

The Rotherham Independent Review

A review into information passed to the Home Office in connection with allegations of Child Sexual Abuse in Rotherham (1998-2005)

Return to an Address of the Honourable
the House of Commons
dated 17 July 2018
for

The Rotherham Independent Review

A review into information passed to the
Home Office in connection with allegations of
Child Sexual Abuse in Rotherham (1998-2005)

Volume One

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**An Independent Review of the Home Office Internal Review,
Peter Wanless and Richard Whittam QC**



**An independent review of the Home Office's "The
Rotherham Internal Review: A review into information
passed to the Home Office in connection with allegations
of Child Sexual Abuse in Rotherham (1998-2005)"**

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1 PREFACE

- 1.1 Child abuse, whether organised or not, is an abhorrent crime that has a profound and lifelong impact on the victims. We accepted the invitation to conduct this review whilst we were carrying out our “Independent Review Of Two Home Office Commissioned Independent Reviews Looking At Information Held In Connection With Child Abuse From 1979-1999” [the Wanless Whittam Review].
- 1.2 We did so for the same reason we accepted our original commission, because of the importance the public attaches to the need for an independent examination of what the Home Office had or did relevant to our terms of reference.

Peter Wanless is the CEO of the NSPCC.

Richard Whittam QC is a barrister in private practice.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 We have conducted this review with a keen eye on what we described in our earlier consideration of Home Office files between 1979 and 1999 as an 'imperfectly operated paper records system'. We bear in mind that the Rotherham Internal Review considered events that started almost two decades ago.

2.2 Having examined the Rotherham Internal Review and key documents, we have concluded:

The methodology employed by the Home Office was sufficient and proportionate to answer a series of questions about what information was received, what action was taken and what the general circumstances were with regard to child sexual abuse in Rotherham, and

The findings and conclusion in relation to these questions were reasonable in the light of the work that had been done.

2.3 Whilst not strictly within our terms of reference, we have also taken this opportunity to make a small number of important points to better meet the needs of children at risk of abuse¹.

¹ For example, the need to consider whether a child is at risk, whatever a person's primary function is [paragraph 5.5.2] and the importance of having a well-published and easily accessible whistleblowing contact point [paragraphs 5.7 and 5.8]

3 INTRODUCTION

3.1 On 2 September 2014 the then Home Secretary indicated that Peter Wanless and Richard Whittam QC would be looking at the process employed by the Home Office to review the information that was passed to the Home Office in connection with allegations of child sexual abuse in Rotherham from 1998 to 2005.

3.2 That expression of intent was reduced into formal terms of reference, and we were asked to consider:

“Whether the methodology employed by the Home Office, to address the questions below, was sufficient, and whether, in light of the information they identified, their findings and conclusions in relation to these questions were reasonable;

- i. What information about child sexual abuse in Rotherham did the Home Office receive as a result of the Crime Reduction Programme and, in particular:
 - a. Did the Home Office receive, whether directly or indirectly, a copy of the draft report described in Professor Alexis Jay’s Report as headed ‘Chapter 4: Key achievements of the Home Office Pilot’;
 - b. Did the Home Office receive, whether directly or indirectly, a copy of the former researcher’s detailed case study notes (as detailed in paragraph 22 of Professor Jay’s report);
 - c. Was the Home Office informed, whether directly or indirectly, of the former researcher’s concerns.
- ii. What action was taken in response to any relevant information received; for example, were relevant authorities informed.
- iii. What were the general circumstances of the Home Office’s engagement with the Rotherham research project, in particular:
 - a. Why was the Rotherham research project commissioned;
 - b. What funding for the Rotherham research project was provided, and when and why was that funding stopped; and,
 - c. Why was an evaluation report of the Rotherham research project not published.
- iv. If the Department did receive any of the information detailed above, but it has since been destroyed, did this take place in accordance with applicable information retention policies in place at the time.”

3.3 Prior to us carrying out our review, the Home Office had to complete its work.

3.4 It has taken the Home Office longer than expected to complete the necessary work, not least because of the nature of the filing system in existence at the time, described in our earlier review as 'imperfectly operated'.

- 3.5 Because that work was taking longer than expected we met at the Home Office on 3 August 2015 and were briefed on the progress of the work being done at that stage. We offered observations as to the potential importance of looking beyond the files contained within the Home Office system and the files in other Government Departments. We encouraged the Home Office to contact individuals inside and outside the Department. The Home Office accepted that recommendation and it is reflected in the Rotherham Internal Review [the Internal Review].
- 3.6 Also, given that the Home Office then was expecting to provide the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse with material it was important to have a system in place that would avoid the duplication of work.
- 3.7 On 15 December 2016 we were provided with a draft copy of the Internal Review. We met with the Reviewer, who explained to us the work that had been carried out, and why the exercise had taken so long. It is clear that a vast amount of material had to be indexed, and the initial search terms used were very broad as the Reviewer was anxious that relevant material was not missed. The breadth of the search terms meant that the material identified was too great and insufficiently specific. In those circumstances the search terms were refined.
- 3.8 We welcomed the opportunity to discuss the draft Internal Review with the Reviewer. In particular we enquired about the searches that were carried out, and how the conclusion that there was no evidence of files deliberately having being destroyed was reached, given the strong public interest in this aspect of our previous work.
- 3.9 In response to the matters we raised with the Reviewer, what originally had been contained in a single paragraph has become the 'File Locations' chapter at paragraphs 192-206 of the Internal Review.

4 THE ROTHERHAM INTERNAL REVIEW

- 4.1 The Internal Review has been published in full. It is a thorough and comprehensive analysis of material from multiple sources. It addressed the four questions set out in our terms of reference.
- 4.2 As we indicated at paragraph 3.5 above, the Reviewer was not constrained only to look at internal files and records, and the Department made contact with further individuals who may have had the opportunity to raise concerns with the Home Office [paragraphs 53-56]
- 4.3 As the Reviewer recognised, no comprehensive attempt to identify records outside the period of relevance to the Rotherham research project was made. In the course of conducting searches for the Review some information concerning child sexual abuse in Rotherham more generally was identified and where it was considered by the Reviewer to be of interest, it has been referred to in the Internal Review.
- 4.4 We were satisfied that the Reviewer and the Department, alive to the difficulties created by the 'imperfectly operated' filing system, took a meticulous approach. Although the Review examined some electronic files relevant to the period, the Department's record management policy was described as 'print to paper' until 2006. See the consideration of:
 - 4.4.1 Record management policy [paragraphs 35-38],
 - 4.4.2 Review of Home Office physical (paper) files [paragraphs 39-43],
 - 4.4.3 Review of Home Office electronic files [paragraphs 44-46],
 - 4.4.4 Review of physical and electronic files held by other Government Departments and other relevant organizations [paragraphs 47-51],
 - 4.4.5 Key documents [paragraph 52], and
 - 4.4.6 Additional information sought [paragraphs 53-56].

5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1 Professor Alexis Jay's Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham [1997-2013] was published on 26 August 2014 [the Jay Report]. This revealed an appalling picture of child abuse.
- 5.2 Whether or not the Home Office had access to the evaluator's document described in chapter 10 of the Jay report, it is evident from its project termination letter [key document 11] and subsequent internal briefing for the Home Secretary [key document 15] that the Department knew that significant disputes between local agencies in Rotherham existed within the research project. However, the Home Office focus seems specifically to have been on the consequence of such disputes for the advancement of evidence that would support a commissioned evaluation, rather than the cause of such disputes. Closer consideration of the latter could have uncovered faster the failings we now know were putting children at risk.
- 5.3 The Reviewer draws this out in paragraphs 216 and 217. The Reviewer comments that since pieces of information questioning the response of statutory services were available to the Home Office, opportunities to follow up on, or seek further information about, matters in Rotherham including whether the police and other statutory agencies were responding appropriately, existed.
- 5.4 However, the Reviewer notes that it was not possible to corroborate that all information referred to in the Review was definitively received by the Home Office. Limitations of the Department's record system is relevant to establishing for sure whether any action was taken in response to the allegations raised and it is not possible now to say whether a referral to a police force was made [paragraph 219].
- 5.5 Two distinct issues arise:
- 5.5.1 With regard to documenting a clear record of what would happen in similar circumstances today new policies have been introduced which create specific requirements in relation to the Home Office's treatment of allegations of child abuse [Internal Review paragraphs 223-227 and recommendation 2 in the Wanless Whittam Review].
- 5.5.2 Whatever the specific task an individual is focused on, everybody can play a part in keeping children safe by considering whether they might be at risk as a consequence of available information. Considering potential risk to children beyond the focus of a specific task, is a lesson of wider relevance that public policy makers might reflect on in all contexts.

- 5.6 One final reflection on the nature of the Home Office engagement with the exploitation and abuse in Rotherham eventually uncovered by the Jay Report is triggered by paragraph 91 of the Internal Review, which outlines very different interpretations of a phone call between the former researcher in Rotherham and a Home Office official. The researcher thought she was calling to 'whistleblow' or report malpractice, while the official receiving the call interpreted it as one to explain a delay to the research timetable.
- 5.7 This episode illustrates powerfully the value of all public agencies offering a well-publicised, easily accessible whistleblowing contact point to avoid the risk of such misunderstandings. If any individual is concerned that the actions of any agency are compromising the safety and wellbeing of a child, they should have access to an independent source whose role is explicitly to assess and act upon that concern as necessary.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 It is important that our terms of reference are understood. We were not commissioned to undertake the actual review of information passed to the Home Office. We were asked to consider whether the methodology employed by the Home Office was sufficient, and whether the conclusions reached by the reviewer were reasonable in the light of the information identified. In undertaking that task we took into account the 'imperfectly operated paper records system', and that the Internal Review was considering events that started almost two decades ago.

6.2 We have concluded:

6.2.1 The methodology employed by the Home Office was sufficient to answer the series of questions set out in our terms of reference. The Reviewer explained the difficulty in conducting a search of the paper files by file name, and the need to refine search terms to get more relevant results. The Home Office accepted our recommendation that contact should also be made with individuals both inside and outside the Department. Given the size and the 'imperfectly operated paper records system', we are of the view that the approach taken was sufficient and proportionate.

6.2.2 The Reviewer explained the approach that had been undertaken. The Internal Review addressed each question asked and gives reasons for the findings as set out in that document. The findings and conclusions drawn in relation to those questions are reasonable and were open to the Reviewer to make on the information that was identified.

7 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 The need to record allegations of child abuse, what is sent to the police and what the result of that reference is remains important. We repeat the recommendation we made to that effect in our earlier report²:

“2. If an allegation of child abuse is made it must be recorded and the file marked as significant. That significance should then inform the Home Office as to how to handle that file, its retention and the need to document when [if at all] it is destroyed. This approach is relevant, not only to the Home Office, but could usefully be adopted across Government as well.

3. There should be a system within the Home Office of recording what information is sent to the police and then a formal procedure of confirming what the result of that reference is.”

² An Independent Review Of Two Home Office Commissioned Independent Reviews Looking At Information Held In Connection With Child Abuse from 1979-1999. Peter Wanless and Richard Whittam QC.

8 OBSERVATIONS

- 8.1 Whatever the specific task an individual is focused on, that individual can play a part in keeping children safe by considering, on the information available to them, whether a child might be at risk of abuse. Assessing whether a child might be at risk of abuse by looking beyond the focus of a specific task is a lesson of wider relevance that public policy makers might reflect on in all contexts.
- 8.2 There is value in all public agencies offering a well-publicised, easily accessible, whistleblowing contact point to avoid the risk of such misunderstandings. If any individual is concerned that the actions of any agency is compromising the safety and wellbeing of a child, they should have access to an independent source whose role is explicitly to assess and act upon that concern as necessary.



Home Office

The Rotherham Internal Review

A review into information passed to the Home Office in connection with allegations of Child Sexual Abuse in Rotherham (1998-2005)

Introduction

1. Professor Alexis Jay's Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997-2013) was published on 26 August 2014 ('the Jay Report'). This revealed an appalling picture of child abuse.
2. The Jay Report provided a detailed and wide-ranging consideration of the adequacy of the response of statutory bodies to child sexual exploitation (CSE)¹ in Rotherham. This included an assessment of the work of 'Risky Business' – an innovative, child focused project which, from 2001-2002, participated in a Rotherham-based research project focused on 'targeting men who are believed to be responsible for "pimping and grooming" young people into prostitution'².
3. This research project (the 'Rotherham research project') was funded by the Home Office under the remit of its Crime Reduction Programme – a comprehensive programme of research designed to identify what worked best in tackling crime.
4. Evidence contained in the Jay Report suggested that in the course of funding and evaluating the Rotherham research project, the Home Office had been passed information about the scale of child abuse in Rotherham and the response of its statutory agencies that should have raised concern³. In particular, Professor Jay saw a document headed 'Chapter 4: Key Achievements of the Home Office Pilot', believed to have been written by a project researcher sometime in 2002, which - although the town was not named - contained a description of the extent of CSE in Rotherham and a series of criticisms regarding the way in which this was being dealt with.
5. This researcher (the 'former researcher') also gave evidence to the Jay Review, and subsequently to the Home Affairs Select Committee, in which she described an unwillingness within South Yorkshire police to investigate those perpetrating sexual abuse against young people and protect potential victims; as well as her frustration that efforts to raise concerns with senior personnel were met with 'defensiveness and hostility'⁴.
6. The Jay Report recorded the former researcher's statement that she sent a copy of her report to 'Home Office evaluators and senior officials'⁵. Similar statements appeared in the former researcher's evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee⁶. This evidence also recorded the former researcher's recollections of having spoken to several Home Office officials by telephone and during meetings⁷ in connection with the Rotherham research project.
7. Finally, the Jay Report also recorded that Home Office funding for the Rotherham research project was 'withheld' and that findings from the Rotherham research project were

¹ Full terms of reference for the Jay Report are contained at Appendix 1 of the Jay Report (http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1407/independent_inquiry_cse_in_rotherham.pdf).

² **Key document 1**, University of Luton Draft Final Evaluation Report, page 26.

³ See, for example, paragraph 10.4-10.15 of the Jay Report.

⁴ Paragraph 10.9, the Jay Report.

⁵ Paragraph 10.15, the Jay Report.

⁶ See response to Q175, oral evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee (<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/child-sexual-exploitation-and-the-response-to-localised-grooming-followup/oral/12521.pdf>) and paragraph 36, former researcher's written evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee.

