street crime. They also pointed out that SYP was named by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary to be “*one of the four most improved forces in the country*” in their 2009 assessment.

They acknowledged the impact of national priorities thus: “*The authors do not accept the perspectives offered by some that the centralised regime necessarily disrupted a local force on police priorities, but the series of initiatives and requirements for reporting did focus attention at times on a narrow range of priorities rather than multiple strands that communities in metropolitan areas such as South Yorkshire need to deal with.*” But, they continued, “*Policing never has few priorities. Public expectations are always that the police will deal with any concern, request or issue. The authors do not accept that a centralised performance management regime absolves or reduces the responsibilities of the local police command team.*”

In particular, they described the wide variety of contact that they had with Council Leaders and senior officers throughout this period, and asserted that the issue was not once raised with them. In their paper they wrote, “*At no stage did the members of the Police Authority raise matters connected to child sexual exploitation or suggest any measures. The Authority had long standing local councillors from all four authorities, and the experienced Deputy Chair – a Rotherham Councillor – at no time either in public meetings or private sessions mentioned CSE. Another Rotherham Councillor – who was to become the elected*

⁸⁵ For a full rehearsal of these arguments see Golding, B. and Savage, S.P. (2011) ‘Leadership and performance management’ in Newburn, T. (ed) *Handbook of Policing* Abingdon: Routledge.

⁸⁶ Hughes, M. and Dyson, R. (2015) *South Yorkshire Police, 2002-2011, The Force Performance Culture* Unpublished paper submitted to the author.

⁸⁷ Meredydd Hughes joined South Yorkshire Police from Greater Manchester Police in 2002 when he was appointed Deputy Chief Constable. He was promoted Chief Constable in 2004 and held that post until his retirement in 2011.

⁸⁸ Bob Dyson spent his entire police career in South Yorkshire. He joined the force in 1976. He became a temporary Assistant Chief Constable in 2003, and held a number of roles at that level. In 2007 he became Deputy Chief Constable. On Meredydd Hughes’ retirement in October 2011 he succeeded him as temporary Chief Constable until the arrival of the current Chief Constable, David Crompton, in April 2012. He retired towards the end of 2012.

*Police and Crime Commissioner*⁸⁹, was formerly the lead member for Child Safeguarding, but at no time did he raise CSE in Police Authority meetings with the SCT [Senior Command Team⁹⁰]. More generally, commenting on a range of meetings and visits carried out by the 'Chief Officers' of SYP they wrote "To our knowledge, at no time did anyone [from South Yorkshire's local authorities] raise child sexual abuse as an issue during any of those events. Issues such as anti-social behaviour, low level nuisance and volume crimes were however often raised."⁹¹

It is hard to reconcile this account with the fact that there was growing evidence, that I have described, from within their own force about the scale of child sexual exploitation. I could find no written evidence that any of this had reached their desks, but there are minutes to show that some of these reports were considered at chief superintendent and superintendent level (and in 2011, immediately before Mr. Hughes' retirement, at assistant chief constable level) which, to someone outside the force, strongly suggests that they ought to have heard something of the issue.

Serving and former officers of SYP have told me that the national priorities were completely dominant within the force at this time, and in consequence there was little prospect of intelligence that might suggest a redirection of resources being given a hearing at the most senior level. I have been consistently told that roles relating to 'performance crime', that is the issues supported by national targets, were seen as being the high status jobs within the force, in particular the roles that would lead to promotion. Work in the areas of child abuse and exploitation was not given priority. I have also been told about long delays in securing a citation for one particularly successful child abuse operation, as well as other examples where the success of an officer in this field was either apparently completely ignored by senior leaders, or where the attitude was taken that the officer was simply doing their job.

Mr. Hughes and Mr. Dyson felt that these recollections ignored the fact that funding was provided to priority areas other than performance crime, for example neighbourhood policing, missing children and '*projects like the National Human Trafficking Centre*'. A 'Cold Case' review team was also established in this period, and they recall that this was largely focused on unsolved sex offences. They also observed that performance management systems were broader based than their former staff recall. They are confident that they would not have ignored for promotion officers who were raising '*unpopular or difficult*' issues.

Having listened carefully to all who wanted to talk about this issue, I am left with the firm impression that attempts to raise the profile of child sexual exploitation

⁸⁹ Shaun Wright was elected South Yorkshire first Police and Crime Commissioner in November 2012. He resigned in September 2014.

⁹⁰ The phrase 'Senior Command Team' was used at the time to describe the most senior police officers in the SYP – the phrase 'Senior Leadership Team' is now used.

⁹¹ All quotations in the preceding paragraphs from Hughes, M. and Dyson, R. (2015) *op cit*.

between 2000 and 2009 were met with lack of interest or professional curiosity by most officers in the more senior ranks of the force. Common sense suggests that this must have been in no little part due to the importance attached to national priorities. The leadership of SYP could reasonably have expected their local authority partners to know more about child sexual exploitation and to raise these issues with them. I could not find evidence of this happening at a senior level. But there was also no need, in my view, for the police to rely on information from councils and other partners when some of their own officers had a good grasp of the widespread nature of exploitation, and had those officers been given the opportunity, the senior ranks would have been informed of what was happening.

The impact of a top down culture combined with a lack of professional curiosity

I have received many accounts from officers who served in SYP during the 2000s that the force had a very strong, top down organisational culture, in which little value was attached to information from the grass roots of policing passing up through the chain of command.

Former Chief Constable Hughes disputed this, and compared the culture in SYP favourably with that in the two forces in which he had served immediately before joining South Yorkshire. He also described initiatives he took to encourage representations from staff, including meeting with staff representatives, increased devolution of budgets, and a force suggestion scheme (encouraged by the use of gift vouchers). But he is alone, in my experience, in his view that these counteracted the 'top down' approach in SYP.

In any event there is no way of assessing accurately whether SYP was atypical when compared to other police forces. Even the testimony of individual officers is of limited help because most serve out their career in one force and so have little with which to compare their experiences. Several, however, endorsed the comment of one sergeant of long standing service to me that *'a few years ago I wouldn't have spoken to a superintendent unless I was first spoken to, that's not how the police culture worked then'*. The significance I attach to this comment is both its description of a top down culture and also the suggestion that things are changing. All were agreed on this, although for some the pace of change was too slow.

It can be argued that such a culture is important to preserve the discipline required to be an effective police force. A force is not a democracy. One seasoned observer of the police in South Yorkshire said to me, *'they like to lead, they like to be in control'*. This creates a problem when there is important information held at the foot of the organisation, or in another agency, that ought to make its way to the head of the police and does not. One former SYP officer who has held a very senior role reflected on this issue to me saying, *'What we needed was a culture in which people could have said "Yes, I get that, but let me just tell you about this".'* In his experience, that was lacking in South Yorkshire at that time.

An officer described being told to '*wind our necks in*' concerning child abuse, in other words to restrict his curiosity and investigations when he attempted to alert more senior officers to the scale of the issue. The senior officer to whom this comment was attributed declined to meet me so I do not know what his recall of this incident might have been. But there are good reasons to believe that the more general attitude behind the quotation was common.

Two officers with significant experience of other forces described finding little apparent interest in what they could bring from their former force to South Yorkshire. One officer went so far as to describe, in the late 2000s, the existence of an unhealthy close-knit culture amongst senior staff, adding that compared to his previous force South Yorkshire felt strictly '*championship class, compared to the premiership*'.

Mr. Hughes described action he took to try to counter the insularity of SYP, particularly at superintendent and chief inspector level⁹². I do not doubt these were sincere initiatives but those joining the force to whom I spoke in this period did not experience any significant interest in their past service and knowledge. I make a **recommendation** about this issue.

I recommend that you, the Police and Crime Commissioner, ask the Chief Constable to convene a standing 'New Voices' group, with revolving membership, both to capture first impressions and also work as directed on specific short term projects. The Chief Constable should be asked to consider allocating the responsibility of meeting with this group to a member of the senior leadership team, thereby signifying the importance of such a group.

Mr. Hughes said that no officer wrote to him directly to describe the child sexual exploitation problem. Officers to whom I have put this comment, including those of quite senior rank, have smiled and asked me why anyone would want to expose themselves as making criticism of force priorities when it was so clear what these were.

I have little doubt that the priorities of SYP were stated so clearly that officers felt there was only so far they could go to propose alternatives. In other words, there was *little point* in pursuing an issue that they knew would not find favour. And some officers say that this was particularly the case for an officer who was hoping for promotion. It was widely thought that going against the grain would not commend an officer to those more senior who were responsible for promotion in the early 2000s.

A senior nurse, commenting on her hopes for the outcome of my Review, said, '*I'd like to feel that your report would enable police officers to feel empowered to challenge when they see things that are wrong*'.

⁹² For example, he recalls a requirement that they presented to the senior command team after three months in their new posts on good practice from outside.

Attitudes to young people

I have heard many accounts, from survivors and officers, which confirm that the children who bore the brunt of exploitation were not given the sympathetic response that they deserved and to which they were entitled. I have heard examples of 'canteen humour' applied to children who were regularly missing from home, which would have the effect of splitting them off from other children in the eyes of some officers. My understanding is that such 'humour' often went unchallenged.

Children who are the subject of sexual exploitation are not always easy to work with for a number of reasons. At first contact they may not acknowledge they are victims at all, and the pernicious nature of grooming typically casts the first exploiters as the child's boyfriend. They often express hostility towards the police.

There is no doubt that some police officers and others were confused in the 2000s about the issue of sexuality in childhood and were therefore less confident about the responsibilities in this area.

It is also the case that the failure of other agencies to exercise their responsibilities did not help ensure an adequate response from the police. Many officers describe returning children to their care homes, to be greeted by a '*what can we do*' response from a residential care worker that left the officer in no doubt that the child would run away again at the earliest opportunity. I was told of one case where control was so poor that it was necessary for the police to take a girl into Police Protection from their care home because of the danger to the child of remaining there.

There is another side to this. Where officers encountered professionals who were demonstrably committed to working in a patient and purposeful way with children who were being exploited, and who could explain why the children with whom they worked behaved in the destructive and hostile way that they did at times, this countered much of the worldly scepticism that can be the trade mark of a police officer.

It is important to record that I do not believe that the majority of police officers in South Yorkshire were hostile to young people generally, or to those who were being sexually exploited in particular. It is also important to recognise that quite outstanding work was undertaken, despite the low priority afforded to child sexual exploitation by the senior command, and that this led to successful prosecutions and a range of other responses that disrupted perpetrators. But I did receive many accounts of negative attitudes that had existed during the 2000s and I assessed that these contributed to the slowness and inconsistency with which SYP responded to the issue of child sexual exploitation.

Potential corruption

There is speculation, in South Yorkshire and nationally, as to whether a part of the reluctance to develop a comprehensive response to child sexual exploitation

arose from some improper and corrupt relationships between police officers and perpetrators. Two names have been mentioned to me and I understand allegations were made during the recent trial in Sheffield Crown Court.

I have no powers to investigate this, falling as it rightly does within the province of the IPCC. We must await the final outcome of IPCC investigations in this area.

The question of race and ‘political correctness’

Lastly there is the question of whether SYP was guilty of a ‘hands off approach’ towards certain potential offenders for fear of being accused of prejudice and institutional racism. Even within the police force views on this differ. Some officers say they are confident that there was no interference on pursuing perpetrators because of their ethnicity. Louise Casey took a different view, quoting two police officers saying, amongst other things, *“They were saying to us “it will cause a lot of community tension if they are targeted specifically”* of taxi drivers and the Pakistani heritage community. Casey concluded that Rotherham Council’s *‘suppression of these uncomfortable issues and the fear of being branded racist has done a disservice to the Pakistani heritage community as well as the wider community’*.⁹³ The Home Affairs Committee took the same view.⁹⁴

Although I have received little evidence on this point I have no reason to disagree that these issues will have served as a brake on some officers willingness to pursue some of the perpetrators of sexual exploitation.

⁹³ Both quotations here taken from Casey, L. (2015) p. 36

⁹⁴ Home Affairs Committee (2013) paragraphs 108-122

Chapter 6

Has South Yorkshire Police understood and acted on the findings of and recommendations in previous reports and inspections, in the media and during parliamentary questioning?

Judgement and summary

I am satisfied that SYP has understood and acted both on the general direction of previous criticism⁹⁵ and also on most of the specific recommendations of previous scrutinies of its performance. This is reflected in the considerable progress that has been made. This is monitored by the force in an Action Plan, regularly updated, which sets out what needs to be done and charts progress. The Action Plan, and indeed the overarching strategy that sits above it, could be further improved. I conclude in the next Chapter that although good progress has been made more work needs to be done to ensure that the force priority, to combat child sexual exploitation, is demonstrated by all officers and staff.

