



ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR
CHILDREN

Chair: Baroness Massey of Darwen

Vice-Chairmen: Jessica Lee MP, Baroness Walmsley, Baroness Blood, Bill Esterson MP, Tim Loughton MP

Secretary: Baroness Howarth of Breckland **Treasurer:** Earl of Listowel

Clerk: Heather Ransom

There was a meeting of the
All Party Parliamentary Group for Children on:
Tuesday 6th May 2014
4:30-6:15pm, Committee Room G, House of Lords
(booked in the name of Baroness Massey)

Children and the Police inquiry:

Oral evidence session 7: 'Child sexual exploitation and trafficking'

This was the seventh meeting of the APPGC's inquiry into 'Children and the Police'. This meeting explored the experience of children and young people who are victims of child sexual exploitation or trafficking when engaging with the police, and considered which groups of children and young people are at greater risk of child sexual exploitation or trafficking and why. It examined good practice used by police forces, including examples which drew on multi-agency working with children's services, and considered how engagement can be improved.

Members in attendance: Baroness Massey, Baroness Howarth, Earl of Listowel, Baroness Walmsley, Tim Loughton MP

Speakers: Chief Constable Simon Bailey (Norfolk Police and ACPO), Johnny Gwynne (CEOP), Liam Vernon (UK Human Trafficking Centre), Sarah Champion MP (Member of Parliament for Rotherham), Graham Ritchie (Office of the Children's Commissioner), Professor Jenny Pearce (University of Bedfordshire), Bharti Patel (ECPAT UK), Lucy Maule (Centre for Social Justice)

Voluntary and community sector in attendance: Marion Sandwell and Lucy Dawes (YJB), Phillippa Goffe (Ministry of Justice), Mary O'Shaughnessy (SCYJ), Caroline Adams (Sussex Police), Emma Mansfield (The Children's Society), Grace Brownfield, Peter Richards and Natasha Jetha (NSPCC), Parama Chakravorty (PSHE Association), Tara Topteagarden (Refuge Council), Sarah Smith (BASW), Mary Crowley (International Federation of Parenting Education), Kathleen Nugent (NYAS), Alison Harvey (ILPA), Nick Wilkinson (Kent County Council/Association of YOT Managers), Thienhuong Nguyen (Women's Aid), Hayley Cull (UNICEF UK), Helen Watson (Just Enough UK), Lisa Bellis (Safer London Foundation), Paul Sanford (Norfolk Police), Steve Black (CEOP), Bridie O'Shea (WAVE Trust), Paris Hogdkinsen-Black and Jashmin Patel (MsUnderstood), Enver Solomon, Zoe Renton, Heather Ransom and Rosie Eatwell-White (NCB)

Apologies: Baroness Blood, Mark Garnier MP, Wendy Scott (TACTYC)

Baroness Massey welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Simon Bailey: explained his role as National Policing Lead for Child Protection and Child Abuse Investigation. He added that Child sexual exploitation and trafficking are National Policing priorities with the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE): the context

- CSE occurs in many forms, both offline and online.
- It can range from inappropriate relationships through to organised networks of exploitation.
- It is significantly underreported.
- It takes place across the country in all areas.
- CSE is a complex crime which requires dedicated resources from a variety of agencies.

The work of the police: National Police Sexual Exploitation Action Plan

- Simon is responsible for the delivery of the National Police Sexual Exploitation Action Plan, which is being implemented in every police force in England and Wales.
- The aim of the Action Plan is to improve partnership working, improve prevention and victim protection and support, and improve the pursuit of offenders.
- CSE and trafficking are dealt with by police as both a child protection issue and a criminal matter.
- Since the inception of the Action Plan there have been improvements in terms of the awareness of CSE amongst police officers, the capability of the police to prevent CSE, and the success of the police in enforcing the law.

Challenges

- Victims will sometimes not recognise that what is taking place is abuse. There is therefore a need to promote awareness of what is and is not abuse.
- The increased prevalence of hardcore pornography is desensitising young people and giving them false ideas of what a relationship should be.
- Too many young people do not report abuse. They may fear reprisals, believe that the abuse was their fault, or lack confidence in the police response should they did report what was happening.

Children at particular risk of CSE

- Children who live in a chaotic or dysfunctional households, including those where there is parental substance abuse, parental mental health issues or criminality, or domestic violence.
- Children from households where there is a history of abuse, including familial child sexual abuse or neglect, or a risk of forced marriage or honour-based violence.
- Children who with learning disabilities or with low esteem or self-confidence.
- Children who are unsure about or feel unable to disclose their own sexual orientation.
- Those with friends who are sexually exploited or who are lacking friends of the same age group.
- Children living in a gang area, residential care, temporary accommodation or who are homeless.
- The common theme is vulnerability because those children are seen as easy targets by abusers.