(<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/child-sexual-exploitation-and-the-response-to-localised-grooming-followup/written/12361.pdf>)

⁷ See <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/child-sexual-exploitation-and-the-response-to-localised-grooming-followup/written/12361.pdf>); paragraphs 20, 22, and 31.

excluded from the Home Office's final research report because of 'implementation problems'⁸.

8. In response to these reports, the then Home Secretary ordered the department to conduct a thorough analysis of all relevant papers covering the period in question to ascertain exactly what information had been made available to the Home Office ('the internal review'). On 2 September 2014, in response to an urgent question in Parliament, the then Home Secretary said:

The Home Office is looking into that [allegations that the Home Office were informed of concerns] internally. When that work has been completed, Richard Whittam and Peter Wanless—who have already been in the Home Office looking at the process of how what was called the Dickens dossier and the files on that were dealt with—will be looking at that process to make sure that it has been conducted absolutely properly⁹.

9. The internal review has sought to identify all relevant material created during the period 1998-2005 (that is, from the point at which the Crime Reduction Programme was announced¹⁰, until one year after the final evaluation research report¹¹ on 'Tackling Prostitution' projects (of which the Rotherham research project was one) was submitted.
10. The Home Office's search has been informed by evidence that parties central to the Rotherham research project have already supplied in oral and written evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee¹². Key external parties were also contacted directly to request any further papers of relevance to the Home Office internal review.
11. The department has attempted to contact former officials believed to have engaged with the Rotherham research project to obtain their recollections of events to guide the search for relevant records.
12. No comprehensive attempt to identify records outside the period of relevance to the Rotherham research project has been made. In the course of conducting searches for the purposes of this report, some information concerning child sexual abuse in Rotherham more generally has been identified. Where considered of interest, this has been referred to in this report, whether falling within the date range or not.
13. In the course of conducting the internal review, the department has sought to answer the following questions.
- i. What information about child sexual abuse in Rotherham did the Home Office receive as a result of the Crime Reduction Programme and, in particular:
 - a. did the Home Office receive, whether directly or indirectly, a copy of the draft report described in the Jay Report as headed 'Chapter 4: Key achievements of the Home Office Pilot';
 - b. did the Home Office receive, whether directly or indirectly, a copy of the former researcher's detailed case study notes (see paragraph 22) and
 - c. was the Home Office informed, whether directly or indirectly, of the former researcher's concerns?

⁸ The Jay Report, paragraph 10.15.

⁹ Hansard, volume 585, 2 September 2014.

¹⁰ **Key document 2**, page 1. The 'Crime Reduction Programme (CRP) ... [was] announced on 21st July 1998'.

¹¹ **Key document 3**, Home Office Research Study 279, Tackling Street Prostitution: Towards an holistic approach, Marianne Hester and Nicole Westmarland, University of Bristol. Published July 2004.

¹² See <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/localised-grooming-follow-up/>.

- ii. What action was taken in response to any relevant information received; for example, were relevant authorities informed?
 - iii. What were the general circumstances of the Home Office's engagement with the Rotherham research project, in particular:
 - a. why was the Rotherham research project commissioned;
 - b. what funding for the Rotherham research project was provided, and when and why was that funding stopped and
 - c. why was an evaluation report of the Rotherham research project not published?
 - iv. If the department did receive any of the information detailed above, but it has since been destroyed, did this take place in accordance with applicable information retention policies in place at the time?
14. This document sets out the department's findings in response to these questions. In addition, although not directly required by these questions, this report also documents information relating to child sexual abuse in Rotherham identified as a result of search activities related to the internal review, but which was not provided to the Home Office in the direct context of the Rotherham research project.

Background

The Home Office Crime Reduction Programme

15. The Home Office's Crime Reduction Programme was a wide-ranging research programme designed to assess what works in tackling crime. Commissioned in 1998, the Crime Reduction Programme comprised various initiatives, one of which was focused on tackling prostitution. The Tackling Prostitution initiative supported 11 research projects, which, for the purposes of evaluating the success of the interventions, were divided into three groups: the protecting young people; policing and enforcement and supporting and exiting prostitution projects¹³.
16. The protecting young people group comprised three research projects: the Bristol Pandora project; the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Project and the Rotherham Risky Business project (the Rotherham research project).

'Risky Business'

17. Risky Business was a Rotherham-based youth project set up in 1997 to identify and support young people involved in CSE. Operating as part of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Youth Services, the Risky Business project adopted an outreach approach, concerning itself with the whole child and working in a manner complementary to that of statutory services¹⁴. The quality of Risky Business's work with individual children is noted in the Jay Report.
18. At the time the Risky Business Crime Reduction Programme funding bid was made, the Risky Business steering group was made up of the following agencies and representatives¹⁵:
- the Domestic Violence Forum;
 - Rush House Homelessness Project;
 - the Leaving Care Team;
 - the Children's Protection and Planning Unit Social Services;
 - the Family Crisis Response Team, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Social Services;
 - the Coalition for the Removal of Pimping (CROP);
 - South Yorkshire Police;
 - Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (Education);
 - Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (Youth Services)
 - Rotherham Crime Reduction Programme;
 - GU Med Rotherham District General;
 - the Senior Nurse Adviser, Child Protection, Doncaster Gate Hospital; and
 - the NSPCC.

The Rotherham Bid for Crime Reduction Programme Research Funding

19. In 2001, a bid¹⁶ was received for Crime Reduction Programme research funding to support an intervention led by two projects: Risky Business and the charity then known as the Coalition for the Removal of Pimping (CROP)¹⁷.

¹³ **Key document 3**, Home Office Research Study 279, Tackling Street Prostitution: Towards an holistic approach, Marianne Hester and Nicole Westmarland, University of Bristol. Published July 2004; see pages 3 - 11.

¹⁴ See Jay Report, particularly Chapter 9 for a description of the Risky Business Project.

¹⁵ **Key document 4**, Rotherham Bid Documentation 'List of agencies/organisations involved in project'.

20. Unlike the Bristol and Sheffield projects, which sought to support young people in exiting prostitution, the Rotherham research project was specifically targeted at men believed to be responsible for ‘pimping and grooming’¹⁸ young people into prostitution.
21. Funding was sought in order to employ a research and development worker to gather information that could be used in targeting pimps by encouraging prosecutions at all stages of the grooming process. In addition, young people affected by sexual abuse would be offered one-to-one support and safe accommodation¹⁹.
22. In order to produce enhanced evidence that could then be acted upon by the police, the research and development worker would also produce case studies of ten young people identified as being at risk²⁰.
23. A research and development worker for the Rotherham research project was appointed (██████████ the former researcher) and employed by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council²¹.

The University of Luton Evaluation of the ‘Protecting Young People’ Project Group

24. As was the case with all parts of the Crime Reduction Programme²², the Rotherham research project was subject to a process of independent evaluation, funded by the Home Office. These independent evaluations were designed to assess the achievements of projects, so that wider lessons regarding what worked in tackling crime could be learned.
25. Evaluation of the protecting young people project group was undertaken by the University of Luton (now Bedfordshire) under contract from the Home Office²³. Led by Professors Margaret Melrose and David Barrett, the evaluation was expected to include an assessment of the Sheffield, Bristol and Rotherham research projects.
26. The University of Luton’s final evaluation report²⁴ included a literature review, discussion of methodological issues associated with the evaluation and a discussion on partnership working; set out project context; described the achievements of those projects covered by the report; considered the question of ‘what more needs to be done’ and finally, detailed recommendations. It does not contain content relating to the Rotherham research project.

Home Office Personnel

27. Members of staff based in a range of Home Office teams are understood to have had contact with the Rotherham research project. These include:
 - the Home Office’s Research, Development and Statistics Directorate’s Policing and Reducing Crime Unit (PRCU);

¹⁶ **Key document 4**, Rotherham Bid Documentation.

¹⁷ Now PACE ‘Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation’, Registered Charity No. 1092560.

¹⁸ **Key document 1**, University of Luton Draft Final Evaluation Report, page 26.

¹⁹ **Key document 4**, Rotherham Bid Documentation, ‘Proposed Interventions, including all components of the multi-agency strategy...’.

²⁰ **Key document 1**, University of Luton Draft Final Evaluation Report, page 26.

²¹ Former researcher’s summary of evidence submitted to the Home Affairs Select Committee

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/child-sexual-exploitation-and-the-response-to-localised-grooming-followup/written/12361.html>

²² <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/cdp1costeff.pdf>, page 3 ‘All the parts of the Crime Reduction Programme will be independently evaluated to assess their effectiveness and cost-effectiveness in reducing crime and improving the impact of the criminal justice system’.

²³ **Key document 5**, Evaluation Contract between the Home Office and the University of Luton.

²⁴ **Key document 6**, presumed final version of University of Luton Evaluation Report.

- the Home Office's Sentencing and Offences Unit (SOU); and
- the team representing the Home Office at the Government Office of Yorkshire and the Humber.

Research, Development and Statistics Directorate

28. The recollections of former officials are consistent in stating that responsibility for the evaluation of Tackling Prostitution initiative projects fell to the Research, Development and Statistics (RDS) Directorate²⁵.
29. The Grade [redacted] official [redacted] was Former Official [redacted], who was based in the RDS's Policing and Reducing Crime unit. Former Official [redacted], a researcher [redacted] (at [redacted] Grade), had contact with the Rotherham research project during late 2001 and the summer of 2002, a critical period in the Home Office's relationship with the project.

Sentencing and Offences Unit

30. Project management documentation from the time details both PRCU and SOU members of staff as contacts for the prostitution projects²⁶; suggesting SOU may have retained policy responsibilities for the projects (while, as above, PRCU was responsible for the evaluation). Former Official [redacted] (an [redacted] grade ([redacted]) in SOU) recalled her predecessor at SOU as having been involved in selecting projects for support under the Tackling Prostitution strand of the Crime Reduction Programme²⁷. She also recalled being responsible for contacting projects to 'chase' the data due from them as part of the evaluation process²⁸.
31. An email from 20 August 2000 reports an account from a member of the CRPU (presumed to be the Crime Reduction Programme Unit) team about the intended lines of communication with research projects as follows:

...advice from CRPU is that policy units liaise with regional crime reduction teams [presumed to be based at the relevant Government Office] over their projects, and that the regional teams will be producing regular reports on these projects which will come to SOU. SOU will also be asked by CRPU to provide regular updates on this initiative to the Crime Reduction Programme board²⁹.

The Government Office

32. An email from a member of the RDS team dated 29 May 2003 indicates that – at least in the view of the official concerned – the Government Office team were 'the first point of contact for projects'³⁰. Although it has not been possible to confirm whether this was the case, the Government Office in question would have been the then Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, and members of Home Office staff would have been based at regional Government Offices to represent issues of Home Office policy relating to the Government Offices' work. Evidence suggests that Government Offices were involved in

²⁵ See, for example, records of discussion with Former Official [redacted] and Former Official [redacted], contained at Annex G.

²⁶ See, for example, **key document 7**; a progress report dated 9 July 2002.

²⁷ This official's details are indeed contained in the Prospectus and Invitation to bid, **key document 2**.

²⁸ See 'Note of a meeting with Former Official [redacted]', at Annex G.

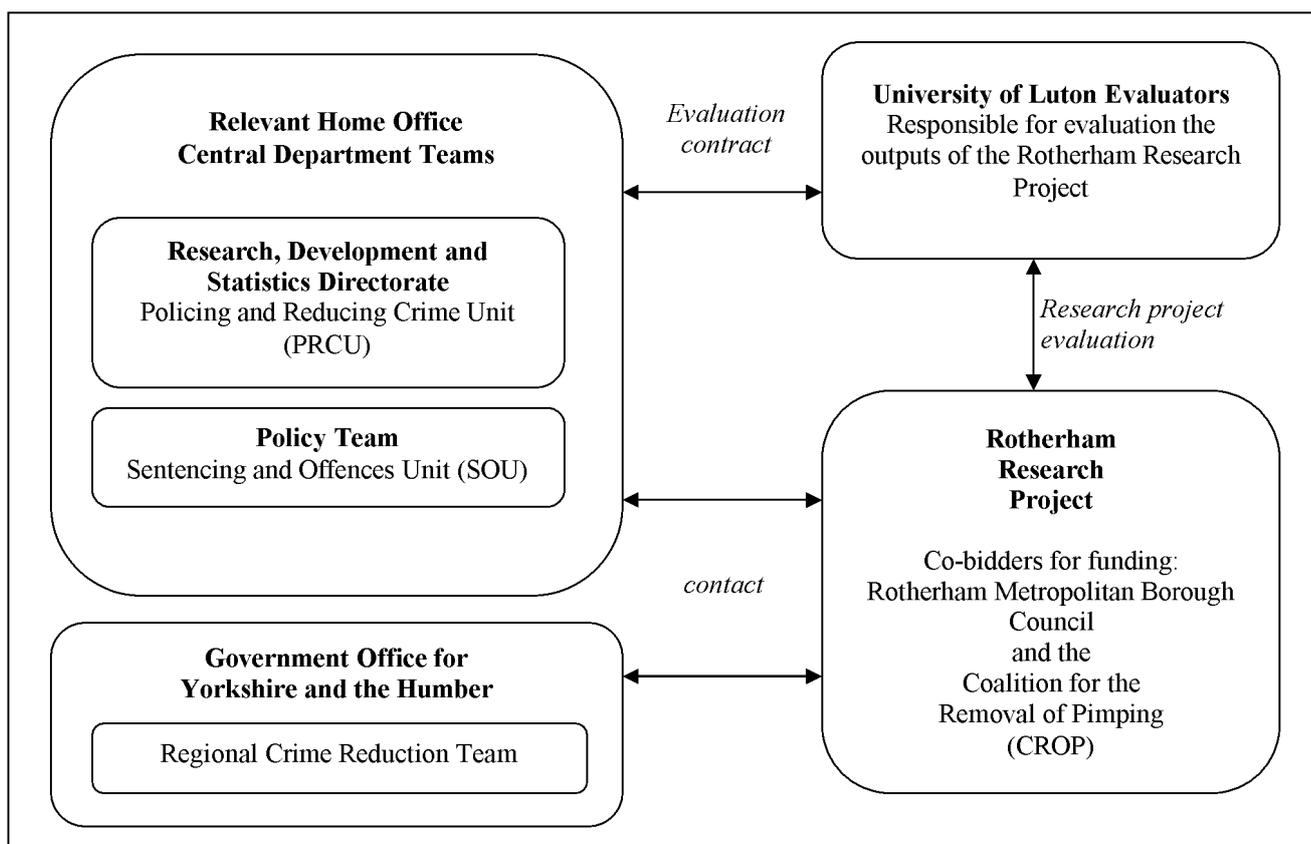
²⁹ **Key document 8**, internal Home Office email dated 20 August 2000.