The task of keeping abreast of all the findings and recommendations made to SYP is very considerable. We have calculated that SYP has been the subject (either directly, or as part of a wider safeguarding partnership) of at least 13 reports, inspections and other formal reviews, as well as having been at the centre of sharp public scrutiny and criticism in the media. Even, for example, at the conclusion of the most recent trial in Sheffield Crown Court, an event that, it might have been thought, would lead to some praise for the investigative skills of SYP and its partners, one national newspaper ran with the headline *'Police failing in Rotherham under scrutiny'*, and gave the convictions *'Six convicted over sexual abuse of teenage girls in South Yorkshire'* only second billing, an editorial decision that seems harsh in all the circumstances.⁹⁶

The current leadership of SYP deserves credit for changing the priority afforded to combatting child sexual exploitation from a position ten years ago where it was hardly acknowledged, and where there was one part time officer allocated to work in this area, to the situation today in which, for example, every email from officers and staff in the force contains the by-line *"Tackling child sexual exploitation is a priority for the Force and it is the responsibility of everyone to help spot the signs and say something"*, and where there are now 68 full time staff working in policing child sexual exploitation, together with the mobilisation of much of the rest of the force to address this priority.

⁹⁵ For a list of these see Appendix 4

⁹⁶ The Guardian, 25.2.16

However, there remain areas for improvement and I have identified and set out some of these in detail in the next Chapter. Partially this is about ensuring that all officers and staff demonstrate the priority, as any setback will be magnified in importance because of the history of past failures. Partially it is about further fine-tuning processes to make sure they are fit for the purposes for which they are intended.

By implementing such changes I believe SYP would go a long way to allay fears expressed to me by many about the sustainability of its current focus on child sexual exploitation.

Raising the priority of child sexual exploitation

SYP adopted child sexual exploitation as a force priority in 2013. The first way, therefore, that the force can demonstrate that it has learnt the lessons of the past is in the most obvious manifestation of this priority, the enhanced resources allocated to combatting child sexual exploitation.

Charting the rise in the number of officers who specialise in child sexual exploitation work is an obvious way to demonstrate the new priority afforded to this area of work. It is not an entirely simple exercise as some staff come in and out of deployment in this area due to the existence of specific investigations and operations. There is a level of simplification here but I believe this is a reasonable estimation, and more importantly it shows a clear sea change in priority.

Year	Estimation of number of specialist staff working on Child Sexual Exploitation
2007	1
2008	7
2010	14
2011	9.5
2013	19
2014	45
2015/6	68

Table 8. Number of specialist South Yorkshire Police staff working on child sexual exploitation.

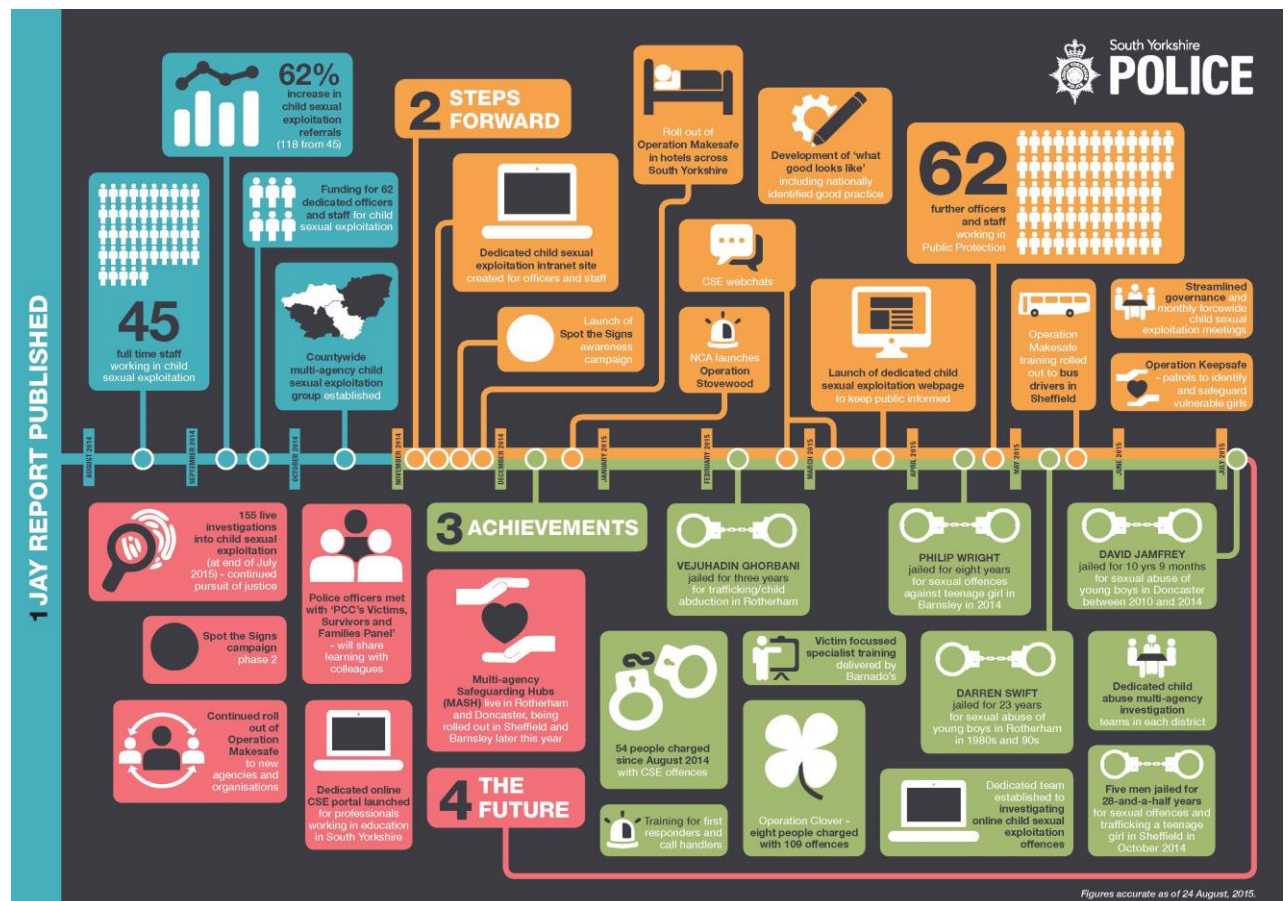
A key moment here came in April 2014 when, after a review of the Public Protection Unit, a decision was reached to create local police child sexual exploitation teams in each district. Rotherham's team had actually been created in 2013, but the creation of the new teams marked a significant change.

The current establishment is as follows:

District	Sergeant	Detectives	Missing Children Officer
Barnsley	1	4	1
Doncaster	1	5	1
Rotherham	1	5	1
Sheffield	1	5	1

Table 9. Deployment of police officers into specialist child sexual exploitation teams by district.⁹⁷

SYP also produced an 'Infograph'⁹⁸ in August 2015 that charted in visual form key data on achievements in their work combatting child sexual exploitation over the previous 12 months. This is another way to chart the growing priority afforded to this work.



⁹⁷ The difference in numbers in Tables 8 and 9 reflects that not all child sexual exploitation specialists are deployed in the local teams.

⁹⁸ An Infograph (Information graphic) is a representation of information in a graphic format designed to make the data easily understandable at a glance.

The Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan

The current Action Plan, revised in January 2016, clusters the actions needed to respond to past findings and recommendations under eight headings. I have cross-referenced these with the sources and believe this is a sensible attempt to provide focus without over-simplifying. The headings used are:

1. Tasking and Analysis
2. Multi-Agency Safeguarding
3. Training
4. Resourcing
5. Raising Awareness
6. Investigation
7. Online child sexual exploitation
8. Development

I shall follow these in turn.

Tasking and analysis

In contrast to the past, where intelligence was neither available in a way a police force would find readily accessible, nor widely circulated, SYP now produces a monthly analytical document for their oversight meeting. We have reviewed these and believe they are good quality documents that provide detailed analysis of the picture emerging across South Yorkshire, as well as detailed summaries of victim and offender profiles, missing children, and other data. In April further enhancements are planned. This represents a substantial improvement from the past and constitutes, in my view, good progress in learning the lessons of past reviews.

There is also an important commitment to de-briefing victims, and suspects, at the close of investigations in order to learn from the victim and suspect perspective, as well as to understand better patterns of offending. This is work in progress as each case provides different learning opportunities.

Two areas are acknowledged as needing particular action. First, the force is pressing its partner agencies to agree the process by which a problem profile can be developed into a multi-agency profile. I discuss some of the police's frustrations with this in Chapter 8. The National Police Chiefs' Council, who are pushing national partners for agreement to adopt regional problem profiles, shares these frustrations. Secondly, SYP acknowledges continuing concern from outside the force about how information is submitted to the police. I return to this issue in the next Chapter.

Multi-agency safeguarding

A number of recommendations to the force have related to the development of better multi-agency arrangements. Since much of the responsibility here lies beyond SYP alone it falls outside my remit to look at this area in detail. However, there are a few general points that I would like to make.

First, an early decision was made to establish a countywide child sexual exploitation group. This has evolved into the Strategic Child Safeguarding Countywide Partnership group to develop better coordination, shared understanding, and common approaches to child sexual exploitation and other child protection related matters. The Assistant Chief Constable chairs this. It is important because it secures multi-agency support to the work of tackling child sexual exploitation and also provides an opportunity for best practice to be exchanged across South Yorkshire, something that was apparently absent in the 2000s when progress in Sheffield was not being matched elsewhere. In addition the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner chairs the Child Sexual Exploitation Forum. This has been in place since 2014.

Second, the development of common approaches across the partnership is not as fast as the police would like, and from a policing perspective there have been setbacks (for example, the closure in 2015 of a third sector service to provide independent interviews to children on returning home after being missing). On the other hand, partners have worked together and secured Department for Education Innovation Fund resources to provide specialist foster parent placements for exploited children; these are now available across South Yorkshire, as well as additional support for young survivors, a development widely welcomed within the force.

The key point here for me has been to enquire, from its partners, whether SYP is a committed partner in this area of work, and to that question I have received an emphatic 'Yes'. I return to this in the next Chapter.

Training

A number of recommendations have focused on the obvious point of ensuring that police officers and staff are properly trained in respect of child sexual exploitation work. There have been extensive initiatives in this area. I have not examined the training material in detail (nor am I qualified to assess it) but the depth and extent of training looks impressive. Some of the training is provided through e-learning modules, which help with coverage but are not ideal in ensuring anything other than formal compliance. The existence of e-learning components does invite criticism, both from within the force and outside it, that this is tokenism, and I have heard this said. I have looked at the balance of material and there does not seem to be an over reliance on e-learning. I think it is reasonable to use this approach at times, provided it is not the centre of the training programme. Street skills training that includes content relevant to child sexual exploitation is provided for all staff, and there are plans in hand to refresh the vulnerability training for all staff in 2016.

Some officers did say to me that they thought the training opportunities offered either via their local council or LSCB were more dynamic, and I think SYP should take this on board. I was very pleased to see that a local voluntary sector organisation was now being invited to provide child sexual exploitation training in Barnsley. I think this opening up of the force to other voices within their locality is very helpful, and will build multi-agency understanding and cooperation.

It is good to see the force collaborating beyond its boundaries on occasions in this regard. For example, training on professional curiosity is being developed with the West Mercia and Thames Valley forces, in conjunction with the University of Worcester. All specialist child sexual exploitation investigators have received training from Barnardos in respect of victim engagement and also attended a programme of master-classes. They have also undergone specific Joint Investigation and other training.

I understand that there is no specific child sexual exploitation training plan, despite this level of activity. There is always a trade-off to be had between 'doing things' and 'developing written plans about doing things', but this seems a curious anomaly. I understand it is under review.

One uniformed officer, on general deployment, described to me both an excellent piece of training that the sergeant had received on human trafficking, followed by a further session a few weeks later that sounded very poor and counter-productive. While this may have owed something to a last minute change of trainer, it does serve to show how easy it is for unacceptable messages to be delivered, and the setback that can follow this. I understand a complaint has been made about this.

As with awareness raising (see below) the ultimate test of training is whether it has not only raised skill levels but also achieved the desired changes in attitude. I discuss this in the next Chapter. Generally I believe very good progress is being made in this area, and, compared to 10 years previously, the picture is markedly different.

During the period of the review a further training initiative was being developed by officers working with survivors and their families from the Police and Crime Commissioner's 'Victims and Survivors Panel'. This group have not only produced a critique of the existing training provision but also generated proposals for improvement. It is important that the progress with this work does not lose momentum.

Resourcing [staff welfare]

The recommendation within this area relates to the welfare procedures in place for staff investigating child sexual exploitation.

I have not examined this service but the inclusion of this theme within the Action Plan is a positive.

Raising awareness

The force maintains a comprehensive Communications Strategy, with both inward facing and external components, to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation.

