



HM Government

# Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation

March 2015

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# Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation

The Government deplores the sexual exploitation of children, and will not tolerate failure at any level to prevent harm, support victims and bring offenders to justice.

- In August last year Professor Alexis Jay published a review of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham. It showed that organised child sexual exploitation had been happening on a massive scale over many years. Local agencies had dismissed concerns or put in place an inadequate response. Shockingly, Louise Casey's report of 4 February this year showed that even since the Jay report, many in the council and its local partners had continued to deny the scale of the problem, and not enough action had been taken to stop the abuse.
- The Government is determined that this will not be allowed to happen again. The actions in this report create a step change in our response. Highlights include:**

  - A **new whistleblowing national portal** for child abuse related reports will help to bring child sexual exploitation to light and will be able to spot patterns of failure across the country.
  - A new **national taskforce**, and a **centre of expertise**, will support areas that are struggling to get it right.
  - We will eradicate the culture of denial: our actions include consulting on an **extension to the new 'wilful neglect' offence** to children's social care, education and elected members.
  - To help tackle offenders we have given **child sexual abuse the status of a national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement** so that this is prioritised by every police force.
  - To support survivors we have given an **additional £7 million** this year and in 2015/16 to organisations which support those who have experienced sexual abuse.
- Child sexual exploitation affects all our communities. While the full extent of this crime is still unknown, we do know that it is not confined to one area. Any local authority or police force that denies that it has a problem, or thinks that it is only happening elsewhere, is wrong.

4. Tackling child sexual exploitation must be a shared effort. Government can lead the national response. Local authorities, police, children's and health services have a statutory duty to work together to identify and stamp it out in their area. Communities must help to tackle the problem, rather than assume victims bring it on themselves. We must eradicate the culture of denial that allows organisations and individuals to avoid the issue, blame others, or distract themselves with endless planning rather than making sure they actually make a difference. Changing culture requires strong leadership, clear accountability, engagement with victims and staff, and unequivocal feedback on what is working well and what is not across the whole local area.
5. The actions set out in this report were developed through a series of meetings chaired by the Home Secretary, at the request of the Prime Minister, with the Secretaries of State for Education, Health, Justice, Communities and Local Government, and the Solicitor General.

## Accountability and Leadership

**Those who fail in their duties to protect children must be held accountable. Secretaries of State have written to all Chief Constables, leaders and lead members of Councils, Chief Executives of local authorities and health system leaders and Directors of Children's Services to reinforce the need for leaders to take responsibility for addressing the failures shown by the Jay report and any other inspections in their area.**

### To strengthen accountability we will:

6. Introduce an expectation that **all Local Safeguarding Children Boards will conduct regular local assessments on the effectiveness of local responses to child sexual exploitation** and publish the outcome of those assessments through their annual reports. They should set out in this analysis how the local partners have used their data to drive their response to vulnerable children and families.
7. **Improve the quality of central Government data collection** to include data on the prevalence of child sexual abuse and publish this data to inform the LSCB assessments so that the performance of local agencies is more transparent to the communities they serve.
8. Commission an external analysis of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards annual reports in 2015/16 to bring **greater scrutiny to the system** and to examine how effectively the data is being used to improve outcomes for children.
9. **Deliver a new system of multi-agency inspections** including Ofsted, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Care Quality Commission. This shake up of the current regime will deliver coordinated interventions and reinforce the need for joint working at all levels and better assess how local agencies are working in a co-ordinated manner to protect children and young people. Inspectorates will start a series of area inspections in 2015/16, at the same time as consulting on a joint inspection framework which they will begin to use from April 2016 onwards.
10. Continue to **refocus the inspection regime on practice** not policy so that organisations and individuals are judged on the impact of their performance on the ground, not on whether there are action plans in place.