³⁰ **Key document 9**, email relating to the production of briefing to support the then Home Secretary's attendance at a 2003 CROP conference.

evaluation of the projects³¹; and two former officials based in PRCU recollected the Government Office having contact with the Rotherham research project³².

Home Office wider contact with CROP

33. File search activity has revealed some wider contact between CROP and the Home Office, unrelated to the Crime Reduction Programme and made in the context of a review of prostitution (signalled in the 2002 'Protecting the Public' Command Paper³³ and which involved the 2004 'Paying the Price' consultation on prostitution³⁴). The lead official working on the [REDACTED], Former Official [REDACTED] was also based in SOU (Grade [REDACTED]).
34. A diagram setting out the relationship between the Rotherham research project participants, the Rotherham research project evaluators and the Home Office is provided below.



³¹ Bids were to be submitted to local Government Offices or the National Assembly for Wales, as applicable, see **key document 2**.

³² See notes of discussions with Former Official [REDACTED] and Former Official [REDACTED], Annex G.

³³ Available at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20091016095138/http://www.archive2.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm56/5668/5668.pdf>.

³⁴ **Key document 10**, 'Paying the Price', a Home Office consultation on prostitution, dated July 2004.

Methodology for the Review of Files and Records

Record Management Policy

35. As noted above, the search activity supporting the internal review has principally targeted records produced in the time period from 1998-2005: from the point at which the Crime Reduction Programme was commissioned, through to the year following publication of the final evaluation report on the Tackling Prostitution initiative projects.
36. Until 2006, the department's record management policy was described as 'print to paper': that is, any information created or received in digital format that needed to be retained for business or historical purposes should have been printed off and retained in physical form.
37. From the outset it was acknowledged that given the length of time that has now passed since the events described in the Jay Report as well as the Home Office information retention policy operational at that time, much of the information saved to the department's records could have been destroyed. Correspondence files were typically destroyed after two years (unless a business reason for retaining these for longer existed), and following review, and subject to content, policy files may have been destroyed at any point after between five and 25 years of the file's registration date, unless grounds for longer retention were felt to apply.
38. Three principal exercises were conducted by the department in order to locate documents containing information of relevance to the internal review. These are described below.

Review of Home Office Physical (paper) Files

39. Searches of Home Office records of physical files³⁵ were undertaken by the Home Office Knowledge and Information Management Unit using a wide range of search terms (contained at Annex A).
40. This process principally involved searching for key terms within file title information, to generate lists of files with potentially relevant titles. These title lists were then reviewed by officials for relevance. Title lists could be refined on the basis of a range of available information: for example, through use of data relating to the file's creation date, its overarching series code (denoting wider topic theme) or status (for example, whether the file had been destroyed or not) and where appropriate, available refinements were applied.
41. Potential relevance was then assessed solely on the basis of the file's title. Since paper files were only reviewed if the file title was judged to have sufficient relevance to warrant its retrieval, the process of selecting files for review was repeated independently by another official. All paper files that were retrieved were reviewed by an official.
42. Limitations associated with the search of physical files must be stated from the outset. There is no ability to remotely or electronically search the contents of Home Office paper files using key words, meaning that assumptions about the relevance of content were made on the basis of title information. It is therefore extremely difficult to confirm that – without exception – all relevant information held in paper form has been located.
43. As per the findings of the Peter Wanless and Richard Whittam QC's earlier Independent Review³⁶, it should also be noted that the Home Office paper record system was

³⁵ The Home Office 'RMSys' database.

'imperfectly operated'. It is therefore also possible that business critical material which should have been held on a physical file was not correctly retained.

Review of Home Office Electronic Files

44. The department conducted a large-scale search of electronic files using agreed search terms. All files containing one of several search terms identified as high-priority search terms were reviewed by an official. Files containing two or more lower-priority search terms were also reviewed. A full explanation of the search methodology deployed in connection with this search is provided at Annex B.
45. The department also reviewed the email account status of Home Office officials known to have been closely involved with the Rotherham research project. Although retentions policy has now changed, until February 2015 it was the case that the email accounts of officials leaving the department would be closed shortly after their departure, at which time the contents of these accounts became unavailable. An exercise to identify live accounts was conducted but all officials known to have had significant contact with the project had left the department.
46. Only one live email account with any reasonable likelihood of relevance was located. This email account and the holder's additional electronic records were reviewed in accordance with the methodology set out at Annex C. This search did not, however, reveal any information of relevance.

Review of Electronic and Physical Files Held by other Government Departments and other Relevant Organisations

47. Other Government departments which had policy interest in, or responsibility for, child 'prostitution' or child abuse; or which might have become responsible for relevant Home Office files following machinery of Government changes, were also asked to conduct searches of physical and electronic holdings for relevant information.
48. The following Government departments undertook searches:
 - the Department for Education;
 - the Department for Communities and Local Government;
 - the Department of Health; and
 - the Ministry of Justice.
49. Departments undertook their own approach to searching to ensure that relevant material held within the organisation was located. However, to assist departments in this effort the Home Office did share details of search terms it would itself be deploying (letter provided at Annex D).
50. Both the Department for Education and the Ministry of Justice identified relevant files and these were supplied to the Home Office.
51. The Home Office also asked South Yorkshire Police, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and the National Crime Agency to conduct targeted searches of records for the purposes of the internal review. These searches were conducted, but did not reveal information of relevance.

³⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-peter-wanless-and-richard-whittam-qc-review>

Key Documents

52. Documents of particular relevance to the work of the internal review identified as a result of the various exercises described above are contained at Annex E.

Additional Information Sought

53. Although the then Home Secretary's original commitment related to an internal review of files and records, the department has taken additional steps to ensure that all information of relevance is located. To this end, the internal review team made contact with further individuals who may have had opportunity to raise concerns with the Home Office.
54. Persons and organisations contacted in this regard are as follows:
- the 'former researcher' associated with the Rotherham research project;
 - the University of Bedfordshire (formerly Luton); and
 - the charity Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (PACE); formerly the Coalition for the Removal of Pimping (CROP).
55. The department is grateful to those external parties who kindly supplied evidence to support the work of the internal review. This evidence is contained at Annex F.
56. The department has also taken steps to contact former civil servants who may have had contact with the Rotherham research project or who may have had contact with key participants around the time in question. Notes of information from former officials who kindly assisted the work of the internal review are provided at Annex G.

Findings

What information about child abuse in Rotherham did the Home Office receive as a result of the Crime Reduction Programme?

57. This section sets out the department's findings in connection with information about child abuse received by the Home Office in direct relation to the Crime Reduction Programme.

Were copies of the former researcher's draft report or case studies received?

58. Searches of paper and electronic records did not reveal either a draft report resembling that described in the Jay Report, or any document containing the former researcher's ten case studies.
59. Of the relevant former officials we were able to contact who might have received this material, none were able to directly recall having received the draft report or case studies. Different views were expressed about the likelihood of the draft report having been received: for example, one former official had no recollection of events at all, one inclined to the view that this material might have been received; and one felt it less likely. Most took pains to emphasise that given the extent of time which has now passed, their recollections of events could not be said to be either complete or perfect.
60. Information supplied to the Home Office by the former researcher clearly states her recollection that the draft report was sent to the Home Office. Although former officials held differing views on the likelihood of this material having been received, since no official had firm recollections on this point, evidence does not suggest any material grounds for doubting this statement. Limitations of the paper record described at paragraph 42 above should also be noted. Given, though, that a copy of the report and/or case studies would have to be found within Home Office records before a conclusive statement that they were received could be made, and since they have not been, a definitive statement that they were received is not possible.
61. It should be noted that **key document 1** (a University of Luton 'Draft Final' Evaluation Report, marked 'Report 3') does contain an apparent reference to one of the case studies, as well as various citations of the former researcher's work. This case study extract, described as 'case study H', provides the clearest indication of the likely content of the ten case studies:

Her mother made another missing person's report, the only one to be formally logged by the police. The FRCT telephoned the police when no response had been received. They were told that the young person's mother should "go and get her herself if she knew where she was". The young person's mother therefore followed this advice and went to the house where she believed her daughter was being held. An Asian man answered the door and claimed that the young woman was not there. A young man believed to be perpetrator number 1 eventually allowed the young woman's mother in but would not allow her into the bedrooms. The mother telephoned the police and waited outside the house for one-and-a-half hours. Incredibly when she telephoned again she was told that if she was causing a public disturbance she would be arrested and charged with a public order offence. The police arrived at the house shortly afterwards but no further action was taken to recover the young person from the house as "she was not in any danger". The young

woman's mother was told that it was not the role of the police to run around after 14-year olds (██████ 2002 from case study H)³⁷.

62. **Key document 11** (Former Official██████'s undated letter to the Director of Education, Culture and Leisure Services announcing the decision to terminate evaluation of the Rotherham research project) does refer to case study material. Numbered paragraph two of that letter suggests that the case studies were given to the University of Luton evaluation team at a joint project-evaluation team meeting 'in March 2002'. Unfortunately, whilst the letter states that Home Office officials were in attendance at a 'number of meetings' at which the accuracy of data was discussed, it is not clear whether Home Office officials attended this March 2002 'case study' meeting, or whether Home Office officials received copies of the case studies either at that meeting, or by some other means (whether directly from the Rotherham research project or via the Luton evaluation team).
63. **Key document P5**, a CROP minute of a discussion between directors and the former researcher, also alludes to a further 23 April meeting involving the 'Home Office and [University of Luton] evaluation team' at which case study data received by the evaluators was returned to Rotherham Borough Council. There is a reference to the evaluators, as opposed to the Home Office, shredding case studies, which could suggest that these were not in the Home Office's possession, but this is far from clear. **Key documents 11 and P5** are, however, consistent in indicating that Home Office officials were present at a number of meetings at which the accuracy of case studies and/ or the handling of case studies was discussed.

Was the Home Office informed, whether directly or indirectly, of the researcher's concerns?

64. No record has been discovered within Home Office files containing a direct account of the former researcher's concerns; although a number of documents have been located which demonstrate that the Home Office was aware of tensions in relationships between the former researcher and Rotherham Borough Council and within the project more generally, as well as other issues affecting the project.
65. These documents demonstrate that the Home Office had sufficient information to know that that the problems being experienced by the Rotherham research project itself were such that the project was not achieving its intended aims.
66. Documents have also been identified which contain concerns regarding the performance of statutory agencies; although the picture presented in these documents is mixed. Relevant material is described below.

University of Luton Evaluation Reports

67. Search activities have demonstrated that the department did receive some information associated with the Rotherham research project, via the University of Luton. This includes an 'Interim Process Report', produced by the University of Luton (**key document 12**) and a 'Draft Final' Evaluation Report, marked 'Report 3' (**key document 1**).
68. **Key document 12** (titled as an August 2001 report, and dated 26 July 2001) would have been issued some eight months after the Home Office's assessment of bids for funding took place; that is, relatively early on in the project's lifespan. It is known to have been received by the Home Office.

³⁷ **Key document 1**, pages 27-28.

69. The report concerns the University of Luton's evaluation of the young people group of projects. In addition to wider methodological discussion, it contains an analysis of the three projects being evaluated. In relation to the Rotherham research project, it contains a description of the project's activities, its achievements to date, the role of the research and development worker (that is, the former researcher), difficulties encountered by the project and an assessment of work remaining to be done. A number of project achievements are described³⁸, and the report suggests that the project is making progress in raising awareness amongst agencies³⁹ and in establishing that 'the commercial sexual exploitation of children and young people is a child protection issue'⁴⁰. However, the report also notes that there have also been 'difficulties in persuading the police to accept that child sexual exploitation is a child protection issue'⁴¹. The report's preliminary reflections on the projects overall states that 'with minor exceptions, all the projects are being implemented in accordance with their original plans'⁴².
70. **Key document 1** is dated June 2002, and as such, would have been produced shortly before the decision to terminate evaluation of the Rotherham research project was taken (July 2002). It is known to have been received by the Home Office.
71. The report contains sections on the project's 'success stories' and 'challenges to success'. Success in awareness-raising continues to be noted⁴³, as well as a review of the use of bed and breakfast accommodation inspired by the project⁴⁴. Positive developments relating to the police are also described: a review of practice in relation to missing persons; increased awareness of commercial sexual exploitation of young women; creation of the post of "Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator" (the 'first in the country') and an indication that the work on sexual exploitation will be "mainstreamed" in the future and become a policing priority to which resources will be allocated accordingly⁴⁵.
72. The report, however, places significantly greater emphasis on the issues negatively affecting the project's performance. 'Challenges to success' commences with a detailed discussion of issues with working relationships within the project. It states:
- ...difficulties appear to have arisen within the project between the research and development worker and the management committee of CROP/RB [Risky Business]. These appear to have arisen as a result of project procedures not being followed appropriately. In addition, there appear to have been some difficulties between the project and statutory organisations, such as the police and social services, which in turn have generated tensions between the project and the local authority. This has created a number of pressures within the team. A member of the management committee of RB told us that with hindsight, 'With CROP, service level agreements, partnership arrangements would have been useful' because 'their lobbying role isn't in keeping with the policies of Rotherham Borough Council'. At the time of writing, it appears that these difficulties have prevented the research and development officer from carrying out her role effectively.*⁴⁶
73. This suggests that CROP was seeking to press for action in a manner which Rotherham Borough Council did not feel, for reasons unspecified in the draft report, to have been appropriate.

³⁸ **Key document 12**, pages 18-19.

³⁹ **Key document 12**, page 19.

⁴⁰ **Key document 12**, pages 19-20.

⁴¹ **Key document 12**, page 21.

⁴² **Key document 12**, page 29.

⁴³ **Key document 1**, page 30.

⁴⁴ **Key document 1**, page 30.

⁴⁵ **Key document 1**, pages 30-31.

⁴⁶ **Key document 1**, page 31.