The creation of a dedicated child sexual exploitation intranet site for officers and staff has been important because it ensures that they have access to up to date

information about exploitation. Its presence is also a reminder of the priority afforded to this issue. This is backed up by the 'Spot the signs' campaign, which displays to staff and to the public important information about exploitation as well as conveying a very clear sense of priority.

So far as outward facing communication and raising awareness is concerned a key initiative is *Operation Makesafe*.

Operation Makesafe

Operation Makesafe began in Sheffield in 2013 as an initiative to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation amongst businesses. The Operation gathers intelligence about child sexual exploitation and works with taxi drivers, bed and breakfast staff, fast food outlets, door staff and concierges to train and raise awareness of the issues, including explaining to staff how to respond to these. It was first aimed at hotels and taxi drivers. The training has grown steadily since that time to include fast food outlets and other businesses.

National chains Whitbread (Premier Inn etc.), Travelodge, the Accor Group (Mercure, Novotel, Ibis etc.) and the Spirit Pub Company have all introduced mandatory training on child sexual exploitation.

The Federation of Small Businesses introduced child sexual exploitation awareness and an accompanying code of conduct in 2015, beginning in the four South Yorkshire districts.

There is also work continuing with the major fast food chains, national and local Tourism Boards, and one of the major national bus companies.

A seminar was organised in June 2015 by the College of Policing to describe the *Makesafe* initiative and to encourage other Police Forces to replicate it.

HMIC found that by the summer of 2015 the Operation had resulted in 40 calls from hotel staff to report concerns about possible sexual exploitation, which had led to safeguarding activity in respect of 5 children and 8 arrests.

Sergeant Katherine Wallis created *Operation Makesafe*; it has now been rolled out extensively in South Yorkshire; and it has been cited by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) as positive practice⁹⁹. I understand that at least ten Police Forces have in effect adopted it in their areas.

Each LSCB has a child sexual exploitation sub group and action plan. Apart from the 'Spot the signs' campaign and *Operation Makesafe*, the force leads sessions targeted on school children in Year six, (ten and eleven year olds), called '*Crucial*

⁹⁹ HMIC (2015) p. 10-11

Crew', provides input to secondary schools and works with specific groups like taxi drivers and local authority licensing officers.

The Communications Strategy has been adjusted as intelligence has dictated. For example, material has been translated into Romanian and other languages to improve engagement with Roma Slovak communities.

South Yorkshire is working with other forces to bring consistency across the Yorkshire and Humber region.

The force's work on awareness has to be considered in the wider context of the work undertaken by each district's LSCB.

Investigation

The Action Plan's main elements include working closely with the Crown Prosecution Service to maximise opportunities to prosecute and disrupt perpetrators of exploitation and to support victims throughout investigations. There has also been action to improve the supervision of cases.

Reflecting priority afforded to investigating child sexual exploitation, weekly meetings are held to review threat, harm and risk in each of the four districts at which child sexual exploitation victims, perpetrators and locations are discussed, and tasks set around safeguarding, disruption and prosecution.

During the time of this review investigations have included the prosecution and conviction of six individuals in Sheffield Crown Court on the 24th February 2016. There is a need to have more ways of measuring success in respect of combatting child sexual exploitation than just by counting successful prosecutions, but it remains the case that a valid criticism of SYP and others in the past had been the very low level of prosecutions brought and convictions secured. This picture here is clearly changing as the figures that I provide in Chapter 3 demonstrate.

I would like to acknowledge, finally, the resource intensity of prosecutions like the one mentioned above that relates to *Operation Clover*. The public sees only the tip of the iceberg of commitment when a trial is brought to court, and may have no sense of the scale of resources allocated to investigations and prosecutions. These are significant events, and the fact that SYP has a series of investigations and trials in train is to the force's credit. As one person supporting witnesses in the Clover trials put it to me, *'we have started trusting the police again and the Clover team have been fantastic.'*

Online child sexual exploitation

Reflecting the growth in the use of social media and other online forms of exploitation, a number of recommendations to SYP in the past have focused on improving this area of its response.

SYP has reviewed staffing within specialist units that deal with the examination of devices (principally phones, tablets and personal computers) and has

established a dedicated online exploitation team that focuses on online grooming and sharing of indecent images.

There has been, and continues to be, considerable pressure on staffing within the unit that examines devices. This is primarily due to the almost exponential growth of this area, the increased use of technology in other crime areas, and to the fact there is a high turnover of civilian staff, who have developed skills that are much sought after within the private sector.

Development

This part of the Action Plan refers to the need to keep abreast of best policing practice in this area. South Yorkshire officers attend national and regional bodies and act as a conduit, exporting as well as importing good practice and ideas back into the force.

SYP has approached several other police forces to seek new approaches to child sexual exploitation and offender management processes. Learning from the Sunrise Team in Rochdale¹⁰⁰ is one example of this.

Refining the action plan

Any organisation receiving in only six years at least 220¹⁰¹ recommendations about how to improve one part of its service must prioritise from these recommendations those that are most important. There is also a need to be clear about those recommendations that they reject.

The refreshed Action Plan is a significant improvement on the past but I am not convinced it is as coherent a document as it could be, and without this coherence it will be hard for the senior leadership group, Police and Crime Commissioner and others to chart progress in response to all of these recommendations.

There is a very particular skill-set needed to produce and maintain such an Action Plan, and I am not convinced that adding this as just one further job to that of an already very busy chief inspector gives this work the resources it needs.

I was also unconvinced by the comprehensiveness of the overarching strategy document. I was looking for a strategic assessment, leading to one year and five year priorities, as well as cross referencing to an Action Plan of the sort now in existence, together with a summary of recommendations already met and those set aside. To my mind this does not exist so I make **two recommendations** on this issue.

¹⁰⁰ The Rochdale Sunrise Team, or 'Sunrise', is a team responsible for tackling child sexual exploitation in Rochdale. The team fosters a collaborative approach in their work with children, helping victims to develop plans of support and pursue criminal investigations where appropriate.

¹⁰¹ See the list of the major reviews and investigations in Appendix 4.

I recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to undertake a comprehensive stock take, of all reports and investigations to date, using gap-analysis methodology to review the findings. This would then form the basis for a new, thematic Action Plan, clear milestones and measurable, timed objectives, linking to the wider force Child Sexual Exploitation plan, as well as the plans of each Local Safeguarding Children Board.

I would recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to reconsider the resource allocation for the task of compiling and reviewing the Action Plan, and associated work.

The force's Strategic Intelligence Assessment does in some sense cover this area as well, but the Chief Constable and his Deputy have acknowledged that there is a need to look again at the strategic assessment.

Conclusions

As I explained at the beginning of this chapter I am satisfied that SYP has understood and acted both on the general direction of previous criticism and also on most of the specific recommendations of previous scrutiny of their performance. This is reflected in the considerable progress that has been made. This is monitored by the force in an Action Plan, regularly updated, which sets out what needs to be done and charts progress. More needs to be done to refine this process and I have described the elements that I think are needed here.

More work needs to be done, also, to ensure the force priority to combat child sexual exploitation is demonstrated by all officers and staff (I describe this in the next Chapter), and to fine tune some of the processes used by the force to achieve this priority.

Chapter 7

Is the police response to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation adequate now?

Judgement and summary

I believe that the police response to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation is now adequate. Indeed, some recent work undertaken by SYP appears to me to be of high quality. There are still some areas that need further attention in order to improve the overall police response. I describe these in the body of this chapter and return to them when I make recommendations to you in Chapter 10. Generally I found a police force led by individuals who were determined to learn from the past; who had allocated significant additional resources to the tasks of catching up from a previous poor position; who were well thought of by their partners not only at strategic level, but also amongst the staff at the grass roots; and who were beginning to see some of this change of direction reflected in the successful prosecutions of offenders, the statistic that had so concerned the Home Affairs Select Committee two years ago¹⁰².

When Louise Casey inspected Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council in the autumn of 2014 she found a council in denial about its past failings.¹⁰³ This is emphatically **not** true of the SYP force that I reviewed in 2015 and 2016.

Current strengths and weaknesses

The easiest way to set out my views about the current performance of SYP is to identify areas in terms of strengths and weaknesses. I'll start by listing these in table form.

¹⁰² The Select Committee had been very concerned about the low level of prosecutions brought in South Yorkshire.

¹⁰³ *'I recognise that child sexual exploitation is hard to tackle. It is a complex, sometimes thankless and very hard to get right. But it is vital that public services face up to difficult tasks. However, Rotherham Council is a place where difficult problems are not always tackled as they should be. When faced with the solid findings contained in the report it itself has commissioned by Professor Jay, it did not accept them. And without accepting what happened and its role in it, it will be unable to move on and change.'* Casey, L. (2015) p.5

Strengths	Weaknesses
Commitment of Senior Leadership	Intelligence gathering
Scale of resources allocated to combatting child sexual exploitation	Management oversight of casework
Commitment to multi-agency working	Learning from Police Officers joining South Yorkshire from other forces
Positive policing initiatives	
Successful prosecutions and other interventions	

Area of both strength and weakness
Attitudes towards victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation
Disciplinary action and criminal proceedings against Police officers and staff
Engagement with victims, survivors and their families

Table 10. Strengths and weaknesses of South Yorkshire Police’s current response to safeguarding children from sexual exploitation.

Strength: Commitment of the Senior Leadership

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that Chief Constable David Crompton and his senior leadership team are sincere in their commitment to combatting child sexual exploitation. This has been obvious in all my meetings with them, and is communicated by the priority afforded to the issue of child sexual exploitation on their website, as well as by the quality of the staff intranet material.

Assistant Chief Constable Ingrid Lee has the lead on all child sexual exploitation at a senior level, and maintains a high profile both within the SYP and amongst the safeguarding partnerships in which the police operate. In this Superintendent Matt Fenwick and Chief Inspectors Mel Palin and Sarah Poolman were assisting her during the period of my Review. I have met each of these officers several times during the review and have been impressed by the depth of their understanding of child sexual exploitation and by their commitment to leading an effective policing response.

I was frequently told during the review that the current senior leadership team was seen as more approachable than their predecessors. Even those for whom the pace of change and recovery was not fast enough made this comment. A senior partner observed *‘there has been a seismic change in leadership on child sexual exploitation, although from a low base.’*

The only criticism that I would make in this area is that we found the current police governance arrangements unclear. I make **a recommendation** on this issue.

I recommend that you, the Police and Commissioner, ask the Chief Constable to produce a clearly documented command structure for you, supported by reference to the LSCBs and any other stakeholder arrangements (including those for victim, survivor and family engagement, see previous recommendation) focusing on the strategic rather than operational response to child sexual exploitation.

Strength: Scale of resources allocated to combatting child sexual exploitation

I highlighted the increase in resources allocated to combatting child sexual exploitation in the last chapter. This is a significant strength. It is not possible to make a direct comparison with the resource commitments now being made by other forces.

The location and roles of these officers is as important as their numbers. SYP appears completely wedded to the support of multi-agency child sexual exploitation teams in Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield. While they came into existence over a period of four years¹⁰⁴ and resourcing levels reflect local circumstances, 27 of the specialist police officers are now deployed in these teams, working alongside social and youth workers, voluntary sector workers and others. There appear to be sensible boundaries around the police role in these teams, but at the same time I was able to see a degree of flexibility around roles so that children who found particular workers easier to work with were able to do so.

I am only concerned about two issues in respect of this resource commitment. The first is that I understand many of the officers now deployed in specialist child sexual exploitation roles did not choose this deployment. A central specification was determined, based on the fact that these officers must be qualified detectives. Then SYP had twice advertised the roles and on each occasion there had been no applicants. It was this that led to the decision to deploy officers in this manner.

This leads me on to my second point. Working with victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation is not a particularly sought after role for a majority of officers. The high risks include the potential of making mistakes in a highly sensitive and closely monitored area of work, leaving them open to protracted misconduct investigations or being named. It is certainly the case that mistakes are much less tolerated in this area of police work than in others. Society as a whole must accept that for as long as this is the case, this will not be a popular deployment for many officers.

It is also the case that policing child abuse is not for every police officer, just as child abuse work is not for every social worker, nurse or teacher. Many police officers will choose, if choice is available, not to work in such a difficult and personally challenging area.

¹⁰⁴ Sheffield in 2010, Rotherham in 2011, and Barnsley and Doncaster in 2014

There is a widespread view that child sexual exploitation can involve a lot of difficult, and personally challenging work, for uncertain results, especially when a prosecution is not a realistic option. Furthermore disruption work¹⁰⁵, probably the mainstay where prosecutions cannot be mounted, by its very nature, does not produce immediately measurable results.

Strength: Commitment to multi-agency working

SYP has a strong commitment to working with other agencies in the area of child abuse, including child sexual exploitation. In November 2014 the Assistant Chief Constable established the countywide strategic group I have already described. This appears to be a dynamic group, which is attempting to shape a ‘South Yorkshire consistency of response’ approach. It was this group that commissioned the review of child sexual exploitation ‘*What does good look like?*’¹⁰⁶ to which I have already referred.