Examples of good practice

- Department for Education have produced *Working Together to Safeguard Children* which sets clear standards on to approach child safeguarding.
- College of Policing consolidated this guidance into an online tool called 'Approved Professional Practice' for all police officers and police staff.
- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASHs) have been established across the country. In some areas, social care, health and the voluntary sector are co-located to provide a comprehensive service for young people.

Areas for improvement

- There is hesitancy among partners to exchange information which potentially very damaging.
- Joint local inspections should be introduced to inspect the combined efforts of relevant agencies.

Johnny Gwynne: stated that The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) was created in 2006 to tackle CSE, particularly, but not exclusively, in an online context. CEOP and the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) are part of the National Crime Agency (NCA).

CEOP's approach to CSE

- Child protection and criminal justice issues are bound together. In many cases, only through addressing the child protection issues can appropriate criminal justice outcomes can be achieved. Both issues are linked but the protection of the child must always take primacy.
- CEOP's work is undertaken as a shared endeavour with police constabulary colleagues
- CEOP has an embedded child protection team of child protection social workers who are specialists in complex CSE enquiries.

Children at particular risk of CSE

- CSE is not experienced by one social group and any young person can be at risk of CSE.
- This compounds the challenges faced in tackling this issue.
- A number of factors do appear to increase risk. Many, but not all, of these relate to disadvantage.
- For children who are groomed and abused online, there does not appear to be a clear vulnerability profile risks and cannot uniformly be described as also vulnerable offline. Recent work on this suggests that some children may have an online risk-taking appetite which does not match a typical vulnerability profile.

Examples of good practice

- CEOP works closely with a range of partners, including NSPCC and the Salvation Army.
- CEOP is supporting the relaunch of the UK Child Rescue Alert System, administered for us by the charity, Missing People.
- CEOP delivers educational products with partners for young people, their families and professionals, aimed at reducing the vulnerability of young people to online CSE.

Sarah Champion MP: explained since her election 18 months ago, she has worked with Barnardo's on a report on CSE: *Report of the Parliamentary inquiry into the effectiveness of legislation for tackling child sexual exploitation and trafficking within the UK*. She added that she spoke at the meeting on behalf of the young people she had met during the research for that report.

Legal and practice issues

- The report found that the law was robust enough to tackle CSE but that application of the law was inconsistent.
- When the police are aware of CSE, they often deal with it very well. However, good practice needs to happen consistently across the country, without the need for high profile cases to raise awareness and focus police attention.
- When legislation is changed there is no systematic roll-out of police training to inform officers of the change. This can lead to inconsistent practice.
- There is no central database which means offenders can replicate abuse in different areas.
- Where there is good practice, this usually down to a committed individual, but good practice needs to be embedded within forces.

Experiences of CSE victims in dealing with the police

- Those who have suffered CSE are not typical victims. They can be aggressive and confrontational and during encounters with the police this may be interpreted as hostility.
- Victims can also be offenders and this is how they may first come into contact with the police.
- They reported repeatedly being asked to give the same information, which made them feel exposed, especially if they struggled to remember details. They worried that the police would not believe them.
- Young people understood that the police were doing to do what they felt was best but that this was not necessarily what the young people wanted. Young people need to be given choices.
- Victims lack control during their abuse. The police process can sometimes have the effect of continuing to take control from them.
- They can feel that they were in a loving relationship with their abuser and can find it challenging to give evidence against them. They felt that the police can sometimes use this against them.
- Young people are not always kept updated on their case and this can feel disempowering.

Recommendations arising from the report

- Two changes should be made in the Criminal Courts and Justice Bill:

- The police should be able to charge abusers after once offence of grooming has taken place (currently the police must prove two offences have occurred)
- Child Abduction Warning Notices should become statutory and should be applicable to all children up to 18 years old, eliminating the current distinction between children in care (18 years old) and children living at home (16 years old)
- The term 'child prostitute' should be removed from all legislation
- Training for police officers and judges should be connected.
- Information sharing should improve so that the police can access information more quickly

General points

- Dealing with CSE is costly and messy, particularly online exploitation. In a climate of austerity, it could be an area that is easy to neglect but it needs to be addressed.
- There are problems with the categories of 'missing' and 'absent'. Abusers know about this distinction and take advantage of it.
- Safe and well checks are carried out by a third party. This is costly but ongoing investment is vital
- The protocol in London of a flag on the system is effective and could be expanded.

Graham Ritchie: stated that the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) had recently completed a two year inquiry into CSE and gangs.