**It is unacceptable for councils, police forces or other public bodies to use severance agreements to cover up examples of under-performance or organisational failure.**

**To strengthen sanctions for leaders and professions we will:**

11. Make it clear that local authorities should **adopt the clear principles on the use of settlement agreements in the public sector** set out in guidance published on 1 February this year. We expect the local government sector to take action to ensure that authorities meet these standards, as other parts of the public sector are now expected to do.
12. Challenge the local government sector to **strengthen accountability arrangements for senior local leaders** immediately through improving its existing self-regulation.
13. Ensure that **exit payments for senior staff, including council staff, can be clawed back** where those people are quickly re-employed in the same part of the public sector. This means public sector employers will be able to stop senior staff pocketing a large redundancy payment and then walking into a new job in the same sector shortly afterwards. We will do this through the Small Business and Enterprise Bill.
14. Consult on options for **imposing sanctions for failure to take action** on abuse or neglect where it is a professional responsibility to do so as part of the forthcoming public consultation we have already committed to on mandatory reporting of all forms of abuse and neglect. This will include considering an extension to the 'wilful neglect' offence to children's social care, education and elected members.
15. Set out an **unambiguous statement of accountability** in the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' statutory guidance. This will be clear about the overarching responsibilities of local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and in particular the role of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services as the key point of professional and political accountability within local authorities. It will also be clear about the vital role of other professionals including the police, school workforce, social workers and health service professionals in keeping children safe. These individuals must be in no doubt about their legal duties to protect children.
16. **Improve standards of integrity in the police.** We have already consulted on changes to police complaints and disciplinary processes and will respond to the consultation shortly. The consultations looked at streamlining the complaints process, increasing transparency and consistency around discipline, as well as measures to improve protection for whistleblowers, giving disciplinary panels the power to reduce rank in cases of misconduct and removing some existing sanctions, such as dismissal with notice, to enable faster dismissal. We will also legislate in this Parliament to give disciplinary panels the power to restrict future payments of compensation to chief officers, in disciplinary cases where a final written warning is given.

## Changing the culture of denial

People who abuse children must be stopped. Their race, age or gender is irrelevant. In Rotherham, the majority of the known perpetrators were of Pakistani heritage – but misplaced concerns about political correctness stopped any proper action being taken. This is not acceptable. We cannot allow professionals to avoid tackling the sexual abuse of children by members of ethnic minority communities for fear of being seen as racist.

Child sexual exploitation is not exclusive to any single community, race or religion. There is no culture in which sexual abuse is not a serious crime.

We need a fundamental change of attitude within professions and the public about the nature of this crime. Offenders must be tackled, regardless of their ethnicity. Victims must be believed, no matter how they behave. And professionals and the public must become more aware of the signs of abuse, and feel empowered to come forward and report it – and have their reports taken seriously.

To improve the early identification and reporting of concerns by professionals and the public, we will:

17. Revise '*What to do if you're worried a child is being abused*' guidance for three audiences – professionals, members of the public and children. This will provide clear information about how to identify child abuse and neglect and what action to take. We will **spend £1 million on a communications campaign to promote the messages** in this guidance to the public and other audiences.
18. Work with the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) Association to **train teaching staff in areas that seek help**, and promote guidance and resources for all schools to help them to teach young people to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse.
19. Enable the public, especially women, to **challenge abuse and the cultural attitudes which create the conditions for abuse** by:
  - a. Expanding our community based English Language Programme which supports those with the lowest levels of English and who are the most isolated and vulnerable as a result.
  - b. Setting up a fund to support innovative projects that will help give women, especially in hard to reach groups, confidence to challenge sexual abuse wherever it occurs.

To create a culture where the health service and medical professionals are spotting the signs of child sexual exploitation early and are supported in sharing information with others, we will:

20. Update '**safeguarding children**' training materials for National Health Service staff.
21. Launch new online training this month available to all health sector staff to help them **identify and support children who may have experienced sexual exploitation**.
22. Produce an **awareness raising film on child sexual exploitation** for all staff in the National Health Service in 2015/16.
23. Publish a **resource pack for school nurses** on tackling child sexual exploitation.

24. Expand routine enquiry from 2015/16 made by professionals in targeted services such as mental health, sexual health and substance misuse services so that **professionals include questions about child abuse, to help ensure early intervention**, protect those at risk and to ensure victims receive the care they need.
25. The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence will publish **a new guideline in September 2016 on 'Managing Harmful Sexual Behaviour among Children and Young People'** and in September 2017 on 'Child Abuse and Neglect,' which will include aspects on child sexual exploitation.
26. **Improve available data on the prevalence of child abuse** using the upcoming population-wide children and adolescent mental health survey.