The force is also very engaged with each of the four LSCB in South Yorkshire. I spoke to each independent chair, and also to the chairs of each of the four Child Sexual Exploitation sub-committees, and all were very complimentary about the active engagement and approachability of senior police officers. Those with longer memories were able to compare this positively with the past. Importantly one independent chair told me of some concerns that had existed about the force’s commitment in their area, and described how this had been raised at a senior level, with the result that a fresh police lead was appointed who brought new momentum to the work.

The force’s statutory partners also hold this view. A senior local authority manager described ‘*a remarkable change in approachability*’ while adding that there was ‘*still some way to go for perfection*’. Several partners whom I met referred specifically to the fact that they were now specifically involved in ‘Gold’¹⁰⁷ meetings previously the exclusive province of the police, as evidence of a much greater level of trust and openness.

SYP does itself have some criticism of the apparent inefficiency of having four separate arrangements, one in each locality, and of the frustrations in securing

¹⁰⁵ ‘Disruption’ in this context refers to the range of approaches that the police and their partners can take that generally discourage perpetrators of child sexual exploitation or make it more difficult to engage in exploitation, but yet fall short of actual prosecution for the main criminal offences in this area of work (see Table 3 for a breakdown of the principal child sexual exploitation related offences)

¹⁰⁶ ‘*What does good look like?*’ was produced for the South Yorkshire Countywide Strategic Group in March 2015 following the publication of the Casey Report and the report from the Office of the Children’s Commissioner ‘*If it’s not the end, it’s not better*’. It provides the SYP senior leadership team and its partners with a summary of what good looks like and where South Yorkshire stands in relation to this.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Gold’ levels of command signifying the most senior, strategic rather than all levels of command in investigations and operations.

the implementation of best practice. In my experience this is a common concern shared with many forces whose area encompasses more than one LSCB.

A case in point has been the development of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASHs)¹⁰⁸ in South Yorkshire. I am told that that each MASH is different. This puzzles the police. I return to the challenge of working across more than one local authority area, with very different social and other characteristics, in Chapter 8.

Strength: Positive policing initiatives

Three current police operations demonstrate innovative approaches that are to the credit of SYP.

Operation Clover has already been identified as the Police operation that culminated in the convictions in Sheffield Crown Court on the 24th February 2016. The feature of this operation that I was particularly impressed by was the level of engagement with, and support offered to, witnesses.

Operation Clover had its origins in events some time ago but *Operation 'A'*, also based in Rotherham, is one of a number of much more contemporary investigations, and I believe demonstrates a much more determined and focused approach being adopted by the police than had been the case in the past. Since *Operation 'A'* is an on-going operation I am restricted in the description I can provide in this report although I have been able to visit the investigative team and discuss the operation with them.

¹⁰⁸ Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs are single points of contact for all professionals to report child safeguarding concerns. Typically each Hub will contain, as a minimum, staff from local authority children's services and the local Police. They will have secure access to their agency's records so as to be able to share confidential information safely, building up a comprehensive picture to facilitate safeguarding plans. Devon and Cornwall Police and Devon County Council first introduced the approach in the late 2000s. The MASH model received the powerful endorsement of the Home Affairs Committee in its 2013 report already cited.

Operation 'A'

Operation 'A' is one of a number of current multi-agency child sexual exploitation investigations going on in Rotherham. From the outset jointly agreed objectives have focused on safeguarding children, reducing risk, securing convictions and/or disrupting perpetrators. Extensive work is taking place with victims and schools to prevent offences. Dedicated victim engagement staff are in place to support the children and build trust and rapport with them. Processes to manage children who are suspected of offences have also been developed and, I am told, are now being used by other police forces.

One man has already received a 10-year prison sentence for offences against 3 children.

Ofsted have commented positively on this Operation and are due to visit it in March 2016.

Operation 'B' is a more recent operation, which has learnt from the experiences, particularly around victim engagement, from *Operation 'A'* and earlier operations.

Operation 'B'

Operation 'B' is another new multi-agency operation, launched in January 2016.

This focuses on tackling the underlying factors that increase vulnerability as well as protecting children and disrupting perpetrators through the '4P' areas – 'Prepare', 'Prevent', 'Protect', and 'Pursue'. The multi-agency team includes council officers, schools and voluntary sector organisations. SYP lead in relation to the 'Pursue' strand, seeking to prosecute and/or disrupt wherever possible.

Strength: Successful prosecutions and other interventions

In Chapter 3 I provide details of the levels of referral, recorded offences, and offence outcomes across a three-year period. One hundred and seventy seven people were charged with child sexual exploitation offences across this period, and a further 22 were summonsed to court.

SYP believe that this level of prosecution to offence, which they calculate as one person prosecuted to every 3.4 offences recorded represents a performance well in advance of the national average.

I am cautious about comparative crime data of this sort, not least because of the potential variations that can exist around what is recorded from one place to another. I have been unable to find any statistics from other forces that I felt

could reliably be compared with those produced by SYP. I do understand, however, why under the intense public scrutiny that the force receives, SYP should seek to make such a comparison.

If other people feel they can make firm comparisons between areas so be it. I am content to record my view that this 2013-2016 picture is a dramatically improved position from earlier periods.

Although there are a very wide range of measures available to a police force and its partners, short of actual prosecution, to disrupt perpetrators the easiest to measure is the use of Child Abduction Notices. In 2015 SYP served 161 such notices.

Strength and weakness¹⁰⁹: Attitudes towards victims of child sexual exploitation

SYP, like other forces, has gone a long way on the journey from the old, nationally imposed, policing priorities of acquisitive crime, most notably burglary and car crime, towards a victim orientation from which child sexual exploitation can assume a high priority.

I experienced this very clearly in the language used by all the serving officers and staff who I met in focus groups. While I do not doubt that, under review, most people (whatever their profession) will carefully prepare key messages that they wish to provide to the reviewer, this was backed up in some very frank individual interviews with officers and staff who I was confident would tell me exactly how they saw things under the cloak of confidentiality I was able to provide to most. Their commitment to change, and the new focus on victims, was both impressive and heartening.

However, I also know that only ten and more years ago a dominant culture, certainly in Rotherham, but probably also throughout South Yorkshire and nationwide, was in denial about the scale of child sexual exploitation and thought of the children concerned more in terms of being nuisances than in any other terms. Combined with the apparent lack of interest from others, notably many of those tasked specifically with responsibility for their care, it is well documented that this led to a wholesale downgrading of concern for the victims of child sexual exploitation.

So how far is SYP on its journey from that low point to one where the victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation are seen as being at the centre of concerns of the force?

There is no easy way of measuring this. A chief constable from another force whose views I sought said, candidly, *“When I took on the job I didn’t doubt that we had a very long way to go in changing mind sets. We are somewhere on that journey and I would like to think that in about four years time we may have got*

¹⁰⁹ I explain at the foot of this sub-section why this is both a strength and a weakness, and where I believe the balance lies between these.

there." The same is probably true for South Yorkshire ... on the journey, not 'there' yet.

During my review I did find evidence of insensitive and at times apparently dismissive responses to victims and survivors still persisting in SYP. Some of these episodes are in the past, but live on powerfully in people's memories, but some occurred during the period of my review. When added together there are frankly too many for this to be dismissed as simply one mistake.

Sarah Champion MP¹¹⁰ told me that it was still necessary for her to contact the Rotherham Chief Superintendent on average once a month about cases that caused her concern. For my part I drew SYP's attention to four cases during my Review. I provide one such example, which has been anonymised to protect the individual concerned.

¹¹⁰ Sarah Champion is Member of Parliament for Rotherham. She was first elected at a by-election in 2012. She is the Shadow Minister for Preventing Abuse.

Maggie¹¹¹

Maggie told me that she made her complaints to the local police where she now lives, far from South Yorkshire, in December 2015, and was assured that it had been passed on to SYP. I have seen documents that support this.

In the 1990s Maggie had been raped, beaten, tortured, and an attempt was made to kill her in a so-called honour-based attack, resulting in life-threatening injuries. In December 2015 she provided the police with the names of witnesses and accomplices. For several weeks in December 2015 and January 2016 Maggie regularly telephoned SYP, only eventually to be told, as she understood it, that no further action was going to be taken over her allegations. SYP disputes this last point but does not deny the delay.

In desperation Maggie visited South Yorkshire, where she made contact with a group that supports victims and survivors. Only after a direct intervention on her behalf made to the district chief superintendent does she believe that her case was taken seriously. I met her during her time in South Yorkshire. I was impressed with her presentation of these facts and my subsequent attempts to verify them have supported her account.

A sergeant and another officer have now visited Maggie in her home area so that they could carry out a formal interview and take a statement. Maggie found this a very positive experience, and feels that things are moving forward well. She hopes that her story is now being taken seriously.

Maggie wrote to me: *“As victims, we are taught, ‘you don’t matter. You’re worth as much as a piece of trash’. When the police don’t ACT ON our cries for help, they are effectively saying EXACTLY the same, ‘you don’t matter. You’re worth as much as a piece of trash.’*

“Of course these girls/women are worth as much as any human being, and we deserve protection, deserve respect, and we don’t deserve what happened to us.”

I have also been provided with several examples of officers revealing old prejudices about girls and boys who are being abused through sexual exploitation. But often the same sources have told me of outstanding sensitivity displayed by particular officers. So there is progress.

Another illustration of this mixed picture of poor and good is provided by a complaint made about remarks made by a stand-in trainer that were clearly out of order. So far so bad, but the fact that the sergeant who heard these remarks

¹¹¹ Maggie was over 18 at the time that she was abused, but I believe her experience, both negative and positive, is relevant to the issue of response to victims.

felt able to make a formal complaint (which I have seen) is clearly a balancing sign. The sergeant felt it would not have been easy to make such a complaint ten years previously.

One final example was provided to me by a chief inspector. He reflected that he would probably have secured greater commitment to one particular investigation, tracking down a highly vulnerable child missing from her children's home if he had described the problem as principally a kidnapping, which it was, rather than as an incident of child sexual exploitation. But, balancing this, I received repeated testimony from concerned and entirely convincing officers whose thinking had moved on. One inspector, a firm believer in the importance of this work, summed up the new focus thus *"there is none of the adrenalin rush that goes with locking up an armed robber, but in terms of the long-term benefits this is where real benefits are gained."*

I will give the last word to Assistant Chief Constable Ingrid Lee on this subject. *"Our aim is in line with the FIRST principles (Fair, Integrity, Respect, Standards, Trust) which are embedded in the organisation. We are creating an environment where staff feel able to challenge and tackle behaviour and be supported by their colleagues and supervisors in doing so. We are also creating an environment where victims are believed. The Code of Ethics underpins our FIRST principles."*

When I went on to ask the Assistant Chief Constable how she would know how near SYP are getting to establishing this culture, she replied, *"It's got to be comments from the public, from victims, through complaints, inspections either internally or by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary etc.."*

This is, in my view, an entirely reasonable answer, and it points to the real difficulty of knowing how much progress is being made in changing culture. In the course of this review I have observed clear evidence of change and this is a strength. I have equally observed clear evidence that there remains some way to go with this. This is a weakness. I do not believe this comment will surprise the senior leadership team, and that is undoubtedly a good thing. I have no new recommendation to make on this; the senior leadership team simply needs to maintain its current momentum for change.

Strength and weakness¹¹²: Disciplinary action and criminal proceedings against Police officers and staff

One way in which SYP can be evaluated is in the robustness of its response to staff whose conduct may have been inadequate. There is a fairly widespread view in South Yorkshire and elsewhere that staff failings in other agencies have led to resignations and dismissals whereas the police have carried on as though there were no such issues.

¹¹² I explain at the foot of this sub-section why this is both a strength and a weakness, and where I believe the balance lies between these.

This is misleading. It is for others to judge whether the response of other agencies to disciplining staff has been adequate, and to comment on the question of scale, but I believe the force has responded robustly.

The Chief Constable took a decision in 2014 that the IPCC should handle all complaints about misconduct that relate to child sexual exploitation. This has meant that, to date, 194 allegations have been considered by the IPCC. In the aftermath of the recent successful prosecution in Sheffield Crown Court, the IPCC expect this number to rise.

The investigation of these complaints has been slow, partially a reflection of the thoroughness required for this type of investigation but also of the fact that competing priorities and limited resources mean that, even following additional resources being available at the close of 2015, the IPCC have only been able to appoint nine¹¹³ lead investigators to this work. My understanding is that the initial bid for resources for this work within the IPCC was significantly higher than this. A further two, and possibly three, Lead Investigators will be appointed in April.

There are many consequences of this slow pace. First, complainants have expressed frustration with, and a certain scepticism about, the process. I know of at least one case where a complaint on a significant matter was withdrawn out of this frustration. This cannot be a good thing.