74. **Key document 1** goes on to describe issues around the location of the project's ICT database and the social services department's refusal to allow 'any of its data'⁴⁷ to be entered onto it; and continues by stating that the police were 'pursuing their own investigation that is not based on data gathered by the research and development officer'. Although this suggests that the police were pursuing some action (albeit in isolation from the data being produced by the project), the report goes on to note the evaluator's 'sources' view which questioned the adequacy of the policing response. The 'sources' report states: the police have been 'seriously hampered ... by a number of factors'; including:
- the lack of a vice squad or dedicated team
 - disbelief that Rotherham has a problem with sexual exploitation
 - judgemental moral attitudes towards the young women involved
 - lack of resources⁴⁸.
75. The report's summary of the project describes some 'small steps forward' having been achieved, but states there to be 'a great deal more work to do'. It states that there is 'no indication that any of the men identified as involved in the exploitation of young girls are to be prosecuted' and this, with the additional information described above, indicates the principal intended aims of the Rotherham research project were not being achieved.
76. **Key document 6**, a presumed final version of the University of Luton's evaluation report on the 'young people' group of research projects, contains no reference to the Rotherham research project itself. **Key document 6** was obtained from the University of Luton. Consistent with information provided by CROP (see, for example, the CROP response to the Home Office's trafficking consultation at **key document 42**) the report does indicate that children from Rotherham are being exploited in other locations (in this case, Sheffield):

In Sheffield, young people tend to come from Rotherham and other surrounding smaller towns. It is thought that the youngest and most vulnerable women working on the streets in Sheffield are from Rotherham (Interview with Sheffield police 2001)⁴⁹.

Home Office Internal Documents and Correspondence

77. Whilst Home Office internal documents containing something approximating a direct report of the former researcher's concerns have not been found, a number of items have been located which indicate Home Office knowledge of project tensions and issues affecting the project. As internal documents, all of the items referenced below are known to have been available to the department.
78. **Key document 13**, the University of Luton's tender for the contract to evaluate the young people group of the Tackling Prostitution projects suggests that the risk of difficulties in multi-agency working relationships was identified from the outset. The tender document quotes a phrase used in the Rotherham research project's bid documentation (**key document 4**): '...police attitudes are not always well informed'⁵⁰ and states that this view 'portends of potential difficulties to come in this particular partnership'⁵¹.
79. **Key documents 14 and 15** appear to form fragments of briefing material produced in support of the then Home Secretary's attendance at a June 2003 CROP conference.

⁴⁷ **Key document 1**, page 31.

⁴⁸ **Key document 1**, page 32.

⁴⁹ **Key document 6**, page 31.

⁵⁰ **Key document 4**, see section headed 'a) Use of Child Abduction Law and civil remedies in the early pimp 'grooming' phase', final paragraph, bullet 4.

⁵¹ **Key document 13**, page 12.

What appears to be a final version of this briefing was also located on a paper file (**key document 16**); and contains largely similar content.

80. **Key document 14** states a ‘number of issues’ to have arisen in respect of the project, description of which is limited to concern about the ‘experience and authority’ of the project steering group and an account of the employment dispute affecting the former researcher. **Key document 16** suggests that the concern relating to the steering group could have been expressed by the local Director of Social Services, who apparently ‘criticised the strength and experience of the steering group’. **Key documents 15 and 16** describe the project as having run into ‘a number of implementation difficulties’ and a ‘number of allegations and disputes relating to work of statutory agencies, and individual members of staff’. It goes on to state that ‘much of the criticism (of inappropriate sharing of information and non-professionalism) was directed from the council to [REDACTED]’, but provides no further information on the nature of issues raised⁵².
81. **Key document 17** (an email chain from July 2004 discussing timing of a Written Ministerial Statement) refers to unspecified ‘problems’. **Key document 18** (advice on the suitability of projects for visits) refers to ‘funding’ difficulties which has ‘caused some bad feeling’. **Key document 7**, an internal Home Office document from 9 July 2002, provides a progress update on the prostitution projects, and notes that in ‘one project area’ (assumed to be Rotherham) the evaluation of the project has been closed ‘due to difficulties in gathering accurate data from the project’. Finally, **key document 19** (a project management report from September 2002, produced after termination of the project’s evaluation) indicates knowledge of continued ‘issues’, appearing to relate to the former researcher’s use of the data:

Issues around evaluation and confidentiality are still being raised. The researcher has breached the terms and conditions by running training seminars purporting to use the Home Office finding’s [sic] as the basis of the courses. Advice is being taken from the HO legal team. The programme monitor is working closely with [Former Official ■], evaluation lead and [Former Official ■] the initiative owner⁵³.

82. **Key document 20**, a letter from [REDACTED] on behalf of the Risky Business Project Steering Group to the Home Office’s Former Official ■, provides further evidence of project tensions being known to the Home Office and indicates tensions in relationships had extended to the project’s relationship with the Home Office evaluators (the University of Luton).

Documents submitted by PACE

83. Documents submitted by PACE were also reviewed for information relating to the Home Office being informed of concerns in connection with the Rotherham research project.
84. PACE’s submission contained a number of minutes of internal CROP meetings, some of which are described in more detail below. As internal minutes, there is no suggestion that these notes were submitted to the Home Office during the time in question; however, several of these do describe instances of contact with the Home Office.
85. Identifying detailed records of discussions within Home Office records would allow for corroboration of the record provided by the CROP minutes, and as such records (which may not have been created even if the contact were to have taken place) have not been identified, it has not been possible to corroborate the specific contact described below.

⁵² **Key document 16**, CROP speech Q and A, page 6.

⁵³ Full accounts of Former Official ■ and Former Official ■’s recollections are provided at Annex G, Record of Discussions with Former Officials.

Material identified for the purposes of this review has not suggested any reasons for doubting their accuracy, either.

86. **Key Document P3** is a 'confidential note of an informal discussion' between CROP directors and the former researcher, dated 3 May 2002. This provides an account of the former researcher's difficulties and her view that allegations of 'breach of confidentiality' were motivated by her findings of the 'high incidence and lamentable position of women under the control of pimps'. The document does indicate that some discussion took place with the Home Office: stating 'the Home Office also believes she is innocent'; and that the Home Office already has 'limited information' about the former researcher's 'difficulties'.
87. **Key Document P5**, a 'confidential note of an informal discussion of the directors with [REDACTED]' dated 19 June 2002, contains a description of continuing difficulties being experienced by the former researcher. It describes a 23 April meeting attended by the Home Office and the University of Luton evaluation team, at which case study data provided to the evaluation team in March was returned to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. It also states that '[REDACTED] has spoken to the Home Office in London, and they know that she is being asked to falsify data and has other problems'. The note also states that a CROP trustee, Professor Jalna Hanmer, had tried to alert 'the regional office' (presumed to be the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber) 'that there are problems'. The note goes on to state that 'Jalna will consult with [Former Official]' (presumed Former Official [REDACTED]) regarding a possible transfer of the former researcher's employment from Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council directly to CROP.
88. The evidence supplied by PACE corroborates the existence of tensions in working relationships affecting the project.

Recollections of Former Officials

89. The former researcher's evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee describes her recollections of contact with Home Office officials⁵⁴. Although former officials' assessments of the likelihood of the former researcher's report having been received differs (and wider recollections are summarised more fully below), material identified for the purposes of this review has not otherwise identified anything appearing fundamentally contradictory to her account.
90. Of those former officials we were able to contact who might have received information equivalent to an account of the former researcher's concerns, none had recollections of having done so. Some did recall direct contact with the former researcher and did have specific recollections of issues affecting the project. Full accounts of discussions with former officials are provided at Annex G.
91. Former Official [REDACTED] did recall a telephone conversation with the former researcher. Her recollection of the call was that it had been made to report a delay to the evaluation data due to be received by the Home Office, which had been caused by a break-in. Former Official [REDACTED] recollected noting that the data would be delayed and said she had not felt the need to escalate the issue to other colleagues. Her recollection was that this had been because the content of the call had not led her to understand that the break-in causing the delay to the submission of the data was something other than a general burglary of office premises. Her recollection was that at the time of the call she had not understood the caller to be seeking to 'whistleblow' or to report malpractice.

⁵⁴ <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/child-sexual-exploitation-and-the-response-to-localised-grooming-followup/written/12361.html>.

92. Former Official ■ could recall being told there was an employment dispute affecting the former researcher, but had no specific recollections of the disciplinary proceedings being taken by Rotherham Borough Council. Former Official ■ recalled attending a meeting with the Rotherham project, and thought it likely that the former researcher would have been present, but, other than thinking it likely that concerns about data sharing would have been discussed, did not have any specific recollections of discussions at that meeting. Former Official ■ could not specifically recall having made the telephone call recollected by the former researcher regarding her use of project data (**key document FR1**), but took pains to note that because she could not remember it this did not mean it had not happened (and also that if the former researcher had said it had taken place, it must have done so).
93. Former Official ■'s recollection was that the first she had known about problems associated with the Rotherham research project was when Professor Margaret Melrose, a member of the University of Luton evaluation team, had telephoned to report 'something along the lines of there being a "number of issues with the project"'. Subsequent conversations between Former Official ■ and Professor Melrose as a result of that call had related to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's use of a taxi firm (described in further detail at paragraph 95, below). She had vague recollections of the former researcher experiencing difficulties with her line manager and project stakeholders and of project relationships being 'tense'; as well as reports that the Rotherham project office had been broken into and that the former researcher's data was missing, but beyond this, had no specific recollections.
94. In relation to contact with the Home Office described in documents submitted by PACE, those former officials we were able to contact were not able to recall further details of conversations with CROP personnel involving the discussion of concerns (other than those described above, or otherwise at Annex G).

Information received by the Department concerning Child Abuse relating to Rotherham Education Service's use of a Taxi Firm

95. A relatively clear set of departmental records exist in relation to a specific incident involving Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's use of a taxi firm, (**key documents 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25**). Although there is nothing in the record to suggest that this incident involved concerns of the former researcher, it clearly involved information about child abuse in Rotherham being referred to the Home Office as a result of the Rotherham research project. These documents also demonstrate that the Home Office would have been aware that concerns relating to the confidentiality of data had extended to affecting the project's relationship with the University of Luton evaluators.
96. **Key documents 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25** constitute a series of letters between the Home Office, the University of Luton and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. Written during the period December 2001 - February 2002, these show that University of Luton evaluators raised concerns with the Home Office regarding Rotherham Education Services' use of a taxi firm suspected of employing men 'actively involved in grooming and pimping young women into prostitution'.
97. **Key document 24** reports the concern regarding use of the taxi firm being raised in an email from Professor Melrose of 'December 2001' and **key document 23** refers to an email from Professor Melrose dated 8 January. Searches have not revealed copies of these emails; however, **key document 21** suggests that concern about the use of this taxi firm emerged as a result of one of the University of Luton's evaluation team sitting in on conversations with young people. The inference that can be drawn from the correspondence is that University of Luton evaluators were concerned that Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Education Services Department's use of this firm to

transport children could inadvertently be placing them at risk. This accords with Former Official [redacted]'s recollection of events, who, of the former civil servants we were able to contact, had the most detailed recollection of events relating to the taxi-firm correspondence.

98. This set of correspondence reveals issues in the relationship between the Rotherham research project and the University of Luton evaluators. In December 2001, (**key document 20**) a Rotherham Borough Council official wrote on behalf of the Risky Business Steering Group to both the Home Office and to the University of Luton (**key document 21**) to express dissatisfaction with the way issues of confidentiality were being managed. In key document 20, the council official states 'we initiated a discussion [with the evaluators] around confidentiality but were made to feel it was not an issue'. **Key documents 21** (Di Billups' letter on behalf of the Risky Business Project to Professor Melrose), and **22** (Professor Melrose's response), show that the manner in which the project evaluators had shared taxi and other project information had caused council officials concern.

What action was taken in response to any relevant information received; for example, were relevant authorities informed?

99. Findings are summarised in two sections, firstly, those relating to the Home Office's treatment of information relating to a taxi firm; and secondly, those relating to the Home Office's response to any other 'relevant information'.

Action taken in response to information relating to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's use of a taxi firm

100. Records identified through the searches provide a fairly clear description of actions taken by the Home Office in response to the information concerning Rotherham Education Services' use of a taxi firm.
101. **Key document 24** (letter from Former Official [redacted] to Professor Margaret Melrose, dated 11 February 2002) indicates that a Home Office official contacted officials in the relevant Government departments so that appropriate action could be taken to address these concerns. **Key document 24** states a Department for Education and Employment official 'notified the Child Protection Coordinator covering Rotherham' and contact with a 'senior office in the education authority' is also mentioned. The letter also states a Department of Health official had raised 'concerns with Social Services in Rotherham'.
102. The letter also reports that the police 'are currently trying to investigate these concerns and in order to progress this successfully are concerned that this should not become public knowledge', and also notes that it would be open to Professor Melrose to contact the police at a 'higher level' directly should she wish.
103. It has not been possible to obtain information as to whether the 'local government officer' (which may constitute a reference to an officer at the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber) was able to obtain an update on the progress of the investigation, and if so, what was found.
104. It should be noted that neither the official reported to have made the referral of information to other government departments nor those officials who are reported to have been the recipients of this referral could remember the incident, although these former officials did not consider that this meant the events described in the letter had not taken place. Both Former Official [redacted] and Former Official [redacted] were of the view that the actions described in **key document 24** were consistent with the way that child protection concerns would have been handled at that time.

Action taken in response to other ‘relevant information’

105. With regard to the former researcher’s concerns, as set out at paragraphs 64-94, it has not been possible to identify a clear picture of the full extent of relevant information that was received.
106. As set out in these paragraphs, it is evident from records and the accounts of former officials that the Home Office was aware of tensions in the Rotherham research project relationships and other issues affecting the Rotherham research project such that its intended outcomes were not being achieved.
107. Within this, there is evidence of the Home Office having been aware of concerns relating to the response of statutory agencies, most notably:
- The Home Office had access to information contained in **Key document 1**. This presents some positive steps in addition to substantial problems, but describes case studies produced by the former researcher as suggesting that ‘when a young person was reported missing, the response from ‘the police and social services was often less than adequate’, and sources’ concern that ‘police have been seriously hampered in doing the work they were expected to do...’⁵⁵;
 - **Key document 15**, which indicates Home Office awareness of ‘a number of allegations and disputes relating to work of statutory agencies, and individual members of staff’⁵⁶.
108. With the exception of action taken in response to the information relating to Rotherham Borough Council’s use of a taxi firm, described above, documents identified for the purposes of the review have not allowed us to identify the Home Office taking action (such as informing relevant authorities) in direct response either in connection with **key documents 1 and 15**, or to any other information received in the context of the Rotherham research project.
109. Former Official ■ recalled the Rotherham research project being different to other projects in that it was collecting data to help prosecute pimps; which involved non-anonymised information being shared with the police for operational and investigative purposes. Of the former officials we were able to contact, with the exception of matters relating to a taxi firm, none could remember the Home Office making a referral of any concerns raised directly in the context of the Rotherham research project to the police, or to other relevant authorities.
110. The Home Office requested that South Yorkshire Police, the National Crime Agency and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary conduct targeted searches of records to seek to establish whether any referral of relevant information was made. A targeted date range requested for these searches – 2002-2004 – encompasses the period when the Home Office was known to have been acting in relation to concerns expressed in connection with a taxi firm and the year in which the University of Luton’s draft final evaluation report (**key document 1**) was produced. These searches did not identify any relevant material.

What were the general circumstances of the Home Office’s engagement with the Rotherham research project?

111. A summary of information discovered about the Home Office’s general engagement with the Rotherham research project is set out below.

⁵⁵ **Key document 1**, page 27 and page 32.

⁵⁶ **Key document 15**, page 6.

Why was the Rotherham research project commissioned?

112. As noted in background information, the Rotherham research project was commissioned under the remit of the 'Tackling Prostitution' initiative of the Crime Reduction Programme. A number of documents have been identified which provide further information about the process by which the Rotherham research project was selected for funding.
113. **Key document 2** is the Crime Reduction Programme prospectus inviting bids for funding under the heading 'Tackling Prostitution – What Works?'. The prospectus states £0.5m would be available for 'local agencies working within a multi-agency context to implement local strategies for reducing prostitution-related crime and disorder'⁵⁷.
114. **Key document 4** is a bid for funding to support a project led by the Risky Business project and by CROP to 'build on ... existing preventative work and 1:1 support of young women at risk of or involved in sexual exploitation and to target pimps in the area'⁵⁸. **Key document 4** shows that £53,000 of Crime Reduction programme funding was sought to support the following activities:
- employment of a development worker to co-ordinate work around targeting pimps and enhanced evidence gathering;
 - identification of, and training for, four specialist foster carers to provide safe accommodation;
 - purchase of ICT equipment and software;
 - provision of equipment (described later as personal alarms and mobile phones) for issue to young women and their parents or carers.
115. **Key document 26**, a submission dated 30 November 2000, provides summarised information on selected projects for Ministers. It describes the Rotherham research project as 'one of the few bids focused on the exploitation of children' and as 'well focussed and innovative'.

What funding for the Rotherham research project was provided and when and why was that funding stopped?

116. Bids for funding were reviewed by an officials' panel which met on 24 November 2000. The panel comprised representatives from Home Office policy and research teams, as well as representatives from the Department for Health and the police. **Key documents 26 and 27** show that the Risky Business and CROP application scored well in the assessment, with the project recommended to receive the full amount of funding sought (£53,000).
117. **Key document 2**, the prospectus and invitation to bid, states that prostitution projects successful in their application for Crime Reduction Programme funding 'may be funded up to 31 March 2002'⁵⁹.
118. **Key document 28**, a submission dated 8 March 2002, shows that officials considered that there were a number of projects being supported under the Crime Reduction Programme's prostitution initiative that were successfully dealing with crime and disorder associated with prostitution. Because of the projects' success, SOU had made a bid for further funding for the projects as part of the 2002 Spending Review process, which, if the Spending Review bid was successful, would make additional funding available 'from 2003/04'⁶⁰. **Key**

⁵⁷ **Key document 2**, page 2.

⁵⁸ **Key document 4**, section headed 'Proposed interventions...?'.

⁵⁹ **Key document 2**, page 6.

⁶⁰ **Key document 27**, page 1.

document 29, a further submission dated 13 March (sent to Ministers as a covering submission to **key document 28**), recommends that continuation funding of £210,000 is provided for ten prostitution projects⁶¹. These submissions do not make clear which of the original 11 prostitution projects was not recommended for bridging funding; although **key document 30**, an undated paper titled 'Tackling Prostitution: What Works? Information for CRP Board' seems to suggest that all three of the 'protecting young people' projects were being considered for an extension of funding.

119. **Key document 31**, an email chain end-dated 25 March 2002 concerning bridging funding for Crime Reduction Programme projects, is a response to these submissions and shows that bridging funding of £283,000 was approved; covering a period of four months (i.e. until end July 2002).
120. **Key document 32** is a later submission dated 28 October 2002, and provides further information about the funding position of the 11 prostitution projects. Funding for a Nottingham-based project from the 'policing and enforcement' group seems to have ceased earliest (30 April 2002), and the inference may be drawn that this was the project not recommended for original bridging funding.
121. **Key document 32** indicates that in June, the then Home Secretary had asked for a further extension of funding for suitable prostitution projects, so that funding could continue beyond the bridging funding extension (end of July 2002) until 'the end of the current financial year' (end March 2003). Officials appear to have advised that not all of the projects would be suitable recipients of further funding, on the basis that some were 'not meeting their contractual obligations in terms of complying with the evaluation requirements, were securing funding elsewhere, or were seeking to diversify their activities beyond the remit of CRB [that is, the Board managing the overarching Crime Reduction Programme] goals'⁶². An assessment was therefore carried out to determine which projects were suitable candidates for further funding.
122. **Key document 32** indicates that six of the 11 original projects were recommended to receive further funding. Of the projects within the 'support and exiting' group, Kirklees, Manchester, Hull and Stoke on Trent projects received the further funding extension, whilst a project in Hackney did not. None of the projects in the 'policing and enforcement group' (Nottingham, Bournemouth and Liverpool) received the further extension of funding. In the 'protecting young people' group, the Sheffield and Bristol projects received further funding, and the Rotherham project did not.
123. **Key document 32** does not make clear how the identified grounds of unsuitability for further funding variously applied to each of the five unsuccessful projects. However, a number of documents identified strongly suggest that the Home Office took the view that 'contractual obligations in terms of complying with evaluation requirements' were not being met. Specifically, the undated⁶³ 'evaluation termination' letter (**key document 11**) cites three main reasons for the decision to terminate evaluation of the project, as follows:
- **Serious delay to project evaluation.** The letter states '...evaluation of the CRP element of the Risky Business Project [i.e. the Rotherham research project] has been seriously delayed because of project concerns about the evaluation process, the project's failure to forward requested data, as well as difficulties with the interview schedules ... Given the current timeframe, a meaningful outcome evaluation is now impossible, and even if the timetable were extended it would still be difficult (if not impossible) for the evaluation to be completed'.

⁶¹ **Key document 29**, paragraph 9.

⁶² **Key document 32**, paragraph 3.

⁶³ Evidence from PACE (**Key document P6**) also includes a faxed copy of this letter, which suggests it may have been sent on or around 4 July 2002.

- **Concern regarding data ‘accuracy’.** This concern primarily appears to have related to case study data. The letter states ‘...accuracy of the data detailed in the case studies has been questioned at a number of meetings involving officers from the Government Office, the Home Office, the evaluation team, staff at Rotherham M.B.C. and the Risky Business Steering Group. It remains unclear as to whether the data needs to be amended or not’; and
- **Concern about the level of co-operation with the evaluation process.** The letter states ‘Unfortunately, for whatever reason, some officers at Rotherham M.B. Council and on the steering group of the Risky Business Project are not comfortable with the evaluation process, and appear to be unclear as to how far they are able to co-operate with the evaluation’.

124. **Key document 1** alludes to concerns about the accuracy of case study data and other problems causing issues in the evaluation process:

The evaluation team has concerns that the majority of the events to which the case studies referred had occurred before the implementation of the CRP funded initiative. They did not indicate any outcomes (in terms of young women being prepared to give evidence or men being targeted by the police) which might lead us to believe that there was potential to achieve successful prosecutions against the men concerned. At the time of writing, the police appear to be pursuing their own investigation that is not based on information they have been supplied with through the CRP funded work⁶⁴.

125. And later, the draft evaluation report states ‘In Rotherham, we have been unable to access any young people and we are therefore unable to say what they have gained from involvement in the project’⁶⁵.

126. **Key document 7**, an internal Home Office document from 2 June 2002, provides a progress update on the prostitution and young people initiative. This notes that in ‘one project area’ (presumed to be Rotherham) the evaluation of the project has been closed ‘due to difficulties in gathering accurate data from the project’.

127. Former Official ■, the former official who recollected meeting with the Rotherham research project, was clear that if the data needed for the purposes of evaluating the project could not be obtained, the evaluation of the project had to stop, and that – for reasons that had not been clear to her – that information had not been forthcoming. This also suggests that the grounds for not extending funding (not meeting ‘contractual obligations in terms of complying with the evaluation requirements’) would have been felt to apply.

128. **Key document 15**, the Q and A style briefing apparently produced in support of the then Secretary of State’s attendance at the June 2003 CROP conference (around a year after the decision to terminate evaluation of the project appears to have been taken) says the following:

It must be noted that during the funding period this project did run into a number of implementation difficulties, and there were also a number of allegations and disputes relating to work of statutory agencies, and individual members of staff. Hence, the Home Office did not consider extending the funding of the project beyond the original funding end date: July 2002.

129. For the avoidance of doubt, this paragraph appears to be referring not to the funding end date as originally described in the Crime Reduction Programme prospectus and invitation to bid (March 2002); but to the funding end date post bridging funding (July 2002).

⁶⁴ **Key document 1**, page 27.

⁶⁵ **Key document 1**, page 32.

Why was an evaluation report of the Rotherham research project not published?

130. An internal record containing a complete account of the department's decision not to include substantive content about the Rotherham project in the final Home Office research publication (**key document 3**) has not been identified; although material is available that provides a reasonable indication of why evaluation data relating to the project was not published.
131. **Key documents 15 and 16** were produced after the decision to terminate evaluation of the project was taken by the Home Office; however, they record that the Home Office's intention was never 'to publish findings from individual projects' and that the aim was instead to 'publish a compendium of all the findings' which would make 'recommendations ... based upon the whole of the programme'. It is the case that a single research publication reporting key findings from across the prostitution projects was produced (**key document 3**), although information about specific projects is included within that publication. Substantive evaluation data relating to the Rotherham project does not appear.
132. The published evaluation report (**key document 3**) itself states that findings about the Rotherham project could not be included in the published report because 'the University of Luton's final evaluation report did not include the Rotherham project and it has therefore not been possible to include analysis of the Rotherham interventions here'⁶⁶. A footnote further states that 'Rotherham was not CRP funded for the second year due to implementation problems. The project was attempting a new approach and took a long time to fully establish'⁶⁷.
133. Documents that have been identified suggest that the data that would have allowed for an evaluation of the project in the University of Luton's final evaluation report (**key document 6**) (and in turn, inclusion of information about the Rotherham project in **key document 3**), was not available. **Key document 11**, the letter announcing the Home Office's decision to cease evaluation of the project, states that 'significant elements of the evaluation remain outstanding' and that in the time available, a 'meaningful outcome evaluation' is 'now impossible'⁶⁸. It goes on:
- ...even if the timetable were extended it would still be difficult (if not impossible) for the evaluation to be completed.*
134. The letter also records 'concern' regarding the 'accuracy' of some data that had been submitted to the evaluation team, primarily relating to 'case studies'⁶⁹. The accuracy of data had, apparently, been questioned at 'a number of meetings involving officers from the Government Office, the Home Office, the evaluation team, staff at Rotherham M.B.C. and the Risky Business Steering Group'⁷⁰. The Home Office did not appear to be able to say whether the data was or was not accurate: 'it remains unclear as to whether the data needs to be amended or not'⁷¹. Finally, the letter makes clear that in the view of the Home Office evaluation could not take place in the absence of the project and its steering group's co-operation, and that some 'officers at Rotherham M.B. Council' and members of the

⁶⁶ **Key document 3**, page 3.

⁶⁷ **Key document 3**, page 3.

⁶⁸ **Key document 11**, bullet '1', page 1.

⁶⁹ **Key document 11**, bullet '2', page 2.

⁷⁰ **Key document 11**, bullet '2', page 2.

⁷¹ **Key document 11**, bullet '2', page 2.

Risky Business project's 'steering group' appeared to be unclear as to 'how far' they were able to co-operate with the evaluation.⁷²

135. It is evident from other material that parts of the project had failed to deliver: the ICT database was not being used by all parties and information being generated by the project was apparently not being used by the police. Finally, the draft final report notes that 'in Rotherham, we have been unable to access any young people and we are therefore unable to say what they have gained from the involvement in the project' (page 32, **key document 1**).

136. The letter from the Home Office announcing termination of the evaluation (key document **11**) suggests that the Home Office's intention was that any usable information gained from the project should be included in the consolidated evaluation report:

Where possible, information relating to the Risky Business project [the Rotherham Research project] will be included in the overview of the young peoples' evaluation group (where there is supporting evidence available)⁷³.

137. As noted above, in the event, no substantive evaluation data relating to the Rotherham project was included (**key document 3**). Former Official [redacted]'s recollection was that this was because it had not been possible for the University of Luton evaluators to include anything on the Rotherham project in their final evaluation of the young people projects (**key document 6**), so in turn, it was not possible to include anything in the published research report (**key document 3**).

138. Key document **FR1/3** notes the former researcher's recollection that she was contacted by the Home Office following closure of the project to 'reprimand' her for mentioning that she had been involved 'in the pilot in publicity for a forthcoming training course run by GC Legal Training'. The former official could not recall having made that telephone conversation (but felt that if the former research recollected it, a call must have taken place).

139. She did consider that it was a matter of standard research practice that research data would not be published prior to formal publication. She recalled that the Home Office's ultimate intention would have been to ensure that as much data arising from the evaluation about what worked in tackling prostitution could be obtained and shared as widely as possible so that it could then be applied; as that had been the point of the Crime Reduction Programme.

140. It is evident from **key document 11** that the Home Office wished to impress that conditions of grant funding relating to ownership of the project data continued to apply, and from **key document 19** that it was concerned about how data arising from the project was being used. This project management progress report states a 'researcher' has 'breached ... terms and conditions by running training seminars purporting to use Home Office finding's [sic] as the basis of the courses'. It notes discussions were taking place between officials, but does not confirm what action would be taken as a result. The programme report for the following quarter simply records the project (reference PROS/YH02) as 'completed'.

⁷² **Key document 11**, bullet '3' page 2.

⁷³ **Key document 11**, bullet 'i', page 2.

Information about Child Sexual Abuse in Rotherham not directly related to the Crime Reduction Programme

141. Further documents which are not directly related to the Crime Reduction Programme but which also contain some information regarding child abuse in Rotherham have been located. These are described below.

Documents concerning CROP

The 27 June 2003 CROP Conference

142. Searches of departmental records have revealed that the charity CROP's relationship with the department during the period in question was not limited to its involvement in the Rotherham-based Crime Reduction Programme research project.

143. CROP appears to have been expanding its operations during the time in question⁷⁴ to cover a wider range of geographical areas; but it is clear from documents discussed in further detail below that issues in and around the West and South Yorkshire region, particularly in relation to Leeds, Rotherham and Keighley, were of particular concern to the charity⁷⁵. Hence the charity's contact with the Home Office beyond the direct context of the Rotherham research project is referenced here, where considered relevant.

144. **Key documents 14, 15 and 16**, believed to have been produced in support of the then Home Secretary's attendance at a CROP conference, are described above; and these documents demonstrate the Home Office was aware of issues affecting the project, characterised variously as 'concern about the experience and authority of the project steering group', 'allegations of misconduct and breach of trust'⁷⁶, 'implementation difficulties' and 'allegations and disputes relating to the work of statutory agencies, and individual members of staff'⁷⁷.

145. Further briefing material connected to the CROP conference has also been identified. It appears that following the Home Secretary's speech to the conference, a question and answer session was held with parents of children affected by CSE. CROP co-ordinated questions that could not be asked in the time available and subsequently wrote to the department to raise these questions.

146. CROP's original letter containing these questions has not been located within departmental records. However, a draft version of a submission appearing to support the then Home Secretary's response has been located (**key document 33**), and 'Annex B' within this key document includes specific details of children and young people affected by CSE; which appear to have been provided by CROP.

147. A response from the then Home Secretary's office to CROP has been located (**key document 34**). Both the Secretary of State's original conference speech (**key document 35**) and the response at **key document 34** provide details of the strategic response being taken by Government to address the issues raised by parents (this included conducting a review of prostitution involving the 2004 consultation exercise, 'Paying the Price'⁷⁸).

⁷⁴ **Key document P9**.

⁷⁵ See, for example, **key document P5, P7, P9** and **key document 38**.

⁷⁶ **Key document 14**.

⁷⁷ **Key documents 15 and 16**.

⁷⁸ http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20060926084210/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-paying-the-price/paying_the_price2835.pdf.

148. A former official (Former Official [redacted]) recalled working on the submission associated with the response to CROP. Although she could not recall whether any information contained in CROP's letter had been referred to the police, Former Official [redacted] noted that the Home Office's normal practice at the time would have been to pass correspondence containing an allegation of any crime to the relevant police force.
149. The response to CROP that has been identified does not contain information indicating whether or not any sort of referral was made in this case.

The November 2003 CROP Briefing Note

150. Evidence supplied by CROP provides some further commentary on events following cessation of funding for the Rotherham research project (July 2002) and the June 2003 CROP Conference. A note of the 25 November 2003 meeting of the CROP management committee (**key document P7**) describes proposals for giving prominence to issues being experienced in Rotherham:

The group to be set up in Rotherham will be a self-help group. [redacted] is now digesting the documentation generated by [redacted] [presumed 'former researcher'] in Rotherham. She is convinced that there are links between the Rotherham and Keighley pimps ... we needed to make it clear that we are very concerned with the situation and not prepared to be fobbed off ... We discussed how to achieve further leverage in a context where there is bad practice within the police, social services and education. We decided to go on amassing information and give the Home Secretary a steady stream of updates. We will create a form of briefing note, especially on Rotherham and Keighley. We will tell him how many parents we are dealing with, and that we are not getting the co-operation we need from the authorities. We are not prepared to go to the police at local level, and want senior police to investigate.

...

[Former Official [redacted]] of the Home Office is due to come and talk with Hilary and [redacted] on 18 December. Jalna will consult with [redacted] to draft a briefing for the Home Secretary, aiming to send it off well before that date.

151. A copy of a briefing note (dated November 2003 and presumed to be that referred to in the text above) is also supplied in PACE's evidence (**Key document P9**).
152. Aspects of **key document P9** are extremely concerning, in particular:
- The suggestion that the scale of the problem in Keighley and Rotherham is increasing ('there are two geographical areas with increasing numbers of requests for assistance, Keighley and Rotherham');
 - Statements regarding the insufficiency of the criminal justice response, for example 'CROP has detailed knowledge of pimping activities in Rotherham from 1999 where no progress has been made in prosecuting pimps' and 'CROP service users continue to multiply rather than reduce as their abusers pass through a non-functioning criminal justice system';
 - The suggestion that (for reasons unspecified) the charity is not prepared to work with South Yorkshire Police ('CROP... urgently needs the assistance of a criminal investigator, preferably from central Government and definitely not from South Yorkshire' and 'CROP's current worker is now herself under threat from Rotherham pimps. PLEASE send us someone with whom we can share our information and who will work with CROP to bring these men into the criminal justice system').
153. We have not been able to locate a copy of this briefing note, the letter presumed to have accompanied it (**Key document P8**), or internal documents that refer either to the letter or

the briefing note within Home Office records. Former officials we were able to contact and who were asked about this note were not able to recall it, which should not be taken as an indication that it was not received as it has not been possible to identify which officials might have had contact with it if it were to have been received.

154. Identifying the briefing note within Home Office records would have allowed for a conclusive statement that it was received, and since such a record has not been found, this is not possible. Although it has not been possible to conclusively state that it was received, evidence identified for the purposes of this review has not given rise to particular reasons for doubting that it was received, either.
155. An internal record (**key document 36**) has been located which does appear to confirm that the 18 December 2003 meeting with a Home Office official, referred to in the letter accompanying the briefing note, did indeed take place. **Key document 36** indicates that difficulties associated with 'securing successful prosecution of those who exploit and abuse young people through prostitution' was a topic of discussion. The letter notes the intention to ensure that the 'consultation document' (this is presumed to be the July 2004 Consultation 'Paying the Price' (**key document 10**)) would:

... explore ways in which we can improve the investigative process, including the support available to vulnerable witnesses, and to ensure that the legal framework provides the best possible chance of securing ... successful prosecutions'.

156. It is clear from **Key document 36** that Former Official ■ intended to write on further issues 'in the new year'. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to locate a copy of that letter, either. It is clear, however, that Chapter 6 of the consultation, titled 'Exploitation – the role of the criminal law' did seek views on 'ways to increase confidence in the criminal justice system among the victims of exploitation and provide them with appropriate witness support'.
157. Former officials believed to have attended the 18 December 2003 meeting (Former Official ■ and Former Official ■) were asked whether they recalled it. Key points arising from their recollections are represented below: full details are provided at Annex G.
158. Former Official ■ indicated that following the CROP conference, she had come to know Hilary Willmer (CROP CEO) well and could recall a number of interactions with the charity. She recalled that CROP had been a national organisation, but at the time was mainly active in the north west of England. She had understood that CSE was a national problem and these issues were likely to be replicated in other areas.
159. Although not part of an operational unit (her role being to develop a co-ordinated government response to prostitution) Former Official ■ recalled it being usual practice to pass on concerns about CSE to the relevant chief constable. Former Official ■ was in regular contact with Chief Constable Tim Brain (then Association of Chief Police Officers' lead for vice) at the time, and his staff officer (Tony Davis). She considered it likely that Hilary Willmer's concerns would have been discussed with them.
160. Although she could not recall specifically discussing concerns about Rotherham, she could recall visiting a multi-agency project in Sheffield and referring information arising from the visit to the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). Although she could not say whether this had been a result of this action, South Yorkshire Police had subsequently investigated and this had resulted in a number of successful prosecutions.
161. With reference to the meeting of 18 December 2003, Former Official ■ recalled that problems with local responses to CSE would have been discussed and that there was frustration from some organisations, including CROP, that courts would not accept

complaints from parents (often young people had been groomed to such an extent that they did not recognise that they were being abused, or were too frightened to report abuse. Former Official [redacted] had at one point made efforts to have CSE recognised as a form of domestic violence as a means of accessing additional resource for these cases (a point alluded to in **key document 36**), but policy officials with lead responsibility for these areas had wanted to keep these two areas separate.

162. Although Former Official [redacted] had a general recollection of the SOU team having been in touch with Hilary Willmer as a key stakeholder, she had no specific recollections of having attended an 18 December 2003 meeting with the charity.
163. **Key document 37**, the Government response to the consultation and strategy document (published 2006) described new provisions contained in the 2003 Sexual Offences Act to protect children and young people, including new offences associated with paying for the sexual services of a child, causing or inciting child prostitution, arranging or facilitating child prostitution and controlling a child prostitute. The document also made clear the view of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) that in cases of commercial sexual exploitation of both adults and children, it would, other than in the most exceptional circumstances 'always be in the public interest to prosecute where there is sufficient evidence to do so'⁷⁹.
164. From the information available it is not clear whether any local action was taken by the Home Office to address the specific issues raised in CROP's 2003 briefing note (which, although not found in Home Office records, PACE evidence indicates was sent) in addition to those strategic changes to the national response described above.

CROP Consultation Responses and a 2005 Report

CROP's July 2004 response to the Home Office 'Paying the Price' Prostitution Consultation

165. In its consultation response (**key document 38**), CROP describes a number of instances where the response of statutory services to issues raised by the charity has caused it concern. The response of schools, social services, the police and the CPS are all discussed. Repeated mention is made of the role of organised criminal networks in the systematic exploitation of young people.
166. The purpose of this consultation exercise was to seek views on the strategic response of Government and agencies to the issue of prostitution. Nonetheless, a number of horrific examples of child sexual abuse (some of which are explicitly stated to have taken place in towns across West and South Yorkshire) are also cited in CROP's response:
- a 13 year old was taken to a car park where she was gang raped and photographed while it happened via a mobile phone by another man. As with other cases, there has been no prosecution⁸⁰;
 - another mother supported by CROP was desperate as her daughter had been gang raped and plied with drugs. Her daughter now suffers from epilepsy due to the drugs she was given by these men ... After pressure was exerted on the police and social services with the help of CROP, her daughter was placed in a secure unit. No charges have ever been brought against any of these men⁸¹;
 - one young girl in Rotherham, aged 13, was gang raped by five young adult men. She dropped her complaint due to intimidation. After being raped again by other men, she made a formal complaint. The CPS recently decided not to prosecute as

⁷⁹ **Key document 37**, page 53.

⁸⁰ **Key document 38**, page 4.

⁸¹ **Key document 38**, page 5.

'it would be her word against theirs' and they believed she would be an unreliable witness⁸²,

- another mother in Huddersfield reported to us that a pimp was seen on CCTV going into a local hotel with her daughter, a young girl of 14. As the child was on the child protection register, social services asked why the police had not charged him. After looking into the matter, the mother has just been told that he cannot be prosecuted⁸³.

CROP Reports Dating from 2005

167. An archived record contained within the department's media handling database (**key document 39**) suggests that the Home Office was approached for comment regarding a 2005 CROP report suggesting that 'girls as young as 12' were being 'targeted into prostitution'. The 'lines to take' section of this record describes the Home Office taking steps to tackle the problem through the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the Prostitution Review that was then underway; as well as Government guidance on Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution (2001) which was 'aimed at ensuring that there are effective multi-agency protocols in place to respond...'.
 168. Further email correspondence relating to an extract from a 2005 CROP Annual Review (**key document 40**) and a CROP research report (**key document 41**) has been identified. It should be noted that this exchange took place outside the date range associated with the search, but the follow-up search activity that has been undertaken has not identified any further material clarifying whether any further action was taken in response.

CROP's March 2006 response to the Home Office 'Tackling Human Trafficking' Consultation

169. In 2006, CROP was continuing to stress the importance of dealing with the organised exploitation of young people. In their response to the 'Tackling Human Trafficking' Home Office consultation (**key document 42**), CROP states that 'knowledge of criminal networks first emerged as a result of CROP research undertaken four years ago as part of a Home Office study on prostitution'. This is presumed to constitute a reference to the Crime Reduction Programme Rotherham research project.
 170. The internal trafficking of children, young people and women is highlighted:

CROP is concerned that internal trafficking of children, young people and women within the UK and other Western countries, operates through targeting and grooming, and is accompanied by extreme abuse and violence; and yet is not regarded by society in the same way as international trafficking which evokes necessary public outrage. Girls targeted by criminal pimps are sent to different parts of the country which is why they go missing from home. CROP has become aware of gangs and individual pimps from Yorkshire sending girls to many towns and cities in the Yorkshire region and around the country where they know of demand – e.g. to Newcastle, Birmingham, Manchester and London.⁸⁴

171. Information available has not identified the Home Office taking any specific local action in response to the material contained in the CROP consultation responses.

⁸² **Key document 38**, page 16.

⁸³ **Key document 38**, page 17.

⁸⁴ **Key document 42**, page 3.

Relevant Documents Arising from Other Sources

The 20 October 2003 Letter from Parents

172. Electronic searches have also revealed a letter dated 20 October 2003 and addressed to the then Home Secretary (**key document 43**), in which two desperately concerned parents ask for help for their daughter, who is being sexually abused by persons well-known to police in the Rotherham area.
173. A date stamp on the letter confirms it was received by the department's correspondence unit on 3 November 2003. A handwritten note (presumed to have been made by an official) indicates that the letter was due to receive a response from Caroline Flint MP (then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Home Office).
174. It has not been possible to locate the response through either digital or physical file search activities (Home Office retentions policy during that period would dictate that correspondence files would have been deleted from two years after registration, subject to content).
175. It is therefore not possible to say what action may have been taken in response to this letter. Former officials could not recall having received the letter, although (consistent with Former Official's recollections) Former Official noted that the Home Office's standard response to correspondence of this nature at that time would have been to pass it to the Chief Constable of the relevant local force.

August 2003 Letters from Ann Cryer, then MP for Keighley and associated Channel Four Media Coverage

176. Letters from Ann Cryer, then MP for Keighley, have been identified (**key documents 44 and 45**).
177. Although these letters relate to concern about the abuse of young people in Keighley, they are referred to here for completeness. As the Jay Report makes clear, children and young people are now known to have been trafficked to towns and cities in the vicinity of Rotherham and, as their November 2003 briefing note indicates (**key document P9**), Keighley was an area of particular concern to CROP. A key feature of the description of the offences contained in this correspondence is that abuse is being perpetrated by 'Asian men'. Descriptions of 'Asian men' feature prominently in material known to have been received by the Home Office from CROP: for example, the first of the questions contained in the letter following the then Home Secretary's attendance at a CROP conference ('Annex A' of **key document 33**) asks 'why Asian men are not prosecuted for taking part in sex with under aged girls...' and 'Annex B' of **key document 33** (a complete set of questions arising from the CROP conference) contains references to a number of Asian perpetrators.
178. **Key document 44** constitutes an email chain enclosing a number of letters from Ann Cryer (provided under cover of a letter from Ann Cryer to the then Home Secretary, dated 18 August 2003). In this correspondence, Ms Cryer sets out concerns about the response of statutory agencies to allegations of CSE in her constituency. In her letter dated 18 August 2003, Ms Cryer refers to her concerns having first been raised with the Home Secretary in May 2002; and indicates that she had been 'pressing both West Yorkshire Police and Bradford Social Services to take a more pro-active role' in dealing with matter. The letter makes clear that in response to this pressure a police and social services operation (operation Parsonage) was established, but raises concern that at no time 'in the last eighteen months' had the men concerned been 'interviewed, questioned or even spoken to informally to alert them to the fact that the police are aware of what is going on

and that they are committing paedophilia'. It goes on to state that failure to challenge the 'behaviour' has led to its 'replication and continuation'; with the police having recently interviewed a further 11 girls who were suspected of having been abused.

179. **Key document 45** constitutes an email chain and a letter dated 20 August 2003 from Ann Cryer to Caroline Flint MP (then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State), which encloses a copy of Ms Cryer's letter to the Home Secretary. **Key document 45** also contains a copy of a letter from Bradford Social Services, which can be assumed to be a copy of one of the letters referred to in Ms Cryer's letter of the 18 August as provided at **key document 44**, but which is missing from that record. **Key document 45** suggests that a response was sent from the department's Direct Correspondence Unit, although this response has not been identified (again, under departmental retentions policy operational at the time correspondence files would typically be destroyed after two years, subject to content). Text provided in support of a reply and included in the record at **key document 45** refers to introduction of a 'new range of preventative orders and offences' to be introduced in the Sexual Offences Bill (which later became the Sexual Offences Act 2003).
180. Ms Cryer's correspondence refers to forthcoming news coverage of the issues she raises by Channel Four News. The database currently used by the department to log and manage press enquiries does not contain records dating back to this point; however, media coverage from the time⁸⁵ indicates that a number of parents with their children met the then Home Secretary 'to voice their concern and demand action'. It is notable that in this report, the police are reported as stating that no evidence of 'systemic exploitation' had been found.
181. Ms Cryer's letter to the then Home Secretary calls for changes to the rules around the admission of hearsay evidence. Changes to rules relating to hearsay evidence were introduced under the Criminal Justice Act 2003, which received Royal Assent on the 20 November 2003⁸⁶. These changes, along with the introduction of new sexual offences by way of the Sexual Offences Bill, are referred to in the statement apparently offered by the department in response to Channel Four's news coverage (**key document 44**).
182. A further record (**key document 46**) contains a draft of an earlier reply to Ms Cryer, apparently produced by the Home Office in response to earlier correspondence (dating from May 2002) on the same issue. Although it has not been possible to locate a copy of the letter as sent by the department, the draft provided with the record at **key document 46** indicates that the Home Office did co-ordinate its response to Ms Cryer with the Departments for Health and Education and Skills, and that it had sought further information from the police about the local action being taken. The draft refers to 'a joint Police and Social Services investigation' having been commenced and 'regular inter-agency meetings' taking place.
183. With the exception of a further email chain relating to the construction of a response to Ann Cryer's correspondence (**key document 47**), no further material records relating to this episode have been located.

Did the destruction of records take place in accordance with applicable information retention policies in place at the time?

184. As noted previously, search activity supporting this review has targeted records produced in the period from 1998 – 2005. Until 2006, the department's record management policy

⁸⁵ See, for example, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1439568/Asian-men-accused-of-grooming-children-for-sex.html>.

⁸⁶ See <http://www.cjp.org.uk/news/archive/delivering-justice-for-all-criminal-justice-bill-receives-royal-assent-21-11-2003/> and http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/44/pdfs/ukpgaen_20030044_en.pdf.

was described as ‘print to paper’: that is, any information created or received in digital format that needed to be retained for business or historical purposes should have been printed off and retained in physical form.

185. The department’s digital corporate record is housed in the Corporate File Plan (CFP). The CFP was rolled out during 2005/6 and all departmental units were asked to migrate all information from older shared drive folders to the newer CFP. The department’s new digital search capability has been used to search both relevant CFP and older shared-drive storage areas.
186. From the late 1990s, The National Archives (TNA) produced model retention schedules setting out standard retention periods for different classes of generic corporate record. The main changes since then have been the extension by TNA of retention periods for some personnel records.
187. As found by the Independent Review of Home Office Files 1979-1999⁸⁷, although there is no evidence of any contemporary assurance or audit work to check compliance with retention policies, the Home Office carried out the reviews centrally at that time, rather than relying on file owners. This element of independence provided some assurance that common standards were applied.

Correspondence Files

188. During the period in question, departmental correspondence files would have been destroyed after two years unless there was a business reason for retaining these any longer. The destruction of correspondence files has therefore taken place in accordance with departmental policy operating at that time.

Policy Files

189. Files containing policy or legislative documents prepared within the Home Office are retained by the originating team and reviewed at between 5 and 25 years, depending on subject matter importance; at which point they can be destroyed, unless they are required by TNA or need to be retained for other reasons. Files containing copies of material produced by other Home Office teams or other government departments do not have to be retained as responsibility for these records remains with the originating business area. These provisions also apply to any correspondence within the files.
190. Many policy files from this period identified for the purposes of the internal review have not been destroyed. However, as Peter Wanless and Richard Whittam QC noted in the context of their earlier Independent Review⁸⁸, the Home Office’s paper records system was ‘imperfectly operated’. Although this finding concerned a different time period to that dealt with for the purposes of this internal review, the internal review has not found any particular grounds for departing from this assessment.
191. It is not possible to state that all business critical information or that with historical significance will, in accordance with departmental policy, have invariably been saved to a paper file.

File Locations

192. Peter Wanless and Richard Whittam QC’s earlier Independent Review gave careful consideration to matters relating to a number of files identified in the course of that review

⁸⁷ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/372922/Final_Report_-_Annex_E_part_1.pdf.

⁸⁸ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/372915/Wanless-Whittam_Review_Report.pdf.

as potentially relevant, but which could not be located, either because they had been destroyed in accordance with retentions policy, or, in a limited number of instances, because they could not be found. Files may be recorded as lost where marked out to an official for a number of years without having been returned to storage, or where, following machinery of Government changes, they are reported as having been transferred to another Government department, but where receipt has not subsequently been recorded.

193. We have also considered this issue in the context of material identified for the purposes of this review. Relevant papers discussed in this section are those as noted in the key documents list as having been located on a paper file.
194. A relatively limited number of paper files were located with titles of such obvious relevance to the Rotherham research project that there was a very clear likelihood that they would contain information of relevance to the Rotherham Project. Five files titled 'Reducing Prostitution – Local Initiatives' (SEN 00 0035/0078/006 and SEN 01 0035/0078001 – 004) contained most of the paper material of direct relevance to the workings of the Rotherham research project that has been located. All files with this title were available for review and none were recorded as having been lost or destroyed.
195. Two further single files with titles clearly relevant to the Rotherham research project ('University Of Luton - Evaluation of CRP Tackling Crime and Disorder Associated with Prostitution Initiative' (CRPE 01/0005/0027/008) and 'Crime Reduction Programme: Tckling [sic] Prostitution - What Works ?' (SH01910648)) were also located, with no files of the same title being shown as either lost or destroyed. A file titled 'PO 12630/01 From: [REDACTED] [sic] Re: Prostitution' was also located, but did not contain material of relevance, and was not lost or destroyed.
196. The review team did identify one paper file, titled 'What Works Prostitution Initiatives', (CLPU 03 0002/0025/001/) which was listed on the file system as having been transferred to the Ministry of Justice but which could not be located. Advice from the department's records management team was that it was most likely that the file has been booked out to a member of staff working in a team that, in accordance with a machinery of Government change, then moved to the Ministry of Justice, at which point details of the file were not logged on the Ministry of Justice central records system. The review team did speak to an official [former official [REDACTED]] to whom the file is presumed to have been marked out to in 2003, but, although this official was able to confirm they had worked on prostitution policy at the time in question, this official had no recollection of matters relating to the Rotherham research project and confirmed that the file was not in his possession.
197. The title suggests the file could have contained material relating to any of the 11 projects supported under the three prostitution initiatives (protecting young people, policing and enforcement and support and exiting prostitution projects), and the extent to which it could have contained material specifically about the Rotherham project is therefore not clear.
198. With this exception, the review team did not identify further paper files with titles very strongly indicating they would contain material of relevance to the Rotherham research project but which were listed as having been lost or destroyed.
199. There is a question as to whether all information received in connection with the Rotherham project and the associated issues was correctly retained. However, in the case of files with titles clearly indicating relevance to the Rotherham research project, no pattern of files with clearly relevant titles being lost or destroyed in breach of the department's retentions policy was identified.

200. Since, as noted at paragraph 42, the department's paper file systems do not allow for a digital search of the contents of paper files, the team took steps to review many additional files with titles less clearly connected to the Rotherham research project. This was to try and ensure (as far as possible, within the noted limitations of the system) that relevant papers had not been overlooked.
201. The review of files with less clearly relevant titles did reveal some additional information: files titled 'Crime Reduction Programme' (FD 02 0025/0069/002), 'Crime Reduction Programme Board' (RSCP 04 0002/0018/003/) and 'Establishing a Review' (SEN 02/0035/0078/002)) contained a number of items, chiefly relating to management of the Crime Reduction Programme. One letter relating to the project was located in a file marked 'Prostitution General' (SEN 02 0035/0078/001).
202. In the course of reviewing files with titles of less clear, but possible, relevance to the Rotherham research project, files which had been destroyed were encountered. In view of the time period of relevance to the review and Home Office file retentions policy operational at that time (which required destruction of correspondence files after two years and policy files from five years following review, subject to content) this was expected. Since these files were not ones with titles of clear and obvious relevance to the Rotherham research project, no further analysis was conducted regarding the dates of destruction of these files.
203. A number of files with titles of less clear, but possible relevance to the Rotherham research project could not be located. This included files with titles such as, for example, 'prostitution', 'research papers' and 'current correspondence with South Yorkshire', where there was no additional indication in the title that material relevant to the Rotherham research project was very likely to be held on the file. A review of a list of the titles of files which could not be located in the course of work to review paper files did not identify any specific pattern of titles, or title words, likely to indicate that the file would not be found.
204. Analysis of the department's total file holdings suggests that the location of approximately 13% of files owned by the department is not known. The closest equivalent calculation of all files selected for consideration for the purpose of the review (i.e. inclusive of both the core group of files with titles indicating relevance and the wider group selected for review on more speculative basis), which excludes those with ownership transferred to another department, suggests that approximately 5% could not be located, which compares favourably with the departmental average of 13%.
205. Including files whose ownership was transferred to another government department causes the percentage of files selected for consideration but which could not be located to rise to approximately 17%. This calculation is not, however, comparable with that conducted in relation to the department's total file holdings (13% location unknown), which did not consider the location of files with ownership transferred to another government department. Any machinery of government change involving the transfer of people and files will increase the risks around the accurate tracking of file locations.
206. In short, this analysis did not suggest any particular grounds to indicate a higher percentage of files that could not be located amongst files selected for review than that applying generally to the department's total holdings.

Current Home Office File Retention and Destruction Policy

207. The Home Office has updated its policies on the handling of allegations of child abuse following the 11 November 2014 publication of Peter Wanless and Richard Whittam QC's

Independent Review. Their report made three recommendations, all of which were accepted in full.

208. Recommendation 2 concerned the processes by which allegations of child abuse are recorded by the department. In line with that recommendation, the following processes have now been introduced:

- All allegations of child abuse in hard-copy form must be placed on a registered file, and tracked according to the appropriate system for the file type;
- All allegations of child abuse in electronic form must be saved to the department's repository for digital records (the CFP) or an appropriate shared drive;
- All verbal allegations relating to child abuse received by staff in the course of the work must be recorded and placed on a registered file, the CFP or an appropriate shared drive;
- The department's Information Services Centre must be notified when any file containing allegations of child abuse is created, with that notification providing the following information:
 - the title of the file;
 - if a paper file, the file number;
 - if electronic, the file path;
 - the security classification of the file and any specific sensitivities; and
 - confirmation as to whether or not the case has been referred to the police.

209. Recommendation 3 concerned the processes by which allegations of child abuse are referred to police and the results of that referral are confirmed. In line with that recommendation, a protocol is now in place for the triage of any information about child abuse (whether current or non-recent) received by the department, covering both the referral of information to the police and confirmation of the result of that referral.

Conclusions

Relevant Information passed to the Home Office in connection with the Rotherham Research Project and Action taken in Response

210. Neither the former researcher's set of case studies nor the copy of the draft report titled 'Chapter Four: Key achievements of the Home Office Pilot' were located in the Home Office's internal records. However, as per the findings from Peter Wanless and Richard Whittam QC's earlier review, the Home Office paper record system that was in operation at this time was 'imperfectly operated'. It is therefore entirely possible that copies of the report and case studies were received but not saved to the department's corporate record.
211. Information provided by the former researcher states that her report was sent to the Home Office. Former officials could not recall having received either this draft report or case studies, though different opinions regarding the likelihood that this material had been received were held. Former officials took pains to note that their recollection of events could not be said to be either complete or perfect.
212. In summary, identifying a copy of the report within Home Office records from the time in question would allow for a conclusive statement that the report was received; and given that one has not been found, this is not possible. However, information identified for the purposes of this review does not appear to include anything fundamentally contradictory to the former researcher's account.
213. The former official who recalled speaking to the former researcher about the loss of her data did not recollect having understood at the time that the former researcher was seeking to 'whistleblow'.
214. Some information can definitively be said to have been received by the Home Office. With regard to the Home Office's knowledge of issues affecting the Rotherham research project itself, it is clear that the department had sufficient information to know that the project's intended outcomes were not being achieved: particularly,
- i. the University of Luton draft report reports that the evaluation team has 'no indication that any of the men identified as involved in the exploitation of young girls are to be prosecuted and in this aspect, the project has therefore been unable fully to achieve its aims'⁸⁹; and
 - ii. the University of Luton was not able to access the data from the project that would have allowed it to be evaluated, for example, 'in Rotherham, we have been unable to access any young people and we are therefore unable to say what they have gained from involvement in the project'⁹⁰; and that
 - iii. there had been 'a number of issues' arising in respect of the project, including 'concern about the experience and authority of the project steering group' and Rotherham Borough Council considering 'disciplinary action against [REDACTED] ... following allegations of misconduct and breach of trust'⁹¹.
215. With regard to specific, non-anonymised allegations of child abuse arising directly from the Rotherham research project (the taxi incident), paper records provide a clear account of

⁸⁹ Key document 1, page 33.

⁹⁰ Key document 1, page 32.

⁹¹ Key document 14.

action apparently taken and this action (referral of relevant information to the Department for Education and Employment, who notified the Child Protection Coordinator covering Rotherham who in turn was in touch with a senior officer in the education authority; and referral of information to the Department of Health, who raised concerns with social services in Rotherham) would have constituted an appropriate response consistent with practice at that time.

Concerns over the response of statutory agencies

216. It is also clear from the Home Office internal document (**Key document 15**) that the view of the department was that the project had been affected by a number of 'allegations and disputes' directed variously at different parties (including in relation to the work of statutory agencies and individual members of staff, including the former researcher)⁹². This does not suggest the Home Office had developed a clear picture of who was at fault in connection with the failures of the research project or was confident about the extent to which failures regarding the project extended to wider failings in the response of statutory agencies.
217. Since pieces of information questioning the response of statutory services were available to the Home Office, opportunities to follow up on, or seek further information about, matters in Rotherham including whether the police and other statutory agencies were responding appropriately existed. Most significantly:

In relation to information relating to the Rotherham research project directly:

- i. **key document 1** does point to developments in the policing response (most notably creation of the post of 'Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator, the first in the country'⁹³). It also reports the evaluators' 'sources' significant concerns about the adequacy of the policing response such that this could have raised questions as to whether the police – well placed as they were through their involvement with the project to deal with matters– were in fact doing so⁹⁴. **Key document 1** also reports the case studies as suggesting that when young people were reported missing, the response from the police and social services was often 'less than adequate'⁹⁵.

In relation to other information available to the department:

- ii. **material received by the department from CROP** consistently highlights the need for further action to be taken in response to the exploitation of young people in towns and cities across Yorkshire. This includes:
 - a. **material supplied in connection with the June 2003 CROP Conference**, which raises questions about what more could be done to protect children being affected by CSE, including with regard to the policing and criminal justice response.
 - b. **CROP's 8 December 2003 letter to the Home Secretary and November 2003 briefing note**. This raises general concern about the response of statutory agencies in Rotherham; with particular focus on the police. Although neither a copy of this letter or the briefing note were found within departmental records, evidence identified for the purposes of this review does not suggest reason to suppose that this was not sent and received by the Home Office. The CROP briefing note strongly suggests grounds for concern. It has not been possible to trace a response to the CROP briefing note providing a record of the response taken;
 - c. **CROP's responses to Home Office consultations**. CROP's response to the July 2004 prostitution consultation consistently refers to cases where persons

⁹² **Key document 15**, page 6.

⁹³ **Key document 1**, page 31.

⁹⁴ **Key document 1**, page 32.

⁹⁵ **Key document 1**, page 27.

engaged in the exploitation of young people have not been prosecuted. CROP's March 2006 response to the trafficking consultation refers to criminal networks in Yorkshire trafficking children across Yorkshire towns and beyond;

d. **a 2005 CROP report**, apparently stating that girls 'as young as 12' were being 'targeted into prostitution' which was referred to the department's press office for comment;

iii. **correspondence from Ann Cryer, then MP for Keighley dated August 2003** called for a change to the law to allow for the admission of 'hearsay' evidence (for example, statement from a parent) and also raised concern about reluctance of the police and social services to challenge the behaviour of abusers on grounds of cultural sensitivity;

iv. **a letter from concerned parents** known to have been received by the department in November 2003 described the appalling abuse of one child and indicated that criminal networks were involved in the organised exploitation of young people.

218. It is evident that changes to the strategic response to prostitution and child sexual abuse were implemented. For example, the 2003 Sexual Offences Act created new offences relating to sexual activity with a child and the trafficking of persons within the UK for sexual exploitation⁹⁶. The Criminal Justice Act 2003 included provision giving the Courts new discretion to accept 'hearsay' evidence where considered to be in the interests of justice to do so.

219. As noted above, it has not been possible to corroborate that all information referred to in this report was definitively received by the Home Office. Limitations of the department's record system must also be noted in relation to the question of determining what, if any, action the department may have taken in response to allegations raised; as well as the question of what information was received. Former officials ■ and ■ recalled that standard practice at the time would have been to refer allegations contained in correspondence to the police force concerned. Where it has not been possible to locate a response or relevant papers connected with an item of correspondence (as noted above, Home Office retention policy operational at the time typically resulted in correspondence files being destroyed after two years, subject to content) it has not been possible to say whether or not a referral to a police force was made.

220. **Key document 46** contains a copy of a draft reply suggesting that the Home Office did respond to Ann Cryer's concerns regarding sexual abuse in Keighley by seeking further information from the police. There are two CROP publications (**key documents 40 and 41**) which appear to have been referred to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) in the course of 2006. With these exceptions, the information located in support of this report has not identified the Home Office taking any specific, local action to further investigate the response of statutory agencies to the systematic and organised exploitation of children now known to have been taking place in Rotherham and surrounding areas.

Operation of Departmental Record Systems

221. Peter Wanless and Richard Whittam QC's 2014 Independent Review has already established that the paper record system used by the department (albeit in relation to a 1977-1999 time period) was 'imperfectly operated'. Evidence identified for the purposes of this review has not suggested grounds for forming a different view in respect of the time period under consideration here.

⁹⁶See, for example, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1447319/Sex-offences-shake-up-receives-royal-assent.html> and http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/pdfs/ukpgaen_20030042_en.pdf.

222. The extent of information it has been possible to locate for the purposes of this report also suggests that information of importance may not have been consistently saved to the record.

Current Policy regarding Treatment of Allegations of Child Abuse

223. Following Peter Wanless and Richard Whittam QC's earlier Independent Review, new policies have been introduced which have created new requirements in relation to the Home Office's treatment of allegations of child abuse.

224. Allegations of child abuse must be correctly recorded and, where appropriate to do so, referred to the police. Importantly, the result of any referral of an allegation to the police must now be followed up; ensuring the Home Office is aware of what police action has been taken in response to any referral.

225. This review has collated a wide range of material relating to child sexual abuse in Rotherham. The evidence does not suggest that all of the material referred to in this review would have been immediately available in its entirety to any one Home Office official, or even one Home Office team; and any decision about response would ideally be informed by all available relevant information.

226. Since current policy requires consistent recording of allegations it is likely that – had this policy been in force at the time – it would have provided the Home Office with the means of obtaining a more complete picture of the extent of concern about CSE in Rotherham and surrounding areas.

227. Furthermore, the new requirement to follow up referrals would have allowed further information regarding the adequacy of the policing response to be obtained.

List of Key Documents

1. **University of Luton Draft Final Evaluation Report** (marked 'Report 3', dated June 2002).
2. **Crime Reduction Programme 'Tackling Prostitution: What Works?' Prospectus and Invitation to Bid.**
3. **Home Office Research Study 279, 'Tackling Street Prostitution: Towards an holistic approach'**. Copy available at:
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20040722030847/http://www.drugs.gov.uk/ReportsandPublications/ResearchDevelopmentStatisticsRDS/1090245505/hors279.pdf>
4. **Rotherham Bid Documentation.**
5. **Contract between the Home Office and the University of Luton, relating to the Evaluation of the Crime Reduction Programme 'Tackling Crime and Disorder Associated with Prostitution Initiative – Young People Group' and associated paperwork.**
6. **Presumed final version of University of Luton Evaluation Report.**
7. **Extract from a Crime Reduction Programme Progress Report, dated 9 July 2002.**
8. **Internal Home Office email 'Crime Reduction Programme – Targeted Policing – Prostitution Initiative' dated 20 August 2000.**
9. **Email relating to production of briefing to support the then Secretary of State's attendance at the 2003 CROP conference**, from Former Official [redacted] to Former Official [redacted] 28 May 2003 – 2 June 2003.
10. **'Paying the Price', a Home Office consultation paper on prostitution, dated July 2004. Copy available at:**
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100406114328/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/paying_the_price2835.pdf?view=Binary
11. **Letter from Former Official [redacted] to Christine Brodhurst Brown, Director of Education, Culture and Leisure Services RMBC announcing the decision to terminate evaluation of the Rotherham research project**, presumed sent on or around 4 July 2002.
12. **University of Luton 'Interim Process Report' dated 26 July 2001.**
13. **University of Luton tender document (tender for contract to evaluate young people and prostitution projects in Sheffield, Rotherham and Bristol', undated.**
14. **A fragment of briefing material apparently produced in support of the then Home Secretary's attendance at a June 2003 CROP conference, titled 'Crime Reduction Programme (CRP) What Works: Tackling Prostitution Initiative – links with CROP'.**
15. **'Q and A' style briefing, apparently also produced in support of the then Home Secretary's attendance at the June 2003 CROP conference, titled 'CROP speech Q&A'.**
16. **Finalised briefing supporting the then Home Secretary's attendance at the June 2003 conference.**

17. **An email chain dated 5 July 2004, concerning the timing and associated arrangements for publication of a Written Ministerial Statement.**
18. **Undated advice on the suitability of projects for visit purposes.**
19. **Crime Reduction Programme Monitoring Returns for the Yorkshire and the Humber Region, including one for 'quarter 2, ending September 2002'.**
20. **Letter from [REDACTED] on behalf of the Risky Business Steering Group to Former Official [REDACTED] dated 19 December 2001.**
21. **Letter from Di Billups, Executive Director Education, Culture and Leisure Services, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to Professor Margaret Melrose, University of Luton, dated 21 December 2001.**
22. **Letter from Professor Margaret Melrose, University of Luton, to Di Billups, Executive Director of Education, Culture and Leisure Services, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, dated 8 January 2002.**
23. **Letter from Professor Margaret Melrose, University of Luton, to Former Official [REDACTED], Home Office, dated 10 January 2002.**
24. **Letter from Former Official [REDACTED], Home Office, to Professor Margaret Melrose, dated 11 February 2002.**
25. **Letter from Former Official [REDACTED] to [REDACTED], Education, Culture and Leisure Service, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, dated 26 February 2002.**
26. **Submission from Former Official [REDACTED] concerning the assessment of bids for the purposes of awarding funding under the Tackling Prostitution strand of the Crime Reduction Programme, dated 30 November 2000.**
27. **Rotherham research project bid assessment sheet.**
28. **Draft submission from [REDACTED] concerning bridging funding for Crime Reduction Programme prostitution projects, dated 8 March 2002.**
29. **Submission from [REDACTED] concerning continuation funding for Crime Reduction Programme prostitution and demonstration Projects, dated 13 March 2002.**
30. **Undated briefing note (presumed from 2001) apparently produced for the purposes of the Crime Reduction Programme Board, titled 'Tackling Prostitution: What Works? Information for CRP Board'.**
31. **Email chain concerning approval for the extension of Crime Reduction Programme project funding, end-dated 25 March 2002.**
32. **Submission from Former Official [REDACTED], providing an update on the prostitution initiatives funded under the Crime Reduction Programme, dated 28 October 2002.**
33. **Submission apparently supporting the Home Secretary's response to a letter from CROP containing further questions from parents following the then Home Secretary's attendance at the June 2003 CROP conference, dated 21 August 2003.**

34. **Copy of response from Home Secretary's Office to CROP following the June 2003 CROP conference**, dated 22 August 2003.
35. **Secretary of State's speech to the 27 June 2003 CROP conference.**
36. **Version of a letter from Former Official [redacted], Home Office, to Hilary Willmer, CROP acknowledging a meeting** (presumed to have taken place on the 18 December), dated 22 December 2003.
37. **'A Coordinated Prostitution Strategy', the Home Office response to the 'Paying the Price' prostitution consultation**, dated January 2006.
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100303151022/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-paying-the-price/ProstitutionStrategy2835.pdf?view=Binary>
38. **CROP's response to 'Paying the Price' prostitution consultation**, the Home Office's July 2004 consultation on prostitution.
39. **Archived record contained within the Home Office's media handling database**, suggesting the department was asked for comment regarding a 2005 CROP report stating that 'girls as young as 12' were being 'targeted into prostitution'.
40. **Email forwarding extract from a 2005 CROP Annual Report, from the Home Office Police Leadership and Powers Unit to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)**, dated 21 September 2006.
41. **Email forwarding a CROP Research Report**, dated 25 September 2006.
42. **CROP response to the 'Tackling Human Trafficking' Home Office consultation**, dated March 2006.
43. **Letter from Parents to the Home Secretary**, dated 20 October 2003.
44. **Email chain containing correspondence from the office of Ann Cryer, then MP for Keighley to the then Home Secretary's office**, letter dated 21 August 2003.
45. **Email chain containing correspondence from Ann Cryer, then MP for Keighley to Caroline Flint MP, then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Home Office** letter dated 20 August 2003.
46. **Memorandum from the department's Correspondence Unit concerning a reply to Ann Cryer MP's correspondence regarding sexual exploitation of young girls in Keighley** dated 3 September 2003
47. **Further email chain relating to the response to Ann Cryer's letter and coverage on Channel 4 dated 27 August 2003.**

List of Annexes

- A. Physical (paper) file search methodology
- B. Digital search methodology
- C. Email account and personal drive search methodology
- D. Letter from the Home Office Director of Crime and Policing Group to other Government departments
- E. Key documents
- F. Evidence supplied by external parties
- G. Notes of discussions with former officials