**To improve the identification of victims and survivors by the police and the support to victims during investigations into child sexual exploitation:**

27. **The Home Secretary has written to all Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners** in September 2014 to reinforce the need to take on board the lessons from the Jay report and from the rolling HMIC inspections into child abuse. Every police force has committed to implement the National Policing Action Plan for child sexual exploitation.
28. The College of Policing and the National Policing lead have set the requirement on all forces to **train all new and existing police staff** including call handlers, PCSOs, police officers, detectives and specialist investigators to respond to child sexual abuse. The College of Policing has developed and will keep under review, a comprehensive training programme, to raise the standard of the police response to this crime, including addressing police behaviours and attitudes, support to victims and the importance of partnership working and information sharing:
  - a. **All new recruits** will receive a combination of classroom-based training and e-learning. **All existing officers** will undertake a tailored e-learning package.
  - b. **All detectives** will receive one week of classroom-based training on public protection, with a strong emphasis on child sexual abuse.
  - c. **All specialist investigators** must complete the Specialist Child Abuse Investigation Programme before they can be included in the National Register of Child Abuse Investigators managed by the College of Policing.

## Improving joint working and information sharing

**Poor multi-agency working, information sharing and risk assessment have led to the major failures in Rotherham, Greater Manchester and elsewhere. The fact that police in Rotherham were forced to seek information from the Freedom of Information team in the council rather than accessing it directly from the social workers themselves sums up the ineffectiveness of local multi-agency working. As a result, children fall between the gaps. This is not acceptable. To remove barriers to information sharing, we will:**

29. Publish a joint letter to the leaders of local authorities, Directors of Children's Services, Police and Crime Commissioners, Local Safeguarding Children's Boards and Health and Wellbeing Boards and GPs **making absolutely clear when and how personal information can and should be shared with other agencies for the purposes of child protection**. This letter is signed by all Secretaries of State.

30. **Publish information sharing guidance**, *Information Sharing: Advice for professionals providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers* in March 2015, with a clear guide for professionals and practitioners, to dispel common myths and concerns about information sharing so that there are no longer false barriers in the way of protecting children.
31. Explore in a number of Local Authority areas **alternative ways of providing local assurance about multi-agency working on child abuse and neglect**, with up to £1 million to support this. These pilots will help us find ways to ensure that local partners work as effectively as possible in tackling sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse and neglect.
32. Commission the Information Sharing Centre of Excellence to **provide direct support to local agencies in how they share information**. Lessons learnt from this direct work will be shared across the Local Government Association and other networks this year.
33. Complete the roll out of the Child Protection Information Sharing system. This will **support health professionals in dealing with children who visit unscheduled health care settings** (such as hospital emergency departments and walk-in centres) by alerting them if a child is subject to a child protection plan or is looked after by a Local Authority.

**To ensure that professionals feel confident to speak out when they are concerned their organisation is not protecting children we will:**

34. Create a new expectation that all organisations that have safeguarding responsibilities **must have internal whistleblowing policies in place**, which are then integrated into training and codes of conduct. These policies should reflect the principles that Sir Robert Francis sets out in his review 'Freedom to Speak Up'. This will improve how organisations manage whistleblowing cases so there can be no cover-ups.
35. **Create a new national single point of contact for child abuse-related whistleblowing reports** to ensure that all professionals can raise concerns about how their organisation is protecting children from the risk of abuse. This new single point of contact will be able to spot patterns of failure across the country and link to the new joint area inspections where there are concerns.
36. Ensure that the new **multi-agency inspections examine whistleblowing arrangements**.

## Protecting vulnerable children

**We are taking action to improve the support to local areas in protecting vulnerable children. The risk of exploitation is much higher when children go missing, or are placed in care outside the local authority that has responsibility for them. Children with learning difficulties will be particularly vulnerable.**

**To improve the local response to child sexual exploitation we will:**

37. **Set up a new national taskforce** to help local authorities when child sexual abuse is a particular concern. This will ensure that specialist professionals in social work, law enforcement and health are available to be deployed when they are needed anywhere in the country, for example following inspection or high levels of whistleblowing.