Secondly, it means that officers who are subject to a complaint are placed under considerable pressure for prolonged periods of time. Some of the complaints are about very significant matters and there is perhaps little that can be done about this. But I am told that this is far from being a full picture; some complaints are about relatively minor matters, for example the location of paperwork. Long delays here are not good for morale in any part of the force.

Lastly, more generally it conveys the impression that SYP is continuing as though nothing had gone wrong in the past. This is, in my experience, most certainly not the case, but until there is greater progress with the IPCC investigations this impression will continue to exist.

In Chapter 9 I have provide a brief summary of the investigations of the IPCC to date.

Although not specifically linked to child sexual exploitation two officers have been convicted of criminal offences involving sexual or other abuse of children since January 2014, and a further two are currently suspended.

¹¹³ Post publication correction – Please note that the IPCC asked me to correct the figure of six that I originally cited here. By December 2015 the IPCC state that there were eight lead investigators appointed, and this has later risen to nine. JD 24.3.16

The strength in this area is because the Chief Constable has taken such a bold and open decision to refer so many investigations to the IPCC. The weakness is that it is taking so long to deal with these. On balance I am in no doubt that the strength outweighs the weakness.

Strength and weakness: Engagement with victims and survivors and their families

There is a mixed picture here. On the one hand recent police operations have clearly attached considerable priority to securing proper engagement with victims, survivors and their families. This appears to have worked well and one experienced person, working with one of the witnesses, contrasted very favourably this work with her past interactions with SYP. A survivor told me that her assigned officers were the two people she trusted most.

However, others had other stories to tell. One survivor said to me, *"I haven't yet met a victim or survivor who has had an entirely positive experience with South Yorkshire Police"*. This difference of account may simply reflect changing and improving practice. A time lag in perception is to be expected. But I think it is more than that. The whole criminal justice system has a tendency, regularly observed by outsiders, to come in and take over, allocating to victims and survivors an entirely passive role. Another survivor described the affect on her of this graphically, *"investigations and all of that leaves us feeling out of control, and we react emotionally to that by walking away as we've been out of control in the past and we don't like it"*.

The best way to continue to counteract any weaknesses in communication with victims, survivors and their families is to remain in regular discussion with voices of experience. In February 2015 Dr. Billings started a series of regular meetings with victims and survivors, and their families, of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham. This meeting has continued to be held at regular intervals and I attended two of their meetings. This is a positive initiative but its membership appears largely limited to Rotherham.

There are also a range of other meetings with victims, for example of sexual violence, but specific links to victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation seem mainly limited to the increasingly very strong links around specific investigations and individual personal contact. Although not easy to do this could be improved upon. There is a strong case for establishing a standing group, chaired by a person of standing in the community, and extending across the whole of South Yorkshire. Such a group might begin its work by considering how to define an excellent police response to victims and survivors.

I make 2 **recommendations** about this weakness.

I recommend that you, the Police and Crime Commissioner, review the existing arrangements for formal meetings between SYP and representatives of victims and survivors, including their families.

I also recommend that you research the operation of this scheme in Greater Manchester and consider, with the four LSCBs, whether this would also improve engagement with victims, survivors and their families.

Weakness: Intelligence gathering

I encountered what appeared to be valid and documented criticisms of how SYP handle potential ‘community intelligence’ about child sexual exploitation, that is, specific intelligence reports, often from members of the community, certainly from outside of the police force, which, when added together, could paint a much bigger picture of risk and abuse.

It is obvious to a layman that the patient task of linking together strands of collaborative evidence is at the heart of good police work in this area, especially for English police forces who are trying to develop alternative investigatory methods to address the fact that some victims and survivors will be reluctant to give evidence in courts both because of their fear of the perpetrators and also as continuing evidence of some of the ambiguities in relationship between perpetrators and their victims and survivors.

The main way in which community intelligence is supposed to be processed in South Yorkshire is via non-emergency calls to the ‘101’ number. This ‘call centre’ approach offers police forces considerable savings but is reliant on a ‘check list’ type of approach from call handlers who are not trained in the handling and evaluation of intelligence. I encountered regularly front line workers from outside the police who were able to describe recent frustrating experiences that they had had in trying to phone in their intelligence. Recent examples included difficulty in reporting someone hanging around near a school with no apparent purpose, and, in another instance, in reporting a takeaway shop where a girl, using Facebook, was telling her friends that she was offered free food in exchange for sex. I am told it took four telephone calls to the ‘101’ number to achieve a satisfactory level of response to this information. I was left in no doubt that I could uncover further accounts of instances where a ‘check list’ response left the informant unable to pass on what they considered to be potentially useful intelligence.

We visited the call handlers and discussed their experiences. Their main interaction with child sexual exploitation was through handling reports about missing children. Most were confident that the sort of setback described above would be the absolute exception rather than the rule. They record information provided on the Pro-Cad¹¹⁴ system and then pass it to the relevant department for action. SYP have no way of putting a figure on the number of mishandlings of calls but stories of an individual failure will gain more momentum than satisfactory experiences.

During focus groups and in one-to-one meetings with intelligence professionals concerns were also raised as to how the force manages intelligence relating to

¹¹⁴ ‘Pro-CAD is the system used in the command and control centre to record details of calls from the public and dispatch officers to incidents.

child sexual exploitation. Officers we spoke to felt the force had a very strong victim focus but that this needed to be complemented by an equal focus on the perpetrators of exploitation. The current Information Communication Technology (ICT) structure within SYP does not enable an integrated process for data access and management (see also our answer to a specific question on this issue in Chapter 9).

The force is already developing a new ICT infrastructure. However, we believe it would benefit now from a review of intelligence processes currently being used. Intelligence Unit staff did not feel sufficiently resourced to manage the volume of information on both victims and suspects that partner agencies could provide and only have limited capacity to nurture the relationships that are required to ensure that SYP elicits and manages effectively the valuable intelligence held elsewhere.

In fairness I should add that one of my sources for criticism of the '101' system did also tell me of another occasion where she phoned in concerns about a man whom she observed with two children in the car park of the Meadowhall Centre. On this occasion her account was treated with appropriate seriousness and within 24 hours she was contacted by an investigative officer who satisfied her that the matter was being followed with appropriate urgency.

Nevertheless I make a **recommendation** on this point.

I recommend that you, the Police and Crime Commissioner, ask the Chief Constable to review these arrangements as a priority so that he can assure you that intelligence is handled promptly and appropriately. Such a review would seem to lend itself to being conducted by a neighbouring force or by the College of Policing

Weakness: Management oversight of casework

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary has now twice identified weaknesses in the handling of cases they have examined during inspections and re-inspections. I understand that their last review only looked at six cases and so did my teams, so I would advise considerable caution about drawing too many conclusions.

Furthermore I did not seek to replicate their methodology as my team members were not inspectors and I did not wish us to appear to be so. Nevertheless we did examine six case records in one of the local child sexual exploitation teams.

The files examined all revealed evidence of good quality victim-focused, multi-agency working by the team. We did, however, judge them to be of varying quality. It was clear that some investigators were more thorough in their recording than others. This points to a weakness of supervision. We were in no doubt that supervision took place, for example in team, triage meetings and one-to-one discussions as the team leader demonstrated detailed knowledge about each of the cases presented. There was, however, minimal record of active supervision taking place. Overall there did not appear to be a consistent or

systematic approach to managing these investigations even though some of the cases reviewed were of high quality and one was a major pro-active operation.

Child sexual exploitation team leaders and investigators would benefit from a more structured approach. One example of where such an approach would have provided a significant benefit was that only one of the cases had a Police National Computer warning in place relating to the formal child abduction notice of which the child was the subject.

I make a **recommendation** about this weakness.

I recommend that you, the Police and Crime Commissioner, ask the Chief Constable to consider implementing a standard operating procedure for the investigation of child sexual exploitation and the management of intelligence related to it. A checklist for investigators and their supervisors could be developed to ensure a consistent approach is maintained across South Yorkshire.

Weakness: Learning from Police Officers joining South Yorkshire from other forces

The great majority of police officers whom I met have served all their time in SYP. This is an obvious strength, but so too is the ability to recruit a proportion of officers from outside with the collective wisdom that they have learnt in their past forces. Some officers and others working for partner organisations believe that SYP might have responded earlier to the challenge of child sexual exploitation if it had learnt more from its neighbours. Using new recruits to help with this speeds up learning and counteracts a natural institutional tendency towards insularity. Some officers have told me that it has been hard to be heard when joining SYP, regardless of their rank.

As I have already explained I make a **recommendation** about this weakness.

I recommend that you, the Police and Crime Commissioner, ask the Chief Constable to convene a standing 'New Voices' group, with revolving membership, both to capture first impressions and also work as directed on specific short term projects. The Chief Constable should be asked to consider allocating the responsibility of meeting with this group to a member of the senior leadership team, thereby signifying the importance of such a group.

Chapter 8

Specific themed questions for the Review

Culture:

Is South Yorkshire Police's current organisational culture across the three boroughs and city a help or hindrance to future openness and transparency?

I have been very impressed by the way in which Assistant Chief Constable Lee works to bring coherence across the whole of South Yorkshire in the way in which not only the police, but also local partners respond to child sexual exploitation, through the Countywide Forum that she established as well as through the active involvement of other officers in the work of each LSCB and sub-group.

The police's organisational culture is very much a consequence of the fact that South Yorkshire is divided into four separate local government areas. This in turn is at least partially a reflection of the very real differences between the communities of Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield.

Child sexual exploitation can only be tackled effectively through the joint endeavours of a wide range of agencies, professions and individuals, and I do not believe that the police would be able to work effectively within such an alliance if they did not have a strongly decentralised organisational format.

This will give rise to frustrations. Senior police officers recount their frustrations with reaching agreement four times over about the creation and form of MASHs in each district, as I described in Chapter 7. At the same time it is inevitable that some local responses, including policing, will be seen as stronger in one part of South Yorkshire than another, giving rise to the comment 'Why can't they all do this like our area does?'

These are understandable frustrations but unless and until local government is reorganised on a countywide basis, or policing returned to 'County Boroughs' it will be necessary for SYP to operate in the way that it does.

Having said this, I would also like to record my view that SYP took a sensible decision in 2013 to bring all the resources for public protection together under one command. This created the organisational framework to ensure a much greater consistency of police approach to child sexual exploitation across South Yorkshire, something that I hope my earlier narrative in Chapter 4 has shown was lacking. It probably did more than this, because it demonstrated very clearly the new priority that SYP was giving to crimes against the person.

Effective, appropriate leadership:

Are SYP leaders effectively driving the fight against child sexual exploitation?

Yes.

See Chapters 6 and 7 for my full answer.

Performance:

Has a target-focused recording of crime mentality prevented SYP from effectively tackling child sexual exploitation sooner?

It is clear that SYP should have priorities. The current priority given to tackling child sexual exploitation means that the force has been able to improve its performance dramatically over the past five years, not least by allocating significantly greater levels of resources to this issue.

By the same token the lack of priority given to child sexual exploitation in the past, particularly in the periods of the strongest central direction on national priorities, did contribute, in my view, to the difficulty that individuals faced in raising concerns about the issue.

There is another issue that I would like to comment on here. The familiar adage that *'what gets measured gets done'* is as true in this field as it is in others. The problem that this presents now for SYP is that some of the work needed in this area may be seen as of low importance precisely because it is hard to link to any particular numerical measure. For example the Home Affairs Select Committee made much of the lack of successful prosecutions of perpetrators. They were right to do this, but too slavish an adoption of this as THE measurement of effectiveness in this area could lead to ruling out the painstaking work needed to gain the confidence of a victim before there was any chance of a successful prosecution. I am strongly of the impression that the apparent difficulty of gaining quick testimony for children played some part in the low priority attached to child sexual exploitation in the past.

It is difficult to quantify disruption, and positive outcomes for victims, survivors and their families do not lend themselves to simple statistical returns.

But the police and their partners do need to develop more sophisticated ways of describing and measuring the work of a specialist investigator, alongside the other people working in a multi-agency setting, so that the input of the police can be valued and retained. This is a national issue and I make no recommendation for South Yorkshire alone on it.

Victim focus:

Is the victim at the forefront of all policing decisions within SYP?

I find this an impossibly binary question¹¹⁵ to answer, but I conclude that the simple answer is that the victim is not as far forward as she or he should be.

¹¹⁵ A binary question is one that can only be answered in one of two ways, in this instance 'Yes' or 'No'.

It is reported widely by partners that concern for, and attempts to adapt standard policing practices to respond to, the needs of victims and survivors is noticeably more the case than it has been in the past. A very high level of victim focus was applied during the most recent trial in Sheffield. One person who was assigned to support one of the witnesses through the trial, and who had first-hand experience of SYP over the previous seven years described much better support than she had seen previously.