Findings of the inquiry

- 2,040 victims were identified and 16,000 were considered to be at high risk.
- CSE was happening in all areas of the country.
- Grooming is a central element of the CSE process and could last a short or long amount of time before becoming abuse.
- Young people can feel that they are in a loving relationship with their abusers.
- Abuse often happens in groups and can involve threats, for example if abuse is filmed and then used to blackmail victims in the future.
- Some professionals viewed children as complicit and described victims as promiscuous. The term 'prostituting themselves' was often used. This was of great concern to the OCC.

Risk factors

The OCC developed a comprehensive indicator list of risk factors:

- Running away or going missing, perhaps due to a dysfunctional family, or a history of familial abuse.
- Association with peers who are at risk, for example gang members or friends who suffering CSE.
- Living in residential care.

Experiences of CSE victims in dealing with the police

The OCC identified some good practice by police but there are a number of barriers to young people engaging with the police:

- The link between CSE and offending: 40% of CSE victims have a history of criminal behaviour. Young people may worry that the police will find out that they have broken the law.
- Young people do not always see themselves as victims
- There is a perception that the police cannot help them or protect them, and fear of reprisals can prevent people from coming forward.

Future working

- Police need to ensure they work with all relevant partners and provide a multi-agency response
- It is crucial that children who go missing regularly are viewed as high risk and not as a nuisance
- Local Safeguarding Boards have a vital role to play.
- The OCC are piloting the 'See me, hear me' framework, which outlines seven key principles for a good response to CSE, and it is hoped this will be useful.

Jenny Pearce: explained that she drew information from the findings from a variety of research projects undertaken by the University of Bedfordshire

Key points:

- The location of the service is important, for example if it is embedded with other professionals in the young person's community
- A large number of children who have been abused have already had a form of contact with children's services. This shows that services need to communicate.
- The link between victims and offending behaviour is strong. The MsUnderstood Project deals with peer-on-peer abuse where young people are both abusers and victims.
- The distinction between online and offline does not exist for young people.
- Historically, when it comes to child abuse the police have tended to deal with under 10s in the home. The issue becomes more foggy when you are dealing with older teens.
- There is a real problem when you are dealing with young people who say that they are in love. There is a question of how to protect them whilst also giving them a voice.

Jenny highlighted four projects: 'Making Justice Work' (young people who have been through the court process talking about their experiences), 'Our voices' (young people taking a lead in developing strategies to prevent sexual violence and exploitation, Msunderstood (focusing on preventing peer on peer sexual violence) and research into young people's experience of sexual violence and exploitation in gang affected neighbourhoods. Specific themes have arisen from these projects:

- Reporting sexual violence and exploitation
 - Many young people are not reporting abuse. Only 1 in 12 noted that they would tell someone of their experience of sexual violence.
 - Young people worry that little can be done to prevent sexual violence and they fear judgement or retaliation if they report abuse.
 - Reporting rates improve when they can see the police working with the community, with victims and the perpetrators and with peer mentoring schemes
- Attitudes before and during court cases
 - Young people are apprehensive about taking a case to court as they worry that they will be disrespected and that their information might be shared without consultation
 - It is damaging for a young person if they take a case forward but the case is dropped and the young person hears no more about it.
 - Attitudes improve if there is consistency of contact with a worker, if they are in contact with the same officer throughout the trial and if they are kept up to date with the progress of the trial
 - Young people would also prefer to only have to tell their story once and to know what is going to happen to the information they give.
- Consistency during court cases
 - Young people feel that they need one consistent support worker and have information about who is involved in their case and what will happen next.
 - Young people report that the response they get can depend upon the attitude and experience of the individual police officers: individual contact with a good police person over the course of a trial can make a lot of difference
 - The aftercare following court is really important, and where police continue to keep contact with other workers to support the victim, the victim feels safer and less likely to be re victimised

Areas for improvement

- Training of the police needs to be uniform and this can be joint with other bodies
- Relations between the police and vulnerable young people can be strengthened
- Joined up working is needed, particularly between youth justice and child protection
- There needs to be consistency of personnel

Bharti Patel: explained that she was drawing from research by the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, from training experience and from her work with victims of trafficking.

Child trafficking: the context

- Child trafficking victims are exposed to multiple risks, including during the journey
- They are often in the UK unaccompanied and are in need of urgent protection
- One third of children trafficked into the UK are under 15
- Children are often exploited in many ways and CSE is just one form of exploitation

- Pull and push factors which lead to children becoming targets for traffickers: poverty and a lack of opportunity at home, and the promise of a better life elsewhere. However, the greatest pull factor is demand from the receiving country.

Young victims in a focus group speaking of their experiences of engaging with the police

- Some young victims reported positive experiences of their engagement with the police. They stated that the police:
 - asked a lot of questions and listened
 - wanted the truth, and were patient and friendly
- Other spoke of their negative experiences. For example, the police:
 - asked a lot of unnecessary questions and did not explain why they were asking them
 - did not believe the victim or appeared to twist the victim's words
 - treated the victim like a criminal
 - used confusing language
- The young victims stated that the police should:
 - listen to young people and ask straight questions
 - receive training on trafficking
 - not discriminate against people of a non-British origin
 - think about their body language
 - keep the victim up to date with their case

Bharti added that these messages are consistent with research findings.

Police engagement with trafficking victims

- Victims of trafficking have a lower view of the police than other groups
- They feel that the police do not trust them
- Victims recognise that police interviews are important. ECPAT UK also recognise this and understand that without this, prosecution cannot happen.
- However, while technical evidence is important it does not tell the whole story.
- Police officers have reported a lack of knowledge and confusion about what child trafficking is.
- There needs to be an individual on the side of the child. The system of legal guardianship addressed in the Immigration Act is a significant step forward.

Examples of good practice

- London Safeguarding Trafficked Children Toolkit: a multi-agency tool which needs more consistent implementation
- MASHs need to be extended and more widely used
- Met Police Paladin Team: this has been very successful but is being replaced. The government has announced an extension of Anti-Slavery Teams at airports.

Lucy Maule: referred to the Centre for Social Justice's report into modern slavery, 'It Happens Here', which heard evidence from over 200 people and made over 80 recommendations.

Experiences of victims in dealing with the police

- Experiences were mixed and police responses seemed to be a 'postcode lottery'
- The lack of resources available to police to tackle the problem was particularly notable.
- Individuals often took on the issue but this was in addition to their normal duties.
- There was often a misunderstanding of the spectrum of child trafficking
- The criminalisation of trafficked children was a big problem, with children not being identified as victims once they have been arrested.

Children at risk: common themes

- Vietnamese children trafficked to work in cannabis factories
- Children with expired visitor visas
- Children housed in private fostering arrangements
- Young British girls trafficked into sexual exploitation

Areas for improvement

- Police training is crucial, including developing a better understanding of trafficking indicators
- Although all police should have a Special Point of Contact (SPOC) for trafficking, only 50% of forces were able to give information on their SPOC when asked
- The idea that children involved in petty crime are a 'nuisance' needs to be removed. There needs to be an understanding that disruptive behaviour can be an indicator of a deeper problem.
- The police and voluntary sector need to engage with each other and build better trust.
- It needs to be understood that in these children's home countries, police can be corrupt and untrustworthy. Engaging with the police can therefore be very frightening for these children.
- The culture of disbelief amongst the police needs to be broken. There is often a feeling that the police are seeking out inconsistencies in a child's story to catch them out.
- Children's services also have a key role to play and awareness amongst social workers needs to improve, particularly awareness of the National Referral Mechanism.
- Support for victims going through the court process needs to be improved.
- Children's services and police must work together to ensure children do not go missing from care.

Baroness Massey: took questions from peers and the wider audience, including:

- How can we move forward beyond the current 'postcode lottery' for children?

Liam Vernon: explained that key to improvement is to have a collective embedded strategy. Awareness and training had to be embedded and that work needs to be consistent. There need to be mechanisms for enabling new understanding to filter through into practice and an understanding of the different vulnerabilities facing different children. He added that the criminal justice system is still not identifying these children as victims enough, and instead criminalising them too often.

Simon Bailey: stated that many of the points raised are covered in the Action Plan. Training and awareness are crucial. Too often, agencies fail to communicate, share information and raise concerns. MASHs are a step towards this but there is still a long way to go.

Bharti Patel: added that the Modern Slavery Bill is a good opportunity to make improvements but that a lot of the focus is on prosecuting offenders rather than on protecting victims. Work is needed on prevention and on the reasons behind children's vulnerabilities.

- Why do professionals not share information more effectively?

Simon Bailey: stated that there was a reluctance to share information for fear of breaking protocols.

- Are children still being trafficked for organs?

Liam Vernon: explained that organ trafficking is not common but it is an issue across the world, including in Europe. UKHTC are working with health professionals to ensure it does not take place.

- Why is there a lack of collaboration and what is done to ensure that police know who their SPOC is?

Jenny Pearce: explained that agencies have tended to develop in silos and this makes it hard to break down barriers and promote inter-agency collaboration. The way to achieve this is to adopt a child-centred approach with teams co-located and working together.

Baroness Massey: summed up the meeting by drawing out key themes.

- The crucial importance of information sharing and collaboration
- The importance of training
- The need for intervention at an early stage
- The involvement of the voluntary sector
- The need to acknowledge examples of good practice and areas of poor practice
- The importance of listening to and respecting the views of children and young people

Baroness Massey thanked all speakers and everyone who had attended.