38. Link this to a **new national Centre of Expertise** to identify and share high quality evidence on what works to tackle child sexual abuse. The centre will identify gaps in evidence and commission research or validate local practice to address these gaps, for example in how to identify children that are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, or what types of services best support victims of child abuse. The Centre of Expertise will develop training and materials for professionals, and will work with the taskforce described above to champion best practice at a local and regional level.
39. Expand the options available to social workers encountering child sexual exploitation through the Innovation Programme by **developing a new model of support that responds to the needs of young people**. Four Innovation Programme projects will test ways to help young people overcome their situation, encourage better partnership working between councils, and provide more options for children identified as at risk of child sexual exploitation.

#### **To improve the frontline social care response we will:**

40. Improve the social care response to abuse, including child sexual exploitation, by **improving the quality of frontline social work practice**. We have welcomed Sir Martin Narey's recommendations on this and have in place a strong programme of reform led by Isabelle Trowler, the Chief Social Worker for Families and Children. We need to generate a culture in which all professionals listen to victims and those at risk and respond properly to allegations. In November 2014 the Secretary of State for Education announced new standards and tests for social workers that will help achieve this:
- a. A new Approved Child and Family Practitioner status for social workers that deal with the highest-risk areas of child protection;
  - b. A new accredited practice supervisor status for those with responsibility for educating, developing and supervising child and family social workers;
  - c. A new accredited social work practice leader status. This new status will help local authorities to recruit excellent practice leaders to senior positions who are able to lead effective social work practice.
41. The Secretary of State for Education will write to Directors of Children's Services to set out **clear expectations that the decision-making tools used to support assessments are properly evidence-based**, and that such tools are used to help thinking, discussion and decision making and only in tandem with professional supervision. As highlighted in the Jay report, some of the tools currently in use are questionable in their robustness and validity.

#### **To better protect children who go missing or who are placed in care we will:**

42. Support the National Policing lead and National Crime Agency to **implement the recommendations of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary inspections on child protection and the all-force inspection on missing and absent children** due to take place this summer, and consider with them options for a national register for missing person's data.
43. Improve **safeguards for children in care** through the following action and reforms:
- a. Making clear in our guidance on the new Children's Homes Regulations that staff in children's homes can and should take steps to protect a child from meeting someone when they believe there is a threat to the child's safety;

- b. Funding a programme of support and training for children's homes over the coming year, helping embed the new regulations and supporting homes on critical areas of practice, including the protection and safeguarding of children at risk of going missing;
- c. Encouraging through the Innovation Programme, the development and testing of new, better tailored approaches to care for children who have been sexually exploited; also ensuring that learning from these and other sources of cutting-edge practice are captured and shared more widely;
- d. Making clear, in statutory guidance, that data and an analysis of the children who go missing from home or care must be included in regular reports to council members and to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

## Stopping offenders

**The Serious Organised Crime Strategy published in 2013 set out an approach aimed at reducing the level of serious and organised crime affecting the UK and its interests, including child sexual exploitation. We are clear that the range of techniques and resources which are deployed to tackle this form of child sexual exploitation should be at the same level as for other forms of organised crime. Child sexual abuse is a serious threat, and so we will:**

- 44. **Give child sexual abuse the status of a national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement.** The Strategic Policing Requirement sets out the national threats that all police forces in England and Wales must give regard to. Including child sexual abuse as one of the five current national threats will make it clear to police forces that they will need to prioritise their response to this issue – this means making sure that there are enough resources to tackle it, and robust plans in place to target the offenders. It also means that forces will need to work with each other to share resources, intelligence and best practice.
- 45. **Ensure the National Crime Agency (NCA) continues to prioritise this issue.** The NCA's national strategic assessment of serious and organised crime in 2014 identified child sexual exploitation and abuse as one of the highest priority threats facing the UK. The NCA leads work through the national tasking process to identify those individuals and organised groups of offenders who pose the greatest risk to children and agree a comprehensive, targeted law enforcement response.
- 46. Further strengthen the law enforcement response by funding **a new network of regional police coordinators and analysts, located in Regional Organised Crime Units**, who will better identify organised child sexual abuse across police force boundaries and ensure these cases are tasked appropriately so that organised offenders are subject to a robust response wherever they offend. Regional Organised Crime Units play a key role in regional tasking, and in national tasking processes led by the National Crime Agency. This means that the Regional Organised Crime Units and police forces will alert the National Crime Agency to threats and risk as part of the national tasking process and provide input into prioritisation and deployment of resources.

47. **Commence new powers for the police** in March 2015 to disrupt and prevent offending including:
- a. Powers to apply a **Sexual Harm Prevention Order or Sexual Risk Order** on any individual who poses a risk of sexual harm in the UK or abroad, even if they have never been convicted or convicted overseas. This will help the police to intervene where there is a risk to the child.
  - b. **Powers to close an establishment** which might be used for sexual activity with a child.
48. Make sure that for the first time all professions work to the **same definition of child sexual exploitation**, so that they can more easily create joint risk assessments and work together to target disruption and investigate offending.

## Supporting victims and survivors

In the last two years, there has been a significant increase in recorded child sexual offences, leading to significant increases in demand for support for victims. As discussed in the Jay and Casey reports, a child that has been sexually exploited is likely to require long-term, specialist help. This help ranges from basic support to rebuild their self-esteem and resilience, to interventions that tackle more serious psychological and mental ill health on an individual and family basis. Provision is made by the statutory sector as well as charitable bodies.

### We will:

49. As previously announced, **provide an additional £7 million this year and in 2015/16 to non-statutory organisations which support the victims of sexual abuse**. This will include specialist services for all child victims of sexual abuse and services in areas where there is a high prevalence of child sexual abuse. As part of this, we have provided a 50% uplift in funding to non-statutory organisations in South Yorkshire to support female victims of rape and sexual abuse including in Rotherham. Additionally, we provided £50,000 to support male victims of rape and sexual abuse.
50. Subject to the outcome of the current Home Office trial, we will consider **roll out of independent child trafficking advocates** to support victims who, like many of those victims in Rotherham, have been trafficked around the UK for the purpose of exploitation.
51. Train staff providing services used by sexually exploited and sexually abused children so that they are able to support the young people to access the care that they need to get their lives back. **These staff will be trained over the next two years** and will in turn cascade this training to other professionals in local authority services for young adults, health and third sector violence services.
52. Work with professional bodies, NHS England, Public Health England and Health Education England on where efforts should be focused to **train staff on trauma-informed approaches to care in mental health services**.

**We have invested heavily during this Spending Review period in improving access to NHS psychological therapies and the quality of mental health services, which will benefit all service users. These include:**

53. **£60 million to transform Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services** since 2011, including improving the availability of evidence-based psychological therapies, which will cover 68% of England by the end of this financial year; and £1.26 billion on improving psychological therapies for adults since 2010, as well as an additional investment of £80 million announced by NHS England for 2015/16 to cut waiting times in adult mental health services.

**It is unacceptable that children who need treatment from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services cannot access services or should be dropped from these services where they are unable to attend an appointment, as highlighted in the Jay report. We will:**

54. Set out in our forthcoming Government report on the work of the Child and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce, **a clear national ambition to support and inform the design and delivery of a local offer of services to all children and young people**, including those who are particularly vulnerable, such as sexually exploited or sexually abused children. Delivering that ambition will require local leadership and ownership.
55. Introduce **new data collection requirements across the National Health Service** to help understand the prevalence of child sexual abuse and to enable commissioners to make sure services are provided in areas where they are most needed.
56. Welcome the work that NHS England is undertaking in **sharing the learning from Rotherham across the NHS**, to strengthen commissioning assurance systems so that child sexual exploitation is a priority for providers of health services and to raise awareness amongst designated professionals who support their colleagues in general practice and hospital care and understand the needs of sexually exploited children and young people using health services, so that they can be identified and supported more effectively.

## Next steps

57. The changes set out in this report show the Government's determination to make sure that local agencies identify, act on and prevent the appalling crime of child sexual exploitation. We have already delivered real change across the system through the reform of children's social care, driving a culture change in the NHS, transforming the Criminal Justice System, ensuring the highest standards of integrity in the police and the introduction of directly accountable PCCs.
58. Our response needs to be comprehensive. It needs to bring together healthcare, social care, education, law enforcement, the voluntary sector, local and national government. No one part of the system can tackle this on its own, and we cannot be complacent about progress. We will continue to keep the structure and the system as a whole under review.
59. The important work we have set out in this report will be incorporated into a new national programme that will be overseen by Ministers and delivered by the National Group on Sexual Violence Against Children and Vulnerable People. Ministers will receive regular updates so that they can challenge progress, measure impact and identify any further steps to tackle this threat.