However, victims and survivors (and those acting as their representatives) that I met could all describe examples of insensitive or inappropriate responses, and I have described this elsewhere in the report.

I have spoken to a number of women who have been witnesses in trials and they all describe how the whole Criminal Justice process, i.e. not just SYP, can take over and leave them feeling powerless. This evidence is not new, but I am shamed to admit that it has struck me with much greater force during this review, despite more than four years working in criminal justice with children who offend.

The solution to this lies far outside of the remit of SYP but the force needs to be regularly reminded of it. I believe there is evidence in the way in which witnesses in the recently completed case in Sheffield Crown Court were supported that there is a growing realisation of the need to become more victim-focused. But even here I have also heard from one witness of quite unforgiveable mistakes made by police officers and others in relation to her during the trial. So there is obviously some way to go.

One positive trend has been the approach to victim engagement manifested in recent operations that I describe in Chapter 7. A further positive example has been the partnership decision, first made in Sheffield but shortly also to be implemented in Rotherham, to locate the multi-agency child sexual exploitation team in child and young people friendly buildings where victims are more likely to feel at ease and less subject to stigma or scrutiny.

Scale:

Is the scale of the problem confined to Rotherham or countywide?

Taking the SYP's current information as set out and analysed in Chapter 3 it is clear that child sexual exploitation is a countywide problem, and indeed all authoritative sources confirm that it is a nationwide problem.

One part of these statistics casts particular light on the issue of the prevalence of child sexual exploitation. The figure for new cases arising in Rotherham is still considerably greater than elsewhere in South Yorkshire, which given the size of the child population in Rotherham when compared with Sheffield in particular, stands out.

The explanation for this, which makes sense to me, is that this is a consequence of *Operation 'A'* to which I have already referred. This shows how what started as

the circumstances of one child, can 'snowball' and generate a great many more concerns and enquiries.

Partnership working:

Do current partnership relationships allow for open and honest discussions to take place, with free exchange of information?

I asked this question of the Independent Chair of each LSCB and also of the Child Sexual Exploitation Sub-Groups chair and they were all satisfied about the openness and honesty of such discussions. Two of the chairs are very experienced people, with first hand experience of chairing boards in other parts of the country, so their views are particularly reassuring.

Having said that, one alarming feature of the past history is how little challenge to the police or the local authorities appears to have taken place on LSCBs. The Government has commissioned Alan Wood, a former Director of Children's Services, to review the system LSCBs and this lack of challenge should be central to his concerns. He is due to report by the end of March 2016.

Prosecutions and case building:

Has SYP encouraged case building against perpetrators of child sexual exploitation, acknowledging the intricacies of information gathering?

Yes.

I am satisfied by the work I have been able to observe that a sophisticated level of case building is now present throughout South Yorkshire, and that cases are not typically turned away because of the obvious intricacies that will have to be explored.

At the same time SYP does acknowledge that there are victims and survivors whose experience has been very different, even in the recent past.

It is also worth recording that the most positive outcome for a victim or survivor is not always a prosecution but other ways of ensuring that the exploitation ceases.

Resource management:

Does the current SYP technology allow for the effective recording and sharing of information and data regarding child sexual exploitation?

SYP does not, as yet, have an integrated ICT system although I understand that there are plans that this will have been rectified by the end of 2016.

Currently the force uses 28 separate, 'legacy', systems that either do not link to each other or require staff to double key and check across multiple systems. This builds inefficiency and risk into the system and is currently managed by a number of technical or personal fixes. This has previously been identified as a key issue during a number of inspections as it increases the risk of information not being linked and shared where necessary.

This is undoubtedly an inhibitor to the effective management of information about child sexual exploitation. The CATS¹¹⁶ software used by the specialist child sexual exploitation investigation teams contains a great deal of valuable data about victims and perpetrators but until recently only specialists have had access to its data. Furthermore this data is not automatically shared with the LYNX¹¹⁷ intelligence system, which is more readily available to operational officers and staff.

At our focus group with police inspectors, many commented on how important access to the CATS information is when managing fast track enquiries into high risk missing children or risk assessing vulnerable children coming into contact with police. Increasingly they are being given 'read only' access to overcome this problem but a fully integrated ICT system is required to ensure all known information is available to those likely to come into contact with potential victims of sexual exploitation.

The force has now procured a new IT system, 'Connect', which will in effect reduce the modules in operation to six, all connected using a single gazetteer¹¹⁸, enabling information sharing with partners and other forces. Initially this will include 'Case and Custody', Crime, Intelligence and Public Protection. Training will commence in August 2016, and partial implementation in December 2016, with two further modules for Missing Persons and Property becoming available in July 2017.

We consider this a satisfactory response to an unsatisfactory situation.

I make a **recommendation** on this issue.

I recommend that you, the Police and Crime Commissioner, monitor progress with this as a standing item on your Governance and Assurance Board.

¹¹⁶ CATS is an acronym for 'Case Administration and Tracking System', a system that contains confidential information about children and vulnerable adults.

¹¹⁷ The LYNX intelligence system is the force's intelligence system, containing information for a range of systems about criminal activity in South Yorkshire. It complies with the National Intelligence Model on the handling and sharing of sensitive information.

¹¹⁸ 'Gazeteer' in this context means a central hub that allows information to be linked together.

Chapter 9

Additional themes that arose during the Review

The unsatisfactory treatment of victims, survivors and their families by the whole Criminal Justice System

I did not have a remit to look at the wider experience of victims and survivors of the whole criminal justice system but their testimonies to me served as a powerful reminder of how alienating an experience this can be, especially once a survivor nears court. This is not a new observation but one survivor put it especially clearly to me when she said, *'the whole system makes us feel out of control, and we react to this emotionally by walking away as we've been out of control in the past and we don't like it.'*

The current tactic of very active engagement with witnesses in the build up to trial seems to have worked very well in the first *Operation Central* trial. But it is also high time that a further examination of court and trial processes took place so that these were less hostile environments for witnesses. It simply cannot be right that immense bravery should be one of the essential attributes a survivor must have in order to gain justice.

Difficulties with measuring success in combatting child sexual exploitation

A review such as this obviously sets out to measure success, and then compare such measurements with those from other police forces. I have been struck during this review by the absence of a satisfactory set of ways for measuring success. Volume indicators of referral will tell the observer something about the ease and receptiveness of a force to allegations of exploitation. The identification of an actual offence, alongside numbers of prosecutions and success in these, will show the case-building qualities of a force. The number of Child Abduction Notices served, when compared with these other indicators, gives a decent impression of the commitment of a force to adopt disruptive measures to head off perpetrators.

SYP now appears to be doing well in these areas. But after this list others means of measuring success are few and far between, in South Yorkshire and elsewhere.

Other disruptive measures taken by the police are a minefield of definition and therefore proof. The rest of the possible measures fall into the partnership field although the police can and should play an active part in trying to develop these. I understand that the Home Office is putting its mind to how better measures might be developed. This is very important if the priority attached to combatting child sexual exploitation is to continue. Police forces are very task driven organisations. Unless there is a way of measuring the long term work needed to build cases there will come a time again when, as with *Operation K-Safe*, a view could be taken that 'nothing is happening'.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)'s investigations

In total 55 separate investigations have commenced, drawing on the complaints of 45 people. Originally 54 officers were identified in complaints, and of these 26 serving and retired officers have been served notices that they are under investigation. Three criminal investigations are under way, two sufficiently serious to involve the suspension of the officer concerned, while in two other cases the officers have been placed on restricted duties, reflecting potentially less serious issues raised against them.

A small number of cases have already been concluded, either because no misconduct has been found or due to lack of engagement from the complainant.

In April 2016 the IPCC intends to develop a new element to their investigations when they will look at the opportunities that may have been missed to afford child sexual exploitation a higher priority. It seems likely that this will involve a more thorough examination of the issues that I have described in Chapter 5. The IPCC are not expecting to be able to complete this investigation in 2016.

The IPCC hopes to have concluded investigating all the original complaints in 2016, although this is not certain.

At the conclusion of its work the IPCC will produce a concluding summary report.

Chapter 10

Recommendations

Summary

SYP has made determined progress since 2013 to improve its response to child sexual exploitation, and should, I believe, receive considerable credit for this.

In the main, the task for the police now is to maintain that trajectory of advance, particularly in its attempts to get contact with victims and survivors right first time.

However, I believe there are some refinements that could be made that would enable the force to build on this improvement.

Action Plan

I believe that the current Action Plan for improving police performance in respect of child sexual exploitation is essentially a sound document. However, I think that it could be improved.

[1] I recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to undertake a comprehensive stock take, of all reports and investigations to date, using gap-analysis methodology to review the findings. This would then form the basis for a new, thematic Action Plan, clear milestones and measurable, timed objectives, linking to the wider force Child Sexual Exploitation plan, as well as the plans of each Local Safeguarding Children Board.

I do wonder whether the existing resources allocated for this work are over-stretched due to other responsibilities. Programme planning of this sort is a specialised function, often carried out by a dedicated planner or unit.

[2] I therefore recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to reconsider the resource allocation for the task of compiling and reviewing the Action Plan, and associated work.

Engagement with victims, survivors and their families

Formal engagement with victims, survivors and their families seems mainly limited to the increasingly very strong links around specific investigations and individual personal contact. Although not easy to do this could be improved upon. There is a strong case for establishing a standing group, chaired by a person of credibility in the community, and extending across the whole of South Yorkshire. Such a group might begin its work by considering how to define an excellent police response to victims and survivors.

[3] I recommend that you review the existing arrangements for formal meetings between SYP and representatives of victims and survivors, including their families.

I am aware that any such initiative ought to be planned in conjunction with the four LSCBs, and you might wish to consider asking one of the existing Independent Chairs to take initial responsibility for this standing group.

When Ann Coffey MP completed her independent report into child sexual exploitation in Greater Manchester¹¹⁹ she recommended the appointment of a 'child sexual exploitation champion' for that area, and I am told this has worked well.

[4] I recommend that you research the operation of this scheme in Greater Manchester and consider, with the four LSCBs, whether this would also improve engagement with victims, survivors and their families.

Learning Lessons Review

Rotherham LSCB commissioned a 'Learning Lessons Review' towards the close of Operation *Central*, see Chapter 4.¹²⁰ This seems to me to have been a good idea, the aim being to ensure that there is discussion of the successes and failings of such operations, before the respective authorities simply move on to the next operation. It ought to follow more of the large-scale operations on which SYP are currently involved.

[5] I therefore recommend that you request the relevant LSCBs to commission 'Learning Lessons Reviews' after the conclusion of each major investigation, starting by making such a request to Rotherham LSCB now even though the conclusion of the recent trial in Sheffield Crown Court does not conclude Operation *Clover*. I also recommend that you press each LSCB to ensure that the views of victims, survivors and their families are central to each such review.

Intelligence gathering

I found evidence from the public, police officers and staffs that the intelligence gathering arrangements do not always work as SYP imagines that they do.

¹¹⁹ Coffey, A. (2014) *Real voices* Manchester, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Greater Manchester

¹²⁰ I also understand Sheffield Area Child Protection Committee, the forerunner to the LSCB, conducted a similar review at the close of Operation *Alphabet* although I have not been able to find a copy of this.

[6] I recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to review these arrangements as a priority so that he can assure you that intelligence is handled promptly and appropriately. Such a review would seem to lend itself to being conducted by a neighbouring force or by the College of Policing.

Making full use of the knowledge and experience of recruits from other forces

The great majority of police officers whom I met have served all their time in the SYP. This is an obvious strength, but so too is the ability to recruit a proportion of officers from outside with the collective wisdom that they have learnt in their past forces. This speeds up learning and counteracts a natural institutional tendency towards insularity. Some officers have told me that it has been hard to be heard when joining SYP, regardless of their rank.

[7] I recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to convene a standing 'New Voices' group, with revolving membership, both to capture first impressions and also work as directed on specific short term projects. The Chief Constable should be asked to consider allocating the responsibility of meeting with this group to a member of the senior leadership team, thereby signifying the importance of such a group.

There is obvious potential to expand this further and set up a process to learn from experienced members of other agencies who come to work in South Yorkshire and have experience of other forces' approach to child sexual exploitation. I make no recommendation here, not least because it extends beyond my brief, but it was obvious to me when interviewing people from outside SYP that many had very useful learning to provide about the work of other forces in this area of work.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

A lot of hope for streamlining and improving police performance is resting on the implementation of the new ICT system, starting this autumn.

[8] I recommend that you monitor progress with this as a standing item at your Governance and Assurance Board¹²¹.

Investigation and supervision

During the course of this review we found apparent gaps in the supervision of cases. This may simply be a recording issue but it may also link to the disappointing results reported in inspections of cases.

¹²¹ The Governance and Assurance Board is the six-weekly meeting between Police and Crime Commissioner and key members of the Senior Leadership Group of SYP where he holds the Chief Constable to account for performance and delivery against the Police and Crime Plan.

[9] I recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to consider implementing a standard operating procedure for the investigation of child sexual exploitation and the management of intelligence related to it. A checklist for investigators and their supervisors could be developed to ensure a consistent approach is maintained across South Yorkshire.

Governance

We found the current police governance arrangements in response to child sexual exploitation to be unclear.

[10] I recommend that you ask the Chief Constable to produce a clearly documented command structure for you, supported by reference to the LSCBs and any other stakeholder arrangements (including those for victim, survivor and family engagement, see previous recommendation) focusing on the strategic rather than operational response to child sexual exploitation.

The response to intelligence reports produced between 2003 and 2006

I describe in Chapter 3 why I did not examine the response to intelligence reports produced by Dr. Heal in more detail. I understand agreement has now been reached as to how the response to these reports can be examined in detail. This is unfinished business so far as this review is concerned.

[11] I recommend that you keep under review the examination of the response to these reports so that you can be reassured that any further lessons from this are learnt.

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF SOUTH YORKSHIRE POLICE IN RELATION TO ITS RESPONSE TO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Aim and timescales of the Independent Review

The aim of the Review is to make certain:

- a) that South Yorkshire Police (together with its partners) has understood and acted on the findings and recommendations raised in all previous reports and inspections, in the media and during parliamentary questioning; and
- b) that the police response to safeguarding children and young people has been and is adequate across the whole of South Yorkshire, not just in Rotherham.

The review will begin in September, following a period of scoping, and conclude in three months, reporting shortly after.

Context

The scale of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham, and the response of agencies to it, was revealed in two reports by Professor Alexis Jay (2014) and Louise Casey CB (2015). The reports make for harrowing reading, raising a myriad of questions as to how this abuse of children and young people could have gone unchecked for so many years. Both Professor Jay and Louise Casey have commented on the tendency for some individuals to deny the scale of the issue¹²², to blame victims for their abuse¹²³⁺¹²⁴, and to discredit those that stand and say ‘enough is enough’.¹²⁵

Though the reports focus on Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, the references to South Yorkshire Police (‘SYP’) have raised significant concern for the Police and Crime Commissioner (‘the Commissioner’), as have revelations from parliamentary committee evidence sessions and in the media. The most recent of these revelations came from evidence heard by the Department for Communities and Local Government Select Committee (2015) and in a BBC programme televised in March 2015, featuring allegations by a retired police

¹²² Jay, A. (2014). *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham*, pp 1.

¹²³ Casey, L. (2015). *Report of Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council*. Department for Communities and Local Government. London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, pp 47.

¹²⁴ Jay, A. (2014). *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham*, pp 38.

¹²⁵ Casey, L. (2015). *Report of Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council*. Department for Communities and Local Government. London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, pp 137.

officer, about SYP's handling of child sexual exploitation reports in Sheffield prior to 2007.¹²⁶

As a result of the on-going way in which revelations have emerged, the Commissioner has requested a 'Casey-like' review into the way South Yorkshire Police responds to child sexual exploitation across all four districts of South Yorkshire, not just in Rotherham. He needs to establish whether the findings and recommendations raised in previous reports and inspections have been genuinely acknowledged and fully addressed, and whether there are robust plans in place to tackle non-recent as well as present day occurrences of child sexual exploitation. As the Commissioner said when he publicly announced this inspection on 13 March 2015:

"...If I am to do my job, I need to be sure that everything that can reasonably be known about the past is known. This is the first and crucial step if the Force is to get itself into a better place.

"However, in the light of what has now been revealed I cannot be certain that we are at that point.

"Reluctantly, therefore, I now believe that a full 'Casey-like' county-wide review of South Yorkshire Police is necessary to get to an accepted understanding about the past and whether things have changed - which is the first step to restoring public confidence..."

From a public confidence perspective, it is important to publicise the good work that is being done by SYP Police to tackle child sexual exploitation. However, the focus must be on improving in the right things and in the right way. There are many hard-working and dedicated officers and members of staff that are tirelessly chasing an end to the sexual exploitation of children and young people. It is the duty of SYP's senior management to make sure these officers and staff are supported to pursue new avenues, implement innovative ideas, and drive evidence-based learning. Too often there is anecdotal evidence that new approaches are hindered by obstructive working practices, silo-working by other agencies and departments, and out-dated policies.

Given the number of recent inspections and investigations into the response to child sexual exploitation which have involved SYP, it is understandable that there will be trepidation among those who are delivering frontline services about engaging with those conducting this review. However, this must not prevent a frank and open discussion taking place. It is important to remember that this is not a blaming exercise; it is about ensuring that the right improvements are

¹²⁶ Subject to the IPCC investigation

made in the eyes of victims, survivors, their families, and the South Yorkshire public generally.

Terms of Reference for existing investigations and recent or forthcoming inspections by the Independent Police Complaints Commission ('IPCC'), the National Crime Agency ('NCA'), and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary ('HMIC') have been taken into consideration in the drafting of these terms of reference, as has police and partner activity under the Multi-Agency Action Plan drawn up in response to the Jay report (which has been updated to cover events and revelations since the publication of the Jay report). There may be duplication between the terms of reference for the IPCC's, NCA's or HMIC's activity and some of the questions in these terms of reference. However, where this could be said, the Commissioner still deems the questions in these terms of reference relevant and necessary due to the lengthy timescales involved in completing the other investigations or inspections, or the different perspective his review will adopt.

Review areas

As a result of issues that have been raised in the reports by Professor Jay and Louise Casey, in parliamentary evidence sessions, and in the media, and raised with the Commissioner by SYP, partner agencies, victims, survivors and their families, serving and retired police officers, and concerned MPs, councillors and members of the public, the themed areas of this review are:-

- ***Culture***
Is the current organisational culture across the four districts a help or hindrance to future openness and transparency?
- ***Effective appropriate leadership***
Are SYP leaders effectively driving the fight against child sexual exploitation?
- ***Performance***
Has a target-focused recording of crime mentality prevented SYP from effectively tackling child sexual exploitation sooner?
- ***Victim focus***
Is the victim at the forefront of all policing decisions within SYP?
- ***Scale***
Is the scale of the problem confined to Rotherham, or countywide?
- ***Partnership working***

Do current partnership relationships allow for open and honest discussions to take place, with free exchange of information?

- ***Prosecutions and case-building***
Has SYP encouraged case-building against perpetrators of child sexual exploitation, acknowledging the intricacies of information gathering?
- ***Resource management***
Does current SYP technology allow for the effective recording and sharing of information and data regarding child sexual exploitation?

The review will establish whether the failings and subsequent learning from these identified by South Yorkshire Police has been exclusive to Rotherham, or is inherent across the force area.

Reporting

The single point of contact for the inspection will be the Commissioner's Chief Executive and Solicitor. At the conclusion of the inspection, a written report is to be submitted to the Commissioner.

4 June 2015

Appendix 2 – Methodology and cost

This review was not an Inspection and nor was it a piece of research, both of which have their distinctive methodologies. Instead it consisted of a series of interviews with as wide a range of individuals as were prepared to meet with me to discuss the question of SYP's handling of child sexual exploitation, both in the past and currently.

My budget was inevitably tight. I agree that it should be. The total cost of the review will have amounted to less than £60,000, which is considerably less than the two major inquiries and inspections of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham, those of Professor Jay¹²⁷ and Louise Casey¹²⁸. The Police and Crime Commissioner has had to balance a number of conflicting financial pressures during this time, not the least of which has been the need to secure safety for the people of South Yorkshire. While a review of this sort is not a luxury that can be avoided, it is nevertheless an event where costs need to be carefully balanced against other priorities.

I understand that the Police and Crime Commissioner did apply for additional funding from the Home Office for this and other special projects, but this application did not find favour.

Fortunately I have been able to draw, extensively, on the earlier reports of Professor Jay and Louise Casey and this has undoubtedly saved considerable time and costs.

In the time and within the resources available to me, I have been able to interview over 150 people, including 72 current and former police officers and staff, and 26 victims and survivors and members of their immediate families.

Most meetings have been one to one interviews, but on occasion it has been more appropriate or effective to convene focus groups (I held 3), or see a particular group of people together.

¹²⁷ Jay (2014) op. cit.

¹²⁸ Casey (2015) op. cit.

Appendix 3 – Written sources

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Pearce, J. (2009) *Young People and Sexual Exploitation – 'It's not hidden, you just aren't looking* London: Routledge

Stevens M. (2010) *Lessons Learned Review – Operation Central Rotherham* Local Safeguarding Children Board

Wilson, S. with McKelvie (2015) *Violated* London: HarperElement

Appendix 4 – Principal investigations into South Yorkshire’s handling of child sexual exploitation

At the outset of this Review we identified 11 separate investigations into SYP’s handling of child sexual exploitation, which together with more general reports, provide the basis for identifying the lessons that SYP needed to learn from the past. These reports are identified in this Appendix, and also referred to in some instances in the text of the main report. They are listed here in chronological order:

Lessons Learned Review – Operation Central, Rotherham Local Children Safeguarding Board 2010¹²⁹

This report was commissioned by the Rotherham LSCB and published in July 2010. It was the work of an independent reviewer, Malcolm Stevens of JusticeCare Solution. The report is broadly supportive of the work of all the agencies involved in Operation Central. The principal recommendation of the report, aimed not just at the South Yorkshire Police (SYP) but also their partners, was that a multi-agency child sexual exploitation team be created in Rotherham.

This happened in 2011/2.

Child Sexual Exploitation – A Strategic Problem Profile, South Yorkshire Police 2010

This restricted internal report was commissioned by SYP’s Head of Public Protection and was prepared in 2010. The report made 15 recommendations, designed both to raise the awareness of child sexual exploitation both within the SYP and outside, its partners. It also proposed that a benchmarking visit be made to a neighbouring police force.

The Director of Intelligence who commissioned this report recalls it being circulated widely at superintendent and chief superintendent level and believes that it was considered at both SYP’s Public Protection Strategic Board, chaired by an assistant child constable, and then in summary form at the Operations and Performance Board.

Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)¹³⁰ Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan 2014 and 2014

The ACPO CSE Action Plan was created in response to the Government’s Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan and a thematic assessment of child sexual exploitation produced by ACPO and the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) called ‘*Out of Mind, Out of Sight*’. The Action Plan was launched to forces in November 2012 and revised in October 2014. The Action Plan aims to

¹²⁹ Stevens, M. (2010) *Learning Lessons Review – Operation Central* Rotherham: Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board, paras 7.2 to 7.3

raise the standards in tackling child sexual exploitation within police forces, and its recommendations provide the base for SYP's Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan.

South Yorkshire Police's Response to Child Sexual Exploitation - Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) 2013

This inspection was commissioned by the previous Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire and took place in 2013. The Inspectorate found increased resources; 'deeply committed' specialist staff; 'considerable efforts' to improve the police response to victims and potential victims; and a number of prosecutions and convictions. However, this was balanced by a judgement that the force was only having mixed success. The stated force priority was not consistently translated into ground level activity; no audit of whether the force was improving outcomes for children or evaluation of its protective work; and poor levels of material support for many staff in specialist units. The report made 15 recommendations. Outstanding issues are included as a matter of course in the Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan.

South Yorkshire Police's Response to Child Sexual Exploitation Re-visit - HMIC 2014

The Inspectorate re-visited the force in 2014. They found further increases in financial and human resources; enhanced partnership engagement; and engagement with other forces and organisations to identify and disseminate good practice. They believed that the police had reacted well to the original recommendations but said that further work was needed *'to construct a robust and accountable implementation plan ... to not just continue to concentrate on 'what' is required but, as important, 'how' it will be done, and 'how' the force know it is being done.'*¹³¹

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham 1997-2013 2014

This Inquiry, led by Professor Alexis Jay. The report condemned the failure of authorities in Rotherham to act effectively against child sexual exploitation and even, in some cases, to acknowledge that it was taking place. The report estimated that 1,400 children has been abused and exploited in Rotherham between 1997 and 2013. Professor Jay reported her view that, having first given no operational priority to the issue, SYP's response to child sexual exploitation had begun to improve in 2007, and that by 2014 SYP was well resourced and staff well trained, though prosecutions remained low.

College of Policing Peer Reviews of Doncaster and Rotherham 2014¹³²

In November 2014 separate review teams, coordinated by the College of Policing, reviewed, at the request of SYP, the force's *'capability and capacity to deal with the threat of CSE'*. SYP was only the second force to be the subject of this review. In Rotherham the review team was impressed by the level of commitment shown by all staff but also referred to the dangers inherent where

¹³¹ Letter from HMIC to PCC, 25.7.14

¹³² Private reports from the College of Policing to South Yorkshire Police

'almost too much activity was taking place'. They identified a number of areas requiring a renewed focus, including training, the investigative process, and the end-to-end intelligence function. IT systems were described as being not integrated, restricting operational effectiveness. Both in Doncaster and Rotherham the review teams felt that officers struggled to describe the overall objective of the force's work around child sexual exploitation, or what success looked like, but instead concentrate on their particular tasks, although they did also comment on strong leadership and impressive strategic intent. Internal communications needed attention. A total of 21 recommendations were made. Outstanding issues are included as a matter of course in the child sexual exploitation action plan.

Report of Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council 2015

Louise Casey was appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to carry out an inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to assess its compliance with Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999. Her conclusion was that the Council was not fit for purpose, and in particular was failing in its duties to protect vulnerable children and young people from harm. Louise Casey fully endorsed Professor Jay's conclusions. SYP fell outside the scope of the inspection and so Louise Casey did not look into police actions in detail. However, she recorded an impression that SYP's action fell short of what would be expected.

'What does good look like?' - Review of the child sexual exploitation response across South Yorkshire

This review, produced for the senior leadership team and partners, was finalised in March 2015 following the publication of the Casey Report and the report from the Office of the Children's Commissioner *'If it's not the end, it's not better'*. It is a thorough and well-structured report, and it demonstrates a high degree of understanding of what needs to be done to improve. The report makes 27 recommendations, principally for SYP but also at times to the wider safeguarding partnership and the Police and Crime Commissioner, in the light of a summary of best practice as of early 2015. Outstanding issues are included as a matter of course in the child sexual exploitation action plan.

Operation Stovewood - Review report into South Yorkshire Police investigations of Operations Clover, Mark and Monroe, National Crime Agency, 2015

I described the origins of this report in Chapter 2. The National Crime Agency (NCA) presented their report to SYP in April 2015, making 48 recommendations at both strategic and operational level. The NCA found the current officers and staff on the operations that they examined conscientious, enthusiastic and focused on providing good outcomes while describing the strategic leadership as professional and appropriate.

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability) HMIC 2015¹³³

¹³³ HMIC (2015) *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)* London: HMIC

This report examined how effective SYP was at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable, and supporting victims. It looked at four areas including how well prepared the force was to tackle child sexual exploitation. It concluded that SYP had good systems in place to respond to children who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, with a clear, structured and well-supervised process for responding to reports about exploitation. HMIC only considered how well *prepared* the force was, and did not examine specific investigations. HMIC's conclusion was that the force was now well prepared and it made no specific recommendations for further improvement.

In total these Reviews produced at least 220 recommendations. In my judgement the key areas for improvement, and progress made in respect of these, are summarised in Chapter 6.

Appendix 5 – National Crime Agency

Update on *Operation Stovewood*

OPERATION STOVEWOOD – Update for review by Profession John Drew on behalf of Alan Billings, South Yorkshire’s Police and Crime Commissioner

Purpose

This briefing note explains the role the National Crime Agency (NCA), its involvement in the investigation of child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) in Rotherham and provides a public-level summary of operational activity up to March 2016.

The reader should note that Operation Stovewood is an independent investigation and does not form part of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner’s (SYPCC’s) review activity. All evidence of criminal activity will be presented to the Crown Prosecution Service for their consideration of prosecution.

Operation Stovewood is not investigating allegations of misconduct by police officers or other public servants. These are matters for other statutory or professional bodies.

Background – the NCA and invitation to investigate

The NCA leads UK law enforcement’s fight to cut serious and organised crime. We have national and international reach and the mandate and powers to work in partnership with other law enforcement organisations to bring the full weight of the law to bear on serious and organised criminals. The NCA became operational in October 2013.

As well as leading our own operations, NCA officers support and coordinate operational activity, providing a range of specialist capabilities to partners who help to deliver criminal justice outcomes, recover assets and prevent and disrupt criminal activity.

The NCA may also perform a task outside of its normal functions at the request of a Chief Officer of Police. A formal request, under Section 5(3) and (4) of the Crime and Courts Act 2013, was made by South Yorkshire Police’s (SYP’s) Chief Constable, David Crompton, on November 18 2014.

The Chief Constable of SYP asked the National Crime Agency to conduct an independent criminal investigation into allegation of non-familial child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) in Rotherham between 1997-2013. Terms of reference for the investigation were finalised in early December and Operation Stovewood commenced. Although funded by SYP the NCA has direction and control of the investigation.

Terms of Reference – what is Operation Stovewood investigating?

A summary of Operation Stovewood's Terms of Reference has been published on the NCA website www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk. The investigation has two phases, firstly review and intelligence gathering and, secondly, new criminal investigations of outstanding allegations and suspects.

Review and intelligence gathering

The investigation has responsibility for the oversight and review of all existing ongoing SYP investigations being conducted into non-familial CSEA in Rotherham between 1997- 2013 (the period covered by the 2014 Professor Alexis Jay Report).

Operations Clover, Mark and Monroe were reviewed in early 2015. The findings of the reviews were presented to the force on April 13 2015, and a summary published on the NCA website on 23 April 2015. The review made a total of 48 recommendations for further improvement at both strategic and operational level, all of which were accepted by the force.

New criminal investigations

Following the establishment of a Major Investigation Room and Investigation and Victim Engagement Teams; together with the gathering of relevant material from SYP, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC), SYPCC and other bodies, Operation Stovewood is now solely focussed on the investigation of CSEA offences. The investigation phase of Operation Stovewood (phase two) began in June 2015.

Leadership and Priorities

Operation Stovewood is led by Roy McComb, NCA Deputy Director for Specialist Investigations. The Senior Investigating Officer is Paul Williamson, who joined the investigation in January 2016.

Operation Stovewood has three priorities. We will:

- Deliver a victim focussed investigation
- Work to identify and bring all offenders to justice
- Work with partners and help to build confidence in local agencies

Operation Stovewood will focus on the investigation of all outstanding offenders with the aim of bringing them to justice or subjecting them to other interventions. We will work closely with other public services to best meet the needs of victims, survivors and witnesses and we will meet or exceed the requirements of the national Victims' Code at all times. To assist in this joint working there is a Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) with other agencies who have a role to play in supporting the investigation.

Current Activity – investigation update

Operation Stovewood is the umbrella and public-facing name for all NCA activity in Rotherham, South Yorkshire. There are currently seven distinct criminal investigations being progressed, two suspect-focussed and five relating to specific victim and survivor accounts. One of the investigations is into criminal allegations of CSEA referred by Louise Casey, following her inspection of RMBC.

The number of distinct investigations will increase as further victims, survivors, witnesses and suspects are identified and interviewed.

Operation Stovewood has so far assessed in excess of 120,000 documents, converting thousands into searchable records for the first time.

The investigation has already identified over 9,000 lines of enquiry for investigators.

A total of 57 serious sexual offences against individuals in Rotherham and have been identified and recorded.

Victims and survivors – ‘Anna’

In her August 2014 report, Professor Alexis Jay published a conservative estimate that 1,400 people had been abused in Rotherham between 1997-2013.

Operation Stovewood is a large-scale and complex criminal investigation and is the largest criminal inquiry of its kind in the UK at this time. When CSEA is happening on the scale that it did in Rotherham, there will be multiple perpetrators and victims.

We have prioritised engagement with 54 victims and survivors in relation to our seven current investigations. We are working hard to earn the trust of individuals, giving them confidence that they will be listened to and that we will follow the evidence without fear or favour.

One case study illustrates the scale of work that needs to be undertaken.

‘Anna’

Specially trained Victim Engagement Team officers are working with Anna, who came forward to report the sexual exploitation and abuse that she has suffered.

It has taken 20 conversations and four interviews so far, at a pace she is comfortable with, for her to share all she can remember. Work is not complete but, so far, Anna has:

- Given the details of nine more potential victims
- Given the details of 17 witnesses
- Identified seven designated suspects
- Identified 33 more *potential* suspects
- Led us to 27 crime scenes in South Yorkshire and beyond

Anna's work with us, just one of potentially 1,400 victims and survivors, provides us with 179 new enquiries to take forward.

Operation Stovewood will investigate all criminal allegations of non-familial CSE in Rotherham between 1997-2013 as quickly as professionally possible within the resources available to us at any given time. The investigation is working to national best practice and standards and adopted the Victims' Code earlier this year along with the rest of the NCA.

Operation Stovewood meets regularly with partners and representatives of local communities and publishes regular public updates on progress.

Roy McComb
Deputy Director
Specialist Investigations

Appendix 6 – ‘Coming out of darkness’

Voices from the Swinton Lock Rotherham Post Abuse Steering Group, prepared for the ‘Coming out of darkness’ conference held in Leeds on Friday the 11th March 2016.

‘She just knew how to light a room a room up. You’d just look at her and she had this little smile and there’d be no way you could ever be mad with her.’

‘I was bubbly, confident, definitely had a personality about me. I had lots of friends, and I were always dancing about, even eating my tea I used to do the splits.’

‘I used to make dens, climb trees, make tarzan swings.’

‘She was lovely, right well behaved at school, always 100% attendance, got awards for whatever she did, very happy.’

‘We come from a big family. We were a happy family until obviously I started knocking about with the wrong sort of people.’

‘I was around 11 when I started being groomed by older men. I thought it was fun at first.’

‘It were just after her 14th birthday. She started going out on the streets. She started hiding her friends away from me Mum and me Dad, and she obviously didn’t want them to know what they were up to.’

‘She started wagging school. Her behaviour just spiraled out of control, not telling the truth about where she were, or who she were with.’

‘She came quite dark and deep, and really, really violent.’

‘Eventually I found out, you know, that it were older men that were involved.’

‘I felt frightened because of having to do stuff I didn’t want to do, the pressure ...’

‘Then you’d hear about people seeing her in cards, so then you’d go out looking for her, then you’d be chasing cars, you’d be getting Reg. numbers.’

‘The only thing I saw was him. I did anything for him. I believed every word he said. So it got to the point where I actually started to hate my own family.’

‘Me Dad were working and then he’s be driving round all night with her pictures, going into hotels asking them if they see her to beg them to phone the Police. He’d be down the Police Station all the time. They didn’t want to know. My bedroom

were next to my Mum and my Dad's and I'd hear my Mum crying herself to sleep every night.'

'There were this time he were going to pour petrol down my front and set me on fire. I thought I was going to die.'

I wouldn't be able to reach 20 as I'd end up dead. That's the stuff me social worker used to say to me.'

'I felt suicidal myself. I thought I'd hit rock bottom with it all, depressed and not knowing which way to turn, who you could trust as well.'

'She was a child, she didn't have a say in what was happening.'

'It were after one night something happened to me and I ended up in hospital for two weeks. And then I got told I couldn't have kids.'

'He strangled me, he had his hands digging in me back. Called me 'white bitch'.'

'It's so scary to watch your little girl having to go through stuff like that and nobody'll listen to you.'

'It ripped me family apart.'

'At the time it felt like it were my fault.'

'The hold they had over my daughter was just much stronger than what I could offer her and I just could not break her away from the hold they had.'

'I just wanted my baby back.'

'I don't think our family will ever get over what happened to me sister. It will always be there. I still look at my sister now and see a sadness in her eyes, that will never go, never.'

'Sometimes I get scared, and sometimes I just think 'well did that really happen?' and then it's there then for a while. It's like torture, and then it'll go, and then I will forget about it.'

'I'm saying this for my old social worker, 'I always told the truth but you chose not to believe me.'

'It totally destroyed my daughter's childhood. Instead of being happy and at home playing with dolls, which she should have been at her age, it were just living a nightmare of abuse.'

'It will stay with us for the rest of us lives. We just learn to deal with it and talk about it.'

‘Sometimes I have bad dreams and flashbacks about what happened.’

‘It’s only because I met people and I have seen that they’ve been through the same stuff as us that I can see the light at the end of the tunnel and people believe you, because we were never believed and always called liars. ‘I don’t think that’s true’ but it was true, it was all true. They are not stories you can make up.’

‘I feel let down massively. It’s been 16 years, me and me Mum and Dad always knew that had happened and we tried so hard with the authorities. Me Mum always said, ‘I never got justice for my baby’, and my Mum died knowing she never got justice, and the reason why we keep fighting is for my Mum. I know that’s a big fight for me sister, but we do it for me Mum.’

‘Coming out of darkness is a perfect title because that is how I felt my journey’s been you know. I were in a dark place and now I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. I think there’s still part of the journey I need to go on but I’ve really started coming to terms now with what happened and I’ve been able to do that through the support that I’ve received.’

‘There is light, and there’s people still there who are willing to fight your corner and to take it every step of the way to help and prevent this ever happening again, and I do feel, yeah, there is light from the darkness I’ve come through.’

Appendix 7 – List of abbreviations used in this report

CROP	Campaign for the Removal Of Pimps
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CSEA	Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Commission
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
NCA	National Crime Agency
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
PNC	Police National Computer
RMBC	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
SCG	Strategic Coordination Group
SEEG	Sexual Exploitation Enforcement Group
SYP	South Yorkshire Police
UKHTC	United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre