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‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Abstract

The purpose of this research dissertation, was to examine and discuss one of the biggest challenges encountered to law enforcement and child protection agencies, the phenomena known as child sexual exploitation. Definitions and related terms of reference relating to the problem are explored and critiqued to provide background analysis and some insight into what investigators might encounter as well as issues associated with it.

The methodology involved sending a number of questionnaires to professionals and charitable organisations involved in working and supporting victims of exploitation. The collected data explored aspects including; the profile and numbers of child victims, grooming models, how exploitation manifests itself, and the current effectiveness of any identified response.

Interpretation of responses from this questionnaire, provided commentary on the perceptions and observations of frontline professionals, and clear evidence of a problem that is often stigmatic and goes largely unreported. Responses also indicate positive responses in respect to the association between going missing and exploitation, that demonstrates the increased awareness policy development in this area of safeguarding.

This dissertation also provides an in depth discussion and offers recommendations on issues relating to the background social preconceptions and assumptions that can sometimes effect attitudes towards victims of exploitation, creating psychological barriers that prevent effective safeguarding for children at risk.

Keywords: Sexual exploitation, Children and Young People, Missing, Safeguarding, Responses.
List of Acronyms Used in This Report.

**ACPO** – Association of Chief Police Officers
**BSC** - British Society of Criminology
**CSE** – Child Sexual Exploitation
**CPS** – Crown Prosecution Service
**CSEGG** - Child Sexual Exploitation by Gangs and Groups
**DCSF** - Department for Children, Schools and Families
**DFE** – Department for Education
**CEOP** - Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre
**ONS** - The Office of National Statistics
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Background

"There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they grow up in peace." – (Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, 2000)

The protection of vulnerable people, in particular children is one of the most important and often challenging aspects of law enforcement. The sexual exploitation of children constitutes one of the most serious aspects of criminology, it is however not a new phenomenon. It is an issue of abuse that has been around for many years, and is arguably still in a state of flux, which has only been amplified by the presence of greater risks and accessibility to young people via the internet and social media applications.

Professionally, what has changed and evolved is the knowledge about CSE, which has provided a growing debate about its root causes, its contributing factors and what methods can be taken to provide effective safeguarding while tackling offending, especially where the victim is at increased risk by them regularly being reported as being missing or are at risk of being trafficked by their abusers.

This dissertation is based upon a research study that incorporates aspects of both quantitative and qualitative research elements. The research will explore the social policies and safeguarding contingencies that form current procedure and practice in relation to safeguarding vulnerable young people from child sexual exploitation (CSE), while examining current trends associated with the prevalence of reporting, with a specific viewpoint from the young people being reported missing and the associated increased risks of becoming victims or being trafficked for the purpose of CSE.

Research elements will be based up on the analysis of current available statistics and written accounts from professional organisations, charities and individuals who have experience in the support of young people experiencing CSE. These groups of people are regularly referred to within regional and national policy documents as
having a direct role and responsibility for identification, intervention and support for victims, while also providing situation awareness of the social issues that are often connected to the problem of children who are regularly reported missing or are victims of trafficking.

The issue of child sexual exploitation, and understanding the best methods associated with safeguarding the victims is clearly a contemporary subject of national importance and urgency, this point is made only too clear as a result of a proliferation of media intensive cases relating to organised child sexual exploitation in Rochdale, Rotherham and most recently Oxford. However, it would be naïve to believe these cases are isolated in their nature, and its widely believed to be the tip of the iceberg, an opinion shared by the then deputy children’s commissioner, Sue Berelowitz when questioned about the prevalence of CSE in a recent house of commons, home affairs meeting.

"there is not a town, village or hamlet in which children are not being sexually exploited. – (Berelowitz, 2013a)

Following these significant legal cases, the Office of the Children’s Commissioner undertook a two year national inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation by Gangs and Groups (CSEGG). The conclusion of which was particularly damning on the understanding of CSE amongst child protection and law enforcement practitioners, it concluded that:

‘serious gaps remain in the knowledge, practice and services required to tackle child sexual exploitation and while there are pockets of good practice, much still needs to be done to prevent thousands more children falling victims’ (Berelowitz et al., 2013b).

Whilst increasing consideration has been given to the awareness of CSE in recent years, which may in large be reflected in the annual rise in statistics, research in to particular elements of the crime, is often weighted towards female victims, leading to an often biased public perception of what constitutes child sexual exploitation, and who the victims are likely to be. This view can often be observed through media reports that often portrays the offence in a very one dimensional way.
It is also important to mention, there is an ever-increasing understanding that children who have been victims of exploitation are also more likely to have been involved in criminality at some point.

1.2 - Research Objectives

Ensuring objectivity, in relation to CSE research is of paramount importance, due to the fact by its very nature it is a very complex crime, that often incorporates a variety of different social strands, and problems faced by the victims of the exploitation. For this reason, the objectives associated with this research are inexplicably linked to one particular issue of vulnerability, those who are regularly reported missing or are victims of internal trafficking, the risks they face, and the responses of professionals when assessing risk, providing support to victims and the safeguarding options taken.

Considering the context of the stated research objectives, the following areas have been identified as areas of imbricating concern associated with the formation of relevant research objectives:

1. To explore the ways and methods that professional organisations, charities and individuals identify and evidence child sexual exploitation and their occupational perspectives on responding to the problem.

2. To explore the prevalence of the link between CSE, missing persons and human trafficking.

3. To consider the ways that CSE professionals and organisations conceptualise the problem, the methods of safeguarding including referrals that are available to them and the levels of disclosure that is associated with those safeguarding options.

4. The procedures and referrals used by agencies, after a young person returns to a place of safety, following a period of being missing, and what can be done to increase safeguarding opportunities.

The current research project endeavours to meet these aims and objectives through critical analysis of the problem in the following chapters:

**Chapter Two** - provides a detailed narrative and critical discussion of the research design, within the context of the proposed methodological framework. The chapter also addresses some of the key ethical and practical
aspects associated with the research study. (Participant inclusion, access, safeguarding). Consideration and critical reflection of other associated aspects including analysis and validity of data is also addressed within this section, with current social research methods and practice also presenting prominent aspects of the discussion.

**Chapter Three** - provides a narrative of current academic and professional conception on the background of the research study within relevant literature, social policy and theory. To effectively examine all the points effectively, this part of the dissertation has been divided in to two distinct areas for discussion. The initial part examines the component parts of the essay, exploring what defines CSE, missing people and what links them together as a factor in CSE. The second aspect of the review, conceptualises the problem, examining policy and practice, offending and associated criminal methodology, and CSE related crime theories.

**Chapter Four** – This chapter details the results from the analysis of responses to the research questionnaire. Included in this section is a critical narrative of the findings, and formulates ideas for discussion in subsequent chapters.

**Chapter Five** – Using a nationally recognised model, this section critically examines and offers discussion on the wider arguments and constructions associated to the sexual exploitation of children. It explores the social concept of childhood, consent and the legal interventions available when making decisions regarding safeguarding.

**Chapter Six** – The final chapter details the authors concluding thoughts, recommendations and research conclusions.

**The Scope and Limitations Of The Research**

This study looks at a small demographic, comparing the opinions and experiences of a range of professional bodies, dealing with and supporting the victims of CSE. It is anticipated that a project of this type will provide a greater understanding of the links between available crime statistics, CSE awareness and those who are at risk of exploitation due to the act of regularly going missing from a place of safety. It will also explore their experiences and confidence in the criminal justice system.
‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Limitations
The subject of child protection and safeguarding is perhaps one of the most guarded issues professionally, with child sexual exploitation proving particularly difficult to research due to the sensitivity of topics and growing public interest and scrutiny of those involved in the support of victims, the responses to this piece of work have definitely demonstrated this. Politically prone to critical observations, research of this nature lends itself to the difficulties of the collection and analysis of reliable and valid data as well as the associated problems in the analysis and interpretation of results. With this in mind, it must be emphasised that the data and interpretation of information, does not offer a systematic review of sexual exploitation as a whole, and cannot on the number of respondents offer a conclusive opinion. However, this work has also drawn on published research, by accredited practitioners and expert organisations to support the arguments and observations from the research aspect of this work.

Response rates
An important feature to recognise in relation to of research into child sexual abuse and exploitation is that often the response rates are comparably low compared with other less sensitive subject areas. This assertion is mirrored in previous research, (Niederberger, 2002) reported a participation response of 56% for his study, with non response rates of 30% being common features when researching sensitive research topics. This observation has been particularly prevalent in this research, despite the steps to negate risk and promote participant participation and confidence, and without further feedback the reasons for non engagement cannot be ascertained or accurately surmised.
Chapter 2
Research Methodology
Introduction
In the following chapter, I will provide an account of the methodology and account of the research processes involved in the collection of data. This will take into account the different aspects I have considered in relation to the project design, critical reflection on the research instruments and the rationale behind the chosen methodology. This section concludes with a statement of the ethical principles that were considered for the progression of the research, together with the dilemmas that may be encountered while conducting this research.

Research design
When deciding on the best design that would meet my aims and objectives, I initially took into the account social research authors, to assist in the development of my epistemological stance. (Gurbich, 2004) makes the premise that as a researcher, you cannot be separated from your ‘background, life experience and memories’. To this end it was important for me as a researcher to acknowledge and draw from my prior training and experiences from the police service in the area of CSE and vulnerability, but also ensure I am not biased by objective limitations.

The research design also positions itself on the premise that ‘professionals directly contribute to good practice’, the observation that the opinion of the professional is one of the main influences on future policy and decision making.

In order to explore the proposed research question, an interpretive paradigm has been adopted within a primarily qualitative framework consisting of either interview based case study, or questionnaire responses. Inclusion of quantitative data that relate to the context of the research question supplements these responses, providing a statistical back drop in relation to the problem.

Qualitative data was obtained from various professionals, originating from statutory to voluntary sectors, with knowledge and experience in the support and safeguarding of children and young people vulnerable to CSE.

Qualitative research was deemed preferential due its ‘personal’ nature. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter, using the prescribed methods allows a rapport to be developed between researcher and participant, allowing the individuals...
attitudes, opinions and experiences to be fully explored. Qualitative research also allowed greater emphasis on the ethical considerations for a study of this kind, which when conveyed to interested parties, it was thought increased confidence in the integrity and validity of the research.

The research questionnaire, explores how the participant and their respective organisation, view and respond to the different factors associated with the connection between children and young people going missing and exploitation, Their perceptions on the response to the problem by law enforcement and what methods were most effective in combatting CSE. Specific elements of investigation and discussed include: victim demographics, including the number of victims who are boys against those who are girls, how the organisation combats cases of CSE, their perceptions and opinions of multi-agency working and whether there were any improvements that could be implemented to increase the response to the problem.

Importantly, the questionnaire is also designed and kept deliberately small in scale with ‘open’ questions, enabling a degree of flexibility in the responses and scope to explore the associated issues in greater depth. The questionnaire was also subject to professional scrutiny from potential stakeholders and advisory bodies, through consultation with the national working group on child sexual exploitation, (NWGNetwork) to ensure the proposed questions were pertinent to the objectives of the research.

**Participant Inclusion Criteria**
The selection of participants for the research project was purposive and representative of the subject matter and the types of professionals and service providers who are in key roles for identifying, referring and working with young people who are victims of CSE. The participants were identified and approached because they could be reasonably expected to have observed and had direct knowledge of the offences being researched. Criteria used for selection for the research were defined as follows:
1. Any individual, provided they are over 18 years old at the time of the research – This is due to the sensitivity of the subject, and not directly involve the input of victims.

2. Those identified who: work, have previously worked, or has direct knowledge relating to the investigation of child sexual exploitation. Potential participants included: a representative of the police service, a Children’s and Young People social worker, child protection workers that works within safeguarding, education authorities and representatives from voluntary and charitable organisations working with the victims of exploitation.

Invitations were sent out to these distinct groups. This was to provide a comparison between those dealing with CSE from different backgrounds and experiences. By approaching professionals from a variety of backgrounds, the research could get a multi-agency perspective on the research questions, it could also be conceived that the identified participants would have a greater understanding on reporting and safeguarding options than a lay person, and as such the responses would hold a greater sense of validity.

**Access and establishing research relationships**

While it can be assumed that there are common aspects involved in any research study such as time, trust, respect and above all confidentiality, they can be especially important when considering the research of this subject, particularly when accessing and establishing a successful partnership with potential participants. This is alluded to in a sexual exploitation context through work by (Caulfield and Hill, 2014; Pearce, 2009). In order to fulfil my obligations in respect to this work, an initial approach was made using an initial email containing a research information sheet (Annex 1) with support in the initial project design being guided from attendance to a sexual exploitation seminar held by a national working group. Ensuring confidence in the integrity of the project was paramount, for the success in establishing research participation, therefore demonstration of good research ethics were also vital, these are detailed in the following ethical statement.

**Data Analysis Methods**
In order to conduct analysis of the data, transcripts of the responses taken from questionnaires will be transferred in to a pre constructed statistical database using the IBM SPSS software package. These responses can then be appropriately investigated to ensure any results can be displayed in a logical format enabling clear evaluations to be identified.

**Ethical Statement**

The conflicts associated with research in the area of CSE, is discussed in depth By (Pearce, 2009), in particular issues surrounding gaining informed consent, avoidance of harm and methods of gaining access to those involved in safeguarding victims of CSE. Despite not being subject related, (Caulfield and Hill, 2014) and (Bryman, 2016) also make specific references to the importance of these issues.

The research was conducted with appreciation of ethical guidance from the British Society of Criminology Code of Ethics (BSC, 2015). Written consent was also sought from all of the identified participants before the commencement of the project, with the addition of covering letters and research information notes explaining the purpose and objectives of the project and the voluntary nature in terms of participation and right of withdrawal in the research. Before undertaking any aspect of research, I also acknowledged the presence of a number of ethical considerations which needed to be addressed prior to seeking ethical clearance from the University of Teesside Ethics Committee, these are outlined below.

As this area of research is particularly sensitive, particularly when considering the discussion of vulnerable young people, it was important to consider the ethical factors involving time, trust, and respect. Therefore, one of the more crucial considerations was in respect of anonymity.

(Caulfield and Hill, 2014) makes the assertion that anonymity, is vital to ensure ‘participants and the organisations to which they belong cannot be harmed by participation in research’. An opinion also held in associated publications, (Bryman, 2016). In acknowledgement of this point, all localities, individuals, organisations and charitable services taking part in the research remained anonymous throughout the process, this was to provide a safeguard and negate any concerns regarding ‘labelling’ from outside organisations.
Furthermore, it also had to be acknowledged that as the participants continued in their employed within their respective organisations, and so to counter any sense of vulnerability about their responses being made public and interpreted as critical, the strictest confidentiality had to be assured to all participants from the outset. Taking this into account and to distinguish between authorities, a coding system used in a similar study by (Smeaton, 2013) was implemented. A prefix letter to indicate the agency represented following by a unique reference number: P=police; C=children’s services (statutory); V= children’s services (voluntary); O=other was attached to each questionnaire prior to being sent, with the identity of the individual or organisation only known to the researcher.

The subject matter of this research also carries a degree of psychological risk to both researcher and participant. Although methodology used in this project minimises the risks, due to the use of active professionals in the subject area, with access to organisational welfare teams, there needs to be recognition of potential psychological consequence of researching Child sexual exploitation, therefore a safeguarding statement with contact details of professional support will be included on the bottom of the consent form. Significant factors that mitigates some of the potential ethical concerns in this respect, is the fact this project does not deal directly with the victims of CSE, and the inclusion of criteria for participant selection, takes into account the respective organisations having access to adequate emotional and psychological welfare provision.

In respect to the gathered data, and how long it should be kept for, there was a necessary consideration of the Data Protection Act 1998, and how it affected the research design process. All data, whatever the format, will be held by the researcher and treated with the upmost care and respect, in a manner that is secure to maintain confidentiality. At the end of the research process, all data pertaining to third party participation will be securely erased and destroyed after a period of 4 months to ensure confidentiality is maintained and there is no further use. At no point will any data be subject to dissemination without the express permission of those who contribute to the research.
Chapter 3 – Literature Review

Introduction
In this Literature review, I will aim to conceptualise the research design into specific areas of interest related to the overarching theme of the dissertation. The first part of the review relates to the background of child sexual exploitation policy and practice, taking into consideration how the issue is defined and its association with going missing, this is followed by some of the main peripheral issues of grooming, coercion and control in a CSE context and the historical context in which exploitation has been seen in academic literature and how this conflicts with modern understanding.

As this dissertation and review makes the proposition that there is a direct link between children going missing and the risk of being exploited we must first ask what is the problem, how it is defined and address what problems there are in attaching associated definitions to child sexual exploitation.
3.1 - Definition Of Child Sexual Exploitation

The first question to consider in relation to the context of the research is the question, What is child sexual exploitation (CSE)? – broadly speaking the public's perceptions about what CSE can be influenced by the media, education and personal opinion. While the concept has been widely acknowledged for a number of years, the terminology is still relatively new, with associated definitions, developing since their introduction in the government report ‘Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation’ (DCSF, 2009).

‘Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive ‘something’ (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities’.

Critics of this definition, noted in work by (Brayley and Cockbain, 2014), have observed that this definition is quite broad and consequently it could arguably be attributed to almost all forms and descriptions of child sexual abuse. This was something that carries a degree of credibility, as it can be seen from examples in many publications the variety of adaptations of the definition. Such as those found in earlier literature. Including (Calder, 2001) and (Smeaton, 2013).

In February 2016, the government launched a multi agency consultation with children’s charities, law enforcement organisations, and support organisations with the aim of developing the pre-existing statutory definition, to one which was universally recognised, within CSE specialist organisations. The following definition came in to effect in the updated government report of the same name as its predecessor.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.
The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. - (Department for Education, 2017)

Central to this definition, is the recognition that CSE involves an abuse of power over a child or young person, attained by the inclusion of the sentence ‘….is a form of child sexual abuse’. What this has accomplished in contrast to previous definitions, is it places a specific emphasis on the context of the offence, including placing an increased awareness on the behavioural attributes of a perpetrator and the methods in which they use to exploit their victims. It can also be observed that by removing the word ‘relationship’ from the original definition and substituting it with ‘abuse’ in the modified edition, that it has radically altered the way in which the definition can be interpreted, and consequently the way in which a report of exploitation can be seen by investigators, and other professionals involved in working with children and young people.

Despite the potential clarification, the new definition brings to the recognition of offences, it is still typical for police investigations into child sexual exploitation cases to face considerable difficulties and barriers, some of which will be discussed later, however one element of the definition which may present future opportunities to critique effectiveness is coercion. More often attributed to domestic abuse offending, coercion is a relatively new concept to the United Kingdom judiciary, legislated by section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. Despite it being a concept associated with domestic abuse, there are clear connotations which would allow it to be applied to those in exploitative situations. In its guidance, the CPS defines coercion as:

‘Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.’ (CPSa, 2016).

However, like domestic abuse, the main problem associated with coercion, is the recognition and detection of the behaviours and factors by an investigation, that may be present in reported CSE cases.
‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

It was revealed in a freedom of information request made by the law firm Simpson Millar that in the first 6 months of the legislation being available to investigators, the associated offence was just used a total of 62 times. In addition to this observation, out of the 22 police authorities in England and Wales, 8 had not prosecuted or convicted a single person with any offences relating to coercion and control. With one of the first convictions only transpiring in June 2016. (CPSb, 2016)

Offences prosecuted in respect to CSE are no different. The realities of the way evidence and testimony is gathered and used in the prosecution of perpetrators will inevitably come under closer scrutiny. It does also remain to be seen whether coercion and control legislation will be extended to the prosecution of those involved in child exploitation cases, and the protection of vulnerable people and their families.

Despite the many questions surrounding the effectiveness of any new definition, It must be acknowledged that the new definition is a huge step forward in providing investigators and experts with not only a comprehensive breakdown of what constitutes child sexual exploitation but also a single definitive framework that is recognised across law enforcement and child protection agencies, providing increased multi agency cooperation and safeguarding opportunities.
3.2 - Definition Of ‘Missing’

The term ‘missing’ in terms of children is often quite a difficult term to attribute, and has often been used interchangeably with terms such as “running away” in reference to the unexplained absences of children and young people. (Rees and Lee, 2005; Rees, 2011; Smeaton, 2013).

Therefore, the issue of missing children always warrants increased scrutiny, both from a safeguarding and law enforcement point of view, particularly when it is suspected to be as a result of criminal activity. But the problems associated with the identification and prosecution of these sorts of cases, is often difficult and complex as a child can be missing for a variety of reasons. (Plass, 2007) makes reference in research to the diversity of the spectrum of “missing children” ranging from those who are victims of abduction, those who are leave to escape a problem at home to those who leave willingly, encouraged by a third party.

It is therefore important that before beginning to critique the literature surrounding the connections between children going missing and CSE, it is important to put in to consider what is a missing person, where they are often missing from and how does this make young people more vulnerable.

The current definition of a missing person is:

‘anyone whose whereabouts is unknown whatever the circumstances of disappearance. They will be considered missing until located and their well-being or otherwise established.’ - (ACPO, 2005)

However, the interpretation of this definition is not as simple as first thought, as there is another element which often gets attributed to children who are reported to police. This being those recorded as ‘absent’ in cases such as these, it is deemed that the missing child is considered to be at that present time, at 'no apparent risk'. In circumstances such as these, the respective police authority normally takes minimal immediate action, keeping the incident under constant review. This aspect of the definition deserves particular attention, as emerging research has indicated that any
missing child can be at an increased risk from sexual exploitation, irrespective of the duration they are missing from their home or place of safety. (Plass, 2007; CEOP, 2011).

There is also a growing consensus amongst researchers and child protection experts that those children who are victims of child sexual exploitation are more likely to be reported missing from home or care placement on a more regular basis and for shorter periods of time (CEOP, 2011; Berelowitz et al. 2012)

Some other factors that relate to young people going missing that require specific attention, include those detailed in a series of reports by (Rees and Lee, 2005) where it was found that in the majority of cases, those who go missing from care, are not reported as being so to the police, with only an estimated 30% of cases coming to the awareness of the police. This highlights obvious gaps in both enforcement and safeguarding opportunities.

This observation can be put in to perspective in the light of much publicised reports into the abuses that occurred in Rotherham and Oxford, where a large majority of the identified victims were found to be from local authority care, and it was found there were shortcomings.

It is for these reasons, It can be conceived that in the context of child sexual exploitation the current definition is potentially ambiguous, as any guidelines that attribute the association of risk to an individual is open to distortion due to personal perception or bias by those responsible for the initial recording of the incident.

This particular issue has been of particular attention in the report “Missing children, who cares?” by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC, 2016). In the report it made specific criticism on the poor quality of data by some forces citing discrepancies in recorded figures, it found that some forces did not respond consistently, and some did not separate incidents of missing children and adults, meaning they could not accurately quantify the number of reported missing children. The report also highlights some more serious inconsistencies some police forces used and categorised absent and missing child reports, including some circumstances where missing children from care home environments were only classified as absent, which was acknowledged, had the potential to leave some children at serious risk of harm. (HMIC, 2016). And as a result, of these variations in
recording standards most police forces did not have a good enough understanding of the nature of the problems associated with missing children or the scale of the problem in their areas.

As a direct result of the observations from the HMIC report, the College of Policing has been consulting, whether the category of ‘absent’ should be removed from the individual police forces missing persons risk assessment process as both academic research and professional inspection reports have pointed out the term ‘absent’ has been unhelpful in describing a child’s status and by removing it, can potentially have the risk of the risk assessment outcome being under estimated minimised.
3.3 - Going missing - An indication of Child Sexual Exploitation?

Historically, the links between going missing from home and the sexual exploitation of children is certainly not a new one, it is one that can find its origins in many high profile, historical criminal cases. One such example in kind would be that of Fred and Rosemary West, who committed 12 murders of children and young people, in circumstances which were sexually abusive in nature. It was later acknowledged some of these children had also gone missing from local authority care, or had recently left care (LGA/ACPO, 1997).

Children and young people who are regularly reported missing are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. (Biehal and Wade, 1999) with those who are in local authority care placements being at increased risk of being targeted by abusers, who take advantage of the victims personal circumstances to expose them to risk of exploitation. (Shaw et al 1996; Smeaton et al, 2013; Rees and Lee, 2005).

In the its research ‘Puppet on a String’ Barnardos identified that over 50% of identified sexually exploited children they provided support to during 2009/10 were reported missing from home on a regular basis and during the same time, 128 of the children and young people who made contact with the charity Missing People were subsequently identified as victims or were actively at risk of being sexually exploited. (Barnardos, 2011).

The study by (Biehal and Wade, 1999) also alludes to the methods in which young people are drawn into exploitative situations with some being initially groomed by individuals who were outside of the care system, before being pressurised and coerced to encourage their peers to follow. This is a common theme, with victims reporting being pressurised by threats of violence or being enticed by a perpetrators illusion of being valued, given expensive gifts or being in a relationship.

Still Hidden?
The increased awareness and education surrounding the issue, has certainly increased debate and discussion around the subject, However, there are still many children who go missing that are still at risk. As it has already been elaborated on in previous sections of this dissertation, CSE is a very dynamic issue with a vast array
of factors that can contribute to and be a direct consequence of a young person being vulnerable to exploitation. (Pearce, 2006). Research has identified that these links are particularly prevalent in situations where children who where in the care of the local authority or foster care went missing from their placements. (APPG, 2016) it also highlighted the fact many of those children did not receive sufficient safeguarding to prevent against CSE.

In another study (Rees, 2011) it was concluded that over a quarter of the children and young people who go missing from home or from care placements overnight are at risk of serious harm or exploitation, while in the study ‘Off the Radar’ on behalf of the organisation Railway Children by (Smeaton, 2009) a fifth of children who were identified as going missing regularly were identified as being victims of child sexual exploitation.

This demonstrates the opinion that both of these factors are inextricably associated, something that has also been a feature in the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centres' thematic assessment (CEOP, 2011).

The link between going and missing and vulnerability to exploitation can also be found in statistical data published by various law enforcement agencies. In the United States, the National Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) provided assistance to law enforcement agencies and families with more than 20,500 individual cases of missing children in 2016. Of which 90 percent were identified as ‘endangered runaways’.

This statistic, while from the perspective of the USA, it does highlight the significance of the problem and the way missing young people are put in danger of exploitation, one which can be further emphasised considering 86 percent were in the care of social services when they went missing. There have also been a number of other research reports published in the UK which mirror these findings. In a study conducted by the University of Bedfordshire, (Jago et al, 2011) found that over 50 percent of those children and young people using CSE support services in England had previously gone missing, with 25 percent of those identified being reported missing on more than one occasion, with some instances occurring more than ten times. 20 percent of service users were also identified as being in care at the time.
observations made in a number of government reports and inquiries, notably (APPG, 2016) and (Berelowitz et al, 2013) also seem to mirror the findings of their American counterparts, as well as reinforcing the opinions of children’s charities and organisations about the dangers and links between going missing and CSE.

Of course, it is not just from home or local authority care, where a child can go missing. In reality a vulnerable or exploited child can go missing from any place given the opportunity. One particular area of concern has been the link between absence from education establishments, and the risk of them becoming exploited by potential abusers (Barnardo’s, 2011). An example of this would include young people leaving school at lunch periods, leaving early or arriving late to spend time with older ‘friends’ who may be potential abusers.

The association between a child going missing and school attendance either through truancy or exclusion has been explored in numerous publications. (Wade and Biehal, 1998; Children’s Society, 1999; Rees and Lee, 2005; Barnardo’s, 2011). In the Safe on the Streets study it was found that over half of those who regularly truanted, had previously gone missing from home overnight, compared with 6% who had never truanted. (Rees and Lee, 2005) in another study by (Wade et al, 1998) over 40% of the surveyed sample were found to be out of mainstream school education at the time they were last reported missing.

While you cannot say every child, who truants or does not regularly attends school are victims of sexual exploitation, it was a feature of recent high profile sexual exploitation cases, and was widely publicised in their respective inquiry reports. the Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s inquiry (Berelowitz et al, 2012) found that 65% of the sexually exploited child victims that the inquiry interviewed, were not regularly attending school. This fact would certainly seem to illustrate and reaffirm this particular link in respect to children going missing and sexual exploitation.

Evidence in to the links between CSE and going missing would seem to suggest that there is a relationship between school attendance, going missing and vulnerability of sexual exploitation is reciprocal rather than causal, and as such would indicate that the signs of exploitation can often be attributed to other factors such as challenging
behaviour by some authorities, which may in part contribute to the misappropriation of risk or incidents of non reporting to police and other safeguarding agencies. In its thematic assessment, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre (CEOP) reaffirmed the findings of research and highlighted children who go missing as a indicator of child sexual exploitation and linking the two areas. As a result the UK government’s strategy on missing children and adults and the associated national action plan on tackling child sexual exploitation recognise and reflect this stance.

There can be little doubt that these observations raise very critical questions, mainly, if the issue of child sexual exploitation is so associated with those who go missing from local authority care, what is the best way to safeguard those from residing in that environment and how do we increase the detection of perpetrators who target these vulnerable individuals.
3.4 - Grooming

Questions such as Why did they not tell? and Why did they go back? are frequent features of the public in their attempts to understand the complexities of the sexual exploitation of children, to answer these questions it is necessary to understand the specific modus operandi of the perpetrator in how they gain and maintain control as well as normalising their behaviour. As part of this understanding this process, one must also analyse the mens rea or state of mind of the perpetrator, specifically the understanding of the question what are the motivations of the perpetrator and what do they gain or hope to gain by abusing their victims.

The motivations of those for engaging in exploitation and the harm that comes from it, can in certain cases vary markedly. The degree of which is often characterised by an individual offenders methodology in which they use to gain the trust of their victim. This methodology is often referred to as ‘grooming’, the process where an offender prepares a child victim for sexual abuse (Craven et al 2006). Simply put, ‘Grooming’ is a term that denotes the staged process in which exploiters recruit their victims introducing them into a lifestyle which they are made to believe is normal, but which is actually abusive. This process often involves an array of coercive tactics which targets the victims’ vulnerabilities, such as an individual need to feel accepted or being shown affection. This is often accompanied by the provision of gifts and other luxuries which the victim would not usually have access to.

There is however very little legal reference to what constitutes ‘grooming’ including in the main legislation, other than behaviour that involves acts of arranging or facilitating communication with a child with the intent of committing an offence covered by the Sexual Offences Act 2003. This may in part be due to the vast array of models and offending methodology associated with sexual offences. Despite the absence of such a definition, the stages of grooming have been extensively researched by academics and safeguarding professionals, (McAlinden, 2014; Scott and Skidmore, 2007; Melrose and Pearce, 2013) providing a sound base in which law makers make provision or revise existing legislation. An example of such definition can be found in the publication, ‘Grooming’ and the Sexual Abuse of Children, which starts to capture the complex processes and variety of symptoms associated with the grooming phenomenon. It defines grooming as:
‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

‘The use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques with a vulnerable subject in a range of inter-personal and social settings in order to establish trust or normalise sexually harmful behaviour with the overall aim of facilitating exploitation and/or prohibiting exposure’. (McAlinden, 2014 pp11)

While this definition provides a good foundation for the interpretation of grooming behaviour (Craven et al, 2006) has previously made the assertion that there are weaknesses in the content of definitions, provided by academics. The above definition can also be conceived as being problematic, because it leaves an open interpretation of what a manipulative and controlling technique is. Without this structure, any person applying such definitions maybe open to ambiguous judgements, based upon their own perceptions, diminishing any safeguarding approaches or misrepresenting certain behaviours in legal proceedings.

Stages of Grooming

Grooming models represent a multitude of tactics and terminology that have been developed and proposed by law enforcement authorities and academics, both nationally and internationally. (Ward et al, 1995; Ward and Siegert, 2002; Welner, 2011;). Depicting the most prevalent methods in which a perpetrator gains the trust of those they exploit, these models specifically demonstrate the stages and tactics a perpetrator uses to methodically build trust with a young person, as well as potentially their guardians, to gain increased contact with their future victim, ensnaring the young person into a situation in which they are ultimately manipulated and coerced in to participating in sexual abuse.

This dissertation briefly considers the concepts of these models, as the emphasis will be placed on how these models relate to the phenomenon of grooming and the sexual exploitation of children.

The following models are representative of those used in the United Kingdom and the United States, and are defined in the Barnardo’s Puppet on a String report (Barnardos, 2011) and by (Welner, 2011).
The subject of the relationship between a perpetrator and their victims has also been the subject of research in the US, most notably by Dr. Michael Welner, a forensic psychiatrist whose 6 stages of molestation, provides an insight into the different stages of grooming used by abusers. In his model of the grooming process, there is no categorisation of grooming typology, instead it focuses on the escalation of abuse based on the effort required by the perpetrator in the initial stages of grooming, to what ultimately equates to minimum effort in controlling their victim, due to the emotional and physical hold they have over the young person. This incremental process, is illustrated in the following stages.

**Stage 1**: Targeting the victim - The perpetrator identifies and targets a vulnerability associated with the intended victim, before making a plan about how to gain access to that child.

**Stage 2**: Gaining Trust - The abuser gathers all available information about the child from a variety of sources, what their needs are and how to fill them. Their objective is to make the child feel that they are valued and understood.

**Stage 3**: Fulfilling a Need - In this stage, the perpetrator having figured out what their victims needs are, begin filling the void. They may provide some sort of incentive such as drugs, alcohol, somewhere to stay, or expensive ‘gifts’, most significantly, the perpetrator will play to their victims emotional vulnerability making the child feel that they are special.
Stage 4: Isolation of the Victim - The perpetrator encourages their victim to sever protective contacts with family, friends and other guardians who may have a genuine interest in the protection of the child.

Stage 5: Sexualising the Relationship – After the perpetrator has obtained the trust and emotional attachment of their victim, it is in this stage the groomer begins to progressively sexualise the relationship. This stage also involves the ‘normalisation’ of sexual behaviour, promoting a sense the relationship is special. Thus, desensitising the child to inappropriate contact.

Stage 6: Maintaining their control - Once the exploitation has begun, the perpetrator attempts to maintain their control over the situation using a range of emotional and physical threats to maintain their control. This is where coercion and control tactics are most often employed, with the use of blame, secrecy and physical or emotional threats being used to manipulate the victim into silence and further participation.

While this approach undoubtedly identifies the progressive calculating nature of grooming there are some points in which the model may be evaluated. A critique of this staged approach, includes the observation that this model perhaps focuses too much on the modus operandi of a perpetrator and does not go far enough to analyse specific motivations associated with those involved in the sexual exploitation of children and the situational factors of their victims. Another point of note being, each of the six stages are really only identified and explained in general, simplistic terms, which does little to acknowledge any cognitive distortions of both the victim and perpetrator, as well as any associated means that allow offending to occur.

Peer on Peer Grooming
Sometimes associated with gang related exploitation, peer grooming occurs when young people are introduced to sexually exploitative networks by peers that are known to them through school, mutual friends or others within their social circle. (Pearce, 2009). Peer grooming is also cited as a feature of institutional abuse where exploitative behaviour has become embedded within the organisational culture, such as in the context of care homes. (McAlinden, 2014).

This specific type of grooming, according to studies was the most likely strategy used by perpetrators to gain access to young people (Wortley and Smallbone, 2006). It can also be observed that it is this model that is most prevalent in the recent
recent manifestation of exploitation via the internet and associated social networks, where young people are groomed in localised networks, and encouraged to participate in ‘sexting’ where they are encouraged to take and send explicit images of themselves. These images are then often distributed amongst abusers, and are often used to maintain control over the victim.

It must also be remembered that often those who actively groom their peers, are often themselves victims of exploitation, who participate in the belief they are in a relationship with one of the main perpetrators of the abuse.

**The Party Model**

This aspect of grooming often involves the organisation of parties by abusers to lure young people, typically in larger groups in to exploitative situations using the rouse and impression of the interaction as being a normal situation with no present danger.

In this model, the initial interaction is made by one or more of the victims peers, where an ‘invite’ is made before the victim is induced with an offer of drugs and alcohol.

It is after attending a number of these parties the perpetrator exploits the trust of their victim and demands repayment or favours, with the victim expected to reciprocate. The perpetrator uses the victims sense of enjoyment to suggest they need to find methods of repayment as a pre requisite of attending future parties, which the exploited child often agree to, regardless due to either not wanting to be isolated from those they believe are their friends or being scared to say no due to threats of violence or other coercive methods.

**Inappropriate Relationship Model**

In the inappropriate relationship model, the grooming and exploitation usually involves a single perpetrator, who uses elements of power and control, similar to that used in domestic abuse to maintain an emotional hold on their victim. Although there may be a noticeable and significant age gap, the victim typically believes that they are involved in an authentic loving relationship

An important fact to remember is all children from every background can be vulnerable to the grooming processes of perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation.
‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

An important factor to consider when consider grooming methodology in the context of sexual exploitation, is the observation going missing can be considered both a cause and a consequence of a victims exposure to exploitation (CEOP, 2011). This is also consistent with literature which associates ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors as potential reasons for going missing (Plass, 2007; Jago et al, 2011).

‘Push’ factors relate to circumstances where children may be “pushed” from their home or place of residence. The reasons this may occur are as diverse as the exploitation itself, however research by (Rees and Lee, 2011; Scott & Skidmore, 2006) have identified factors such as child neglect, sexual or physical abuse, or poor family structure or parenting as reasons.

It is also the case that some parents, siblings or carers live chaotic lives that involve alcohol or drug abuse, domestic abuse, mental health issues or bereavement. These issues may promote a sense of escapism in children increasing their vulnerability to going missing and risk of exploitation (CEOP, 2011).

(Plass, 2007) suggests that when these ‘push’ factors are directly associated to a child going missing it makes the child unprotected from the risks associated with an exploitative situation, and as such the likelihood of encountering motivated perpetrators is significantly increased.

As opposed to being the immediate reason why a child may be at risk of exploitation, it is also acknowledged as being a potential symptom of sexual exploitation (Jago et al, 2011). In scenarios, such this the perpetrator of abuse can be described as being a ‘pull’ factor where there is a cultivation of trust and affection, before the child is coerced in to exploitative situations, leading to the victim being isolated from family and friends more often and for greater periods of time (CEOP, 2011). The provision of gifts and accommodation as part of a targeted grooming process also acts as a draw to young victims, while also increasing the perpetrators hold over their victim.

(Scott & Skidmore, 2006) observes that the grooming of young people for the purpose of sexual exploitation does not begin in the immediacy of interaction and overt force is a tactic rarely adopted by the abusers in the early stages of the exploitation.

By understanding the potential relationship between a victim, perpetrator and the associated push and pull factors, one’s attention may automatically drawn to fact a
victim of exploitation may exhibit behaviour changes as a result of the grooming (CEOP, 2011; Melrose and Pearce, 2103).

This behaviour change may cause conflict in any family or care setting, with the perpetrator encouraging their victim to go missing more regularly and for longer periods of time.

Other signs synonymous with indications of exploitation have been explored in research by (Beckett, 2011) which revealed that those children and young people who were exposed to exploitation were often observed as being tired, and undernourished upon returning home, and frequently appeared upset or withdrawn.

In certain circumstances, there was also evidence of serious self harming which was a suspected reaction to trauma experienced while missing.
The Relationship Between Coercion, Control and Grooming.

Before we can analyse the connection between coercion, control, grooming and how an offender maintains a hold over their victim, it is necessary to first consider the cognitive background of what is power and how it links in to the theory of exploitation.

The concept of having a power over another, is to have the capacity to manipulate or change the behaviour of an individual or group of people so that the perpetrator can direct or influence a victims actions ensuring compliance on a separate course. (Turner, 2005) describes power as ‘The capacity to influence other people, that it is conferred by the control of resources (positive and negative outcomes, rewards and costs, information, etc.) that are desired, valued or needed by others and which make them dependent upon the influencing agent for the satisfaction of their needs or reaching their goals’. It is this definition which clearly aligns theory with grooming models and has parallels with those who experience CSE.

(Figure 2: - The Nature of Power through People – (Turner, 2005)
Turner’s nature of power, while not explicitly aimed at the grooming process of exploitation, provides an insight to the breakdown of the processes involved within the grooming phase of exploitation and demonstrates the subtle differences between specific elements that make up a perpetrator’s offending mechanism. It also demonstrates how components of ‘power’ often interlink, strengthening the hold a perpetrator often has on their victim.

A constant term of note, both in sexual exploitation and crime theory is ‘influence’, which in the context of sexual exploitation, is the influencing of another in relation to the perpetrators ability to have their victim come to change their beliefs, values and attitudes towards those on the peripheral of the ‘relationship’ aligning the victims’ views with their own.

In contrast with ‘influence’ there is the act of ‘compliance’. In this model, to be compliant is to ‘have someone choose to act as you want them to act’, without the victim necessarily agree with you. To put it in more simplistic terms, the perpetrator can promote and gain the behaviour or actions they want, without acceptance or informed consent. This is most prominent later in abuse, where the offender is using a variety of techniques to maintain their hold over the victim, as opposed to influence which occurs both early and subsequently after the abuse.

A further way to understand coercive control in the context of sexual exploitation is to contrast it to the attributes and features relating to partner abuse within domestic abuse. Similarly CSE is understood to be a result of ‘an imbalance of power within a relationship’. (DCSF, 2009). It is therefore important to consider coercion control and how it fits in to the grooming process, assisting in the facilitation of the exploitation. Coercive control is a strategic course of oppressive and manipulative behaviour that encompasses a range of strategies to establish a regime of dominance up on a victim of abuse in their personal life.

Similarly, to the methodology used by domestic abuse perpetrators, those engaged in the sexual exploitation of children, often employ similar tactics to gain, and maintain power over their victims. The power and control wheel is a particularly useful tool to understand the patterns of abusive and violent behaviour, which are used by perpetrators of abuse to establish and maintain power and control over their...
victims. It is often the case, exploitation is accompanied by an array of these other types of psychological abuse. They can be less easily identified, yet are firmly established patterns of intimidation and control in the offending process.

Created in 1984, by the Duluth domestic abuse intervention project, the power control wheel describes the dynamics of an abusive relationship. This version of the power and control wheel has been adapted from the original work to take in to account the coercive elements that are frequently observed in the sexual exploitation of children. There are eight key variables or concepts which explain the methods in which a perpetrator exerts their power over the victims of abuse. Vulnerability and grooming has been extensively discussed, as such the following section will focus on the other elements of the wheel.

(Figure 3: - Power and Control Wheel, adapted from the Duluth Model 1984 (Barker, 2017)

**Trafficking**

Part of a broader spectrum of offending, trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons for the purpose of exploitation. (Brayley and Cockbain, 2014). Often misconstrued as a problem involving non-UK nationals, over large distances, trafficking and CSE is inextricably linked (CEOP, 2011; Brayley...
and Cockbain, 2014). An example may include a child being groomed and exploited in one area or town, and moved to a neighbouring town or county to be introduced to a wider network of abusers. This is an example of Power and Control, as it increases the dependency on the perpetrator, and further isolates the victim.

**Intimidation**
Perpetrators will often use coercion and threats to maintain control over their victims. (McAlinden, 2014) Threats of physical harm both to the victim and their immediate family are commonplace, especially where there is a risk of a complaint being made to the police or other authorities. (Barnardos, 2011). The perpetrator may also use the victims sense of attachment, by threatening self harm or suicide. This method is to ensure the victim remains compliant, and in the control of the abusers.

**Debt**
The use of debt to maintain control on victims of exploitation occurs when people give themselves in to situations as a result of an inferred debt. The process begins with a debt, which the perpetrator suggest comes from the items provided early in the grooming process. Knowing that it cannot be paid the victim is often threatened or coerced in to criminal activity, sexual abuse or grooming their peers.

**Isolation**
An element of psychological control, isolation is the emotional and physical detachment of the victim from friends, family or safeguarding professionals. (Barnardos, 2011) The perpetrator will take steps to control or monitor social activity, and may increase a victims sense of detachment by introducing them to other abusers further away from the victims home, or coerce them in to spending more time away.

**Use of Institutions**
The use of institutions in coercion and control of victims cannot be underestimated, perhaps one of the most powerful tools as a perpetrators disposal, this aspect of the wheel stems from the perceived notion or threat that the victim will be either punished or not believed by those in authority. In the joint report ‘Children’s Voices’
between the HMIC and the University of Bedfordshire, a lack of confidence in the system and fear of negative repercussions was cited as reasons some young people do not report incidents to the police (Beckett et al., 2016 p60). Other examples of the use of institutions in power and control may include the inference that the young person would not be believed. (Allnock, 2015).

**Emotional Abuse.**

Another example of psychological control, emotional abuse involves the deliberate intimidation or humiliation of a child victim with the intention of coercing or manipulating the victim into compliance. In cases of exploitation, emotional abuse may be a little subtler, in the respect of a victim’s attachment to the perpetrator. In some cases, the victim does not see the exploitation as wrong, and believes the fallacy of being in a relationship. (CEOP, 2011; Childrens Society, 1999)

The theory and concepts behind the control wheel are not exhaustive, but illustrate some of the methods that encompass power and control in sexual exploitation cases and how they can inter-link to strengthen the offenders control over the victim. It must also be pointed out that as with domestic abuse, this type of coercion and control is particularly effective on two levels, as it not only puts those who are victims of exploitation in fear of the consequences of not only the perpetrators themselves, but potentially the safeguarding authorities, such as the police and social services as well.

It can also inversely manifest itself as psychological barriers, such as denial or post traumatic stress which prevent effective early safeguarding opportunities.

What can be taken from both aspects of grooming models, power and control theories, and sexual exploitation is that there is a specific emphasis on the naivety, vulnerability and entrapment process of the young person. As well as a predatory instinct of a motivated abusing adult.
Chapter 4 - Key Findings

Introduction
This chapter presents the results of the study, incorporating feedback from the questionnaire and analysis of available statistical data relevant to the study. The first aim in this chapter was to try to address the question Who, the victims were, this was established using descriptive analysis of victim demographics. It also addresses when the children are most likely to become a victim of exploitation. The results also look into factors such as Prevalence, barriers to interventions and police effectiveness in dealing with sexual exploitation

Finally, this chapter also aims to put the data in to the context of previous research to reinforce conclusions and discussion points in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.
Victim Demographics.

Age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-12yrs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-14yrs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-17yrs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18yrs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table1: - Average, age victims of CSE first become sexually exploited)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.5 On Average, at what age do victims of CSE first become sexually exploited?</th>
<th>31-40%</th>
<th>41-50%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13-14yrs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-17yrs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table2: - Crosstabulation, Age of CSE Victims and What Percentage previously went missing)

Following the data analysis generated from the responses to the questionnaire, the first thing to consider relating to the victim demographics was, who was identified as being most at risk of being at risk of becoming a victim of sexual exploitation. Respondents were therefore asked to evaluate the age range and gender of those they supported, as well as at what age victims typically became victims of exploitation. The resulting profile demonstrates that those in the age group of 13-14yrs were identified as most at risk of exploitation, with a majority of those also being identified as having previously been reported missing from a place of safety. 100% of respondents (n=5) answered they supported victims with an age range of 11-18 with the age most encountered as being victims being 13-14yrs.

While there cannot be any comprehensive affirmations based on these results due to the low number of respondents, it is representative of similar patterns relating to age from similar studies and victim analysis. The following graphic generated from data available in the National Crime Agency publication, Missing Persons High Level Data Report 2015-16 (NCA, 2016) illustrates the fact there appears to be a significant age...
in which children are more susceptible to exploitation, one which despite the low response correlates with the results gathered for this research.

(Chart 1 - Age of reported CSE Victims 2015/16, (n=1,969) – Source (NCA, 2016)

(CEOP, 2011). Also makes reference to the fact most victims came into contact with safeguarding agencies at the ages of 14 or 15.

**Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.3 Of those who have indicated that they are victims what percentage where Male</th>
<th>0-10%</th>
<th>11-20%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.4 Of those who have indicated that they are victims what percentage where Female</th>
<th>81-90%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table3:- Crosstabulation, Identified Victim Gender)

**IDENTIFIED VICTIM GENDER**

(Chart 2:- Identified Victim Gender graphical representation)
In relation to gender of the victims, this is an area of conjecture and will be one of the main points of discussion later in this dissertation. At first glance of the results, there would appear to be an overwhelmingly weighted proportion of female victims of exploitation as opposed to males, with 90% victims being female. However, this is an example of where statistical representation of data can present a skewed portrayal of vulnerability. Again, despite the low response this figure is surprisingly consistent with other studies, which found that males generally make up 11% of known or suspected exploitation victims. (Barnardos, 2014).
Prevalence and Trends

Prevalence of sexual exploitation, is considered one of the most challenging things to ascertain, as currently throughout the United Kingdom, there is no singular crime indicator that can be utilised to accumulate data relating to the exploitation of children; information instead must first be removed from the multiple crime classifications in order to provide any realistic predictions or conclusions relating to offending rates. This can also prove problematic due to many victims not disclosing the abuse or not being able to identify themselves as victims or their experiences as being exploitative in nature (CEOP, 2011).

Despite this being the case, there are clearer sources of data in which we can relate sexual exploitation and prevalence. This data primarily originates from information relating to child safeguarding referrals via the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The tables below from the National Crime Agency end of year summary (NCA, 2017) shows that currently, at the time of this dissertation project child referrals involving recognised exploitation factors were increasing. While outside of the scope of the data obtained as part of the questionnaire, it is an important source to consider and does provide indications of how sexual exploitation has been recorded, and any relevant change in reporting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Trans-Gender</th>
<th>Total 2015</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor – Sexual Exploitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(non UK National)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(UK National)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor – Unknown Exploitation</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table 4: National Referral Mechanism Figures, 2015 Summary – Sexual Exploitation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Trans-Gender</th>
<th>Total 2016</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor – Sexual Exploitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(non UK National)</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(UK National)</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>104.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor – Unknown Exploitation</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>-14.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table 5: National Referral Mechanism Figures, 2016 Summary – Sexual Exploitation)

As can be seen in the % change column in both tables, referrals relating to the sexual exploitation of children have increased annually, although the numbers of children actually referred via the mechanism are still relatively small. Sexual
exploitation referrals in the UK increased overall 12% to 707 in 2016, compared to 620 in 2015. This is in stark contrast to data released by the Department for Education (Annex 2) which shows a total of 17,600 referrals (3.9% of total) for 2016 in relation to sexual exploitation and 11,900 for going missing (2.7%).

In relation to data that was provided as part of the questionnaire responses, the following table and chart, shows the responses in which participants were asked by what percentage sexual exploitation had increased by from the previous year, what can be seen is that 40% reported that the demand for support for victims had increased by 11-20% and 21-30% receptively, while 20% reported a 41-50% increase in workload. This would certainly fit the same patterns observed in the NRM referral statistics as indicated in previous tables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Valid Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid 11-20%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table 6: Average Increase of CSE related workload)

(Chart 3: Average Increase of CSE related workload graphical representation)

**Trends over time – A note of Caution**

The identification of temporal trends relating to sexual exploitation is notoriously difficult. To the outsider, it can easily be conceived that child sexual and related exploitation offences have escalated exponentially over the last decade. However,
The Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2017) cautions against the interpretation in respect to evaluating patterns in recorded sexual crime data as a potential indicator of the increase in the rate of offending:

‘The renewed focus on the quality of crime recording by the police is thought to have led to improved compliance with the National Crime Recording Standards, leading to a greater proportion of reported crimes being recorded by the police. This means caution should be taken when interpreting police recorded crime trends’. - (ONS, 2017)

In simple terms, any observed increase in offending levels over a period of time maybe down to the improved recording, detection and other safeguarding measures that have been implemented, leading to a greater degree of confidence by victims in the criminal justice process. That is not to say certain offences have not become more or less prevalent, it merely suggests with the development of law and safeguarding procedures certain offences may be effected by renewed classification and recording processes.
What type of CSE is more prevalent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer to Peer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang Related</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Model</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One point of conjecture is the question, what type of sexual exploitation is more prevalent. Again, as with other factors there is a great deal of variation with care needed not to take these results verbatim in every sexual exploitation case. Therefore, the results generated as part of this dissertation cannot be representative of exploitation as a whole, and only offer a snap shot of how sexual exploitation can manifest itself. As can be observed from the responses to the questionnaire, the respondents cited Peer to Peer and inappropriate relationship as being the most prevalent in the cases they were involved in, this aspect may demonstrate how a victim is initially groomed by a peer, before being introduced to the main perpetrator which develops into an inappropriate relationship. Gang related featured twice, as did the Party model, which again may be linked due to large numbers of victims and perpetrators who may frequent a party environment. This hypothesis would require additional testing to gain any significant conclusions, and may benefit from a dedicated research project.
Police Response to CSE.

In respect to the perception respondents had in respect to law enforcement response to sexual exploitation, positively all those expressed the opinion that police forces in their area were good at responding to reports of sexual exploitation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Good</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.15 How effectively has law enforcement dealt with reports of a young person going missing?

Q.12 Overall, how good a job do you think the Police are doing to tackle Child Sexual exploitation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.12 Overall, how good a job do you think the Police are doing to tackle Child Sexual exploitation?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table 8: - Crosstabulation of police response to CSE compared to going missing)

In addition to this outlook, respondents were also asked to comment on how efficiently police authorities dealt with reports of a vulnerable young person going missing. As can be seen from the above table, respondent’s opinions consistently held the view police response was either excellent or good. These findings are provided with additional context from the following comments supplied by the respective participants.

‘We are sent spreadsheets by local police and collect data to present at multi agency meetings surrounding CSE’ – (Participant V1)

‘Police provide data regarding connected CSE and missing person incidents that complement our own, gathered as part of a multi agency response’ – (Participant C3)

It can also be argued that police staff have benefited from increased awareness training and leadership from the College of Policing in this area, which have provided
a sound basis and understanding of the issues surrounding child sexual exploitation cases, which is reflected in the responses in this dissertation.

Despite the very positive view in fundamental areas of police investigation, there were other instances where respondents expressed the opinion police could improve the service they provide. These areas mainly surrounded regularity of updates and the support given to victims and their families. As table 9 below suggests, despite the perception of police being good, only one out of the five respondents (20%) regularly received updates regarding exploitation cases they were involved in. Three (60%) received occasional updates, while one (20%) rarely received any update.

<p>| Q.12 Overall, how good a job do you think the Police are doing to tackle Child Sexual exploitation? | Good | Occasionally | Rarely | Total |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.13 Did the respective authority keep you informed about what was happening?</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occassionally</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Chart 5: - Graphical Representation of police updating of incident)

Putting the above results in to the context of the level of support victims and their families perceived they received from the police revealed that there was a correlation
between the level of update and the perception of support received. The authority who regularly provided updates, was the only one which it was believed supported victims and families effectively, in those instances where the update was either occasional or rare, respondents indicated that they did not feel well supported through the investigation process. Again, there is an argument the sample size is not representative of the overall picture, however it is logical to assume such a pattern would be present in a much larger scale and is an issue that is explored in a Victim Support publication ‘Left in the Dark’, as updates is a factor to be explored later in relation to barriers to intervention. Table 10 below and its associated boxplot chart provides an illustration of the data gathered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.16 Do children and young people, and their families, who have been involved in criminal proceedings feel that they have been well supported and protected, by law enforcement?</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.13 Did the respective authority keep you informed about what was happening?</td>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occassionally</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table 10: - Crosstabulation of perceived support compared to communication)

(Chart 6: - Boxplot of victim perception of support against police providing updates )
A final aspect relating to law enforcement and victim satisfaction would be to compare the perception of police performance to that of the main prosecution authority, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

The following table presents a distinct parallel between satisfaction levels in the Police and CPS in dealing with child sexual exploitation. It is very clear there is a reciprocal connection between a victim’s experience of the police handling of a case, with the overall opinion of how well the CPS handles the incident. This is not overly surprising as the two are inexplicably linked by aspects of prosecution such as the handling of evidence, investigation and charging decisions relating to a case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.12 Overall, how good a job do you think the Police are doing to tackle Child Sexual exploitation?</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.17 Overall, how good a job do you think the CPS are doing to tackle Child Sexual exploitation?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table 11: - Crosstabulation of police response compared to CPS response)

Overall, the police and CPS are becoming increasingly aware of all aspects relating to child sexual exploitation. This can only serve to improve some of the observations of some of the participants and the victims they support. Socially awareness has also increased, however there needs to be better understanding of the processes involved and how they can be effectively communicated, so the victims of exploitation can feel they have been informed throughout on likely outcomes of their particular case, and get the maximum amount of support available.
As research and associated literature has indicated, there are significant barriers in which victims of sexual exploitation experience when confronted with the realities of the abuse. Participants indicated that the barriers that can be linked to the grooming process were most apparent, with 100% indicating, victims often did not perceive the exploitation as being abusive, fear of the perpetrator or the belief of not being believed by safeguarding authorities with the belief little would be done to help. The other reasons indicated, could be observed as being ‘personal’ to the victim including the feeling of shame or not wanting to make family life worse.

In addition to the noted responses in respect to non reporting of exploitation, participants were asked to comment on specific barriers in which they or victims encounter, when communicating with law enforcement. As can be seen from the comments, much of these barriers again relate to the methods or manner of the investigation

‘Too much focus on gaining a prosecution, rather than building up trust and listening to a young persons story and experience.’ - (Participant V1)
‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

‘On occasion, there is a lack of information sharing or updates on the progress of a case’ - (Participant C2)

‘Not using intermediaries to engage with young people’ - (Participant V2)

These findings are not restricted to those involved in this study, in a serious case review by Bradford Safeguarding Children Board published in June 2017, Key points included a lack of leadership and planning and the quality of the initial response provided to the victim and his family.

It must be pointed out that a key theme both on an individual and organisational level, is the need for an effective multi agency response, as well as continued awareness professional development to break perceived barriers. There is also a key balance required to conduct an effective investigation, while taking in to account the opinions, views and experiences of those who experience or support victims of sexual exploitation. This will be further explored in the discussion section of this dissertation.


‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Multi Agency Response

Case Summaries

| Q.19: How do you come in contact with victims of CSE? Are any of these young people ever referred to you by other agencies or by the police? If so, which agencies? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Police | Social Services | Education | Health Service | CAMHS - Mental Health | Early Intervention |
| 2 | Police | Social Services | Education | Health Service | CAMHS - Mental Health | Early Intervention |
| 3 | Police | Social Services | Education | Health Service | CAMHS - Mental Health | Early Intervention |
| 4 | Police | Social Services | Education | Health Service | CAMHS - Mental Health | Early Intervention |
| 5 | Police | Social Services | Education | Health Service | CAMHS - Mental Health | Early Intervention |
| Total N | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

(Chart 7: - Bar chart representing referral routes to support services)

The final section of results explores the effective intervention and referral routes in which the respective organisations encounter when put in to contact with victims of exploitation. It must be emphasised that establishing what is the best referral and safeguarding practices is complex, as every victim is different, with often unique needs. This point highlights another reason to ensure child victims have a voice and are involved in the safeguarding process. In respect to the results gathered from the questionnaire, there is a clear focus and affirmation from the respondents on the need to take a multi agency approach to the safeguarding process. Indeed, the result point to clear, established referral pathways with 100% stating they had received referrals from Police, Social services and early intervention pathways. 80% received referrals from child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and Educational...
authorities, while 60% received them from Health authorities. As with other results, to make any comprehensive affirmations would require an extended research sample, it does however highlight a vital aspect of a multi agency response, which also includes Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) meetings on vulnerable, at risk young people.

It must be pointed out however that effective practice in this area is far from consistent (Barnardo”s, 2012; Beckett et al, 2016; Jago et al, 2011), and there are continued challenges in the definition and methods in which safeguarding agencies can best respond (Pearce, 2010).
Introduction

Part of the JESIP, programme, the joint decision model (JDM) is an adaptation of a law enforcement model that has been used for a variety of law enforcement situations and operational planning.

As this model is an established and integral part of multi agency working policy albeit in the form of major incident control and planning, the component parts of the model offer the best basis for discussion in regards of the findings of research and observations regarding current practice involving safeguarding and multi agency working in the field of child sexual exploitation.

The following section, will address points of discussion that have been raised both from the analysis of results used in this dissertation and from continued research found in a variety of publications relating to exploitation, placing each point within the relevant JDM section, again while there are many aspects worthy of discussion, I have chosen to focus on some of the most pertinent points to arise during the research.
‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

**Vulnerability - A Perfect Victim Paradigm - (Information and Intelligence)**

What is a victim? And why are they so vulnerable? – these are questions that have vexed child protection and law enforcement services, long before the issue of CSE came to the fore, and as the results and literature review in this piece of work has indicated, in the first instance it is not an easy question to answer. However a common theme and characteristic is, the victims are vulnerable children. So why is this a difficult distinction? The stereotypical image of a victim being a young, sexually promiscuous teenage girl. However, as the definition, recent high profile cases and this research demonstrate, this is most definitely not the case and attitudes to the contrary, unfairly attributing blame have often led to significant harm to those at risk of exploitation.

Another point of note, is the distinction that the terms of reference that society uses to describe young people. In the first sense, there is the definition that is afforded to us through legislative processes such as in the Children’s Act 1989, that simply put classifies all those under the age of 18 as being children. However in reality this definition often conflicts with other terminology often used in legal or social sectors, including ‘young adult’ or ‘youth’ which often offer a rather ambiguous status, devoid of the innocence of pre adolescence, that is found lodged between childhood and adulthood. (Valentine, 2004) backs this up with the assertion youths are ‘awkwardly placed between childhood and adulthood’ while at other times ‘represented as articulated adults’. This observation can often be seen in many earlier CSE related literature, where until recently, a lot of the literature and research surrounding the issue of CSE, included references to ‘child prostitution’.

While the context of the literature often relates to the sexual exploitation of young people, the terminology, specifically in reference to prostitution is largely in contradiction to both what constitutes the offence of sexual exploitation, and the legal status of those under the age of 18. This is because there cannot be a clear association between a social issue that often involves a degree of consent and one which is far more complex in its origins, it must also be pointed out that this analogy does not accurately acknowledge the presence of power and control relationships between the victim and perpetrator, thereby dismissing exploitation as a direct cause
of the abuse. The importance of this point can be found in work by (Cusick, 2002), where it was noted that in certain circumstances the issue was stigmatic and did not acknowledge the problem as a direct form of abuse. This stance is has been reaffirmed by (Goddard et al., 2005), where the author argues that to refer to ‘child prostitution’ in the context of CSE was to commit ‘textual abuse’.

However as we have seen, in recent years there has been a significant cultural shift away from associating prostitution with CSE, promoting a renewed discourse both in practice and associated literature, with it being more widely recognised and referred to in the context of child protection. This is largely due to the widespread acknowledgement and awareness of what constitutes consent, the methods used by a perpetrator that prevent a victim from making an informed choice, and amendments to legislation that underpins how we interpret offences involving children.

This observation can be found in the recent changes to sections 47-50 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, where each part was superseded and amended by section 68 of the Serious Crime Act 2015, removing references to prostitution in relation to child abuse and exploitation.

**Boys as victims of CSE**

If as suggested the vulnerability of a person, can as much be linked to professional attitudes and awareness as the factors that directly contribute towards the exploitation taking place, it can be argued that Boys and males are therefore more at risk of sexual exploitation due to societal values and sentiment regarding masculinity and the perception males are nearly always the perpetrators of sexual exploitation. This notion gains particular credibility when you consider the UK government approach to domestic abuse and its ‘Violence against Women and Girls’ publication, one which is mirrored by many police forces. Approaches such as these, while vital in the concepts of protecting those at risk of violence, can be seen to mask the fact that boys and young men can be victims of exploitation and sexual violence too, minimising the impact of any potential intervention and safeguarding opportunity that would be common place for female victims.
‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Similar arguments are made by various academics. Lillywhite and Skidmore’s opening statement in their article states ‘Boys are not sexually exploited is unfortunately the view, probably subconsciously of many professionals working with vulnerable young men’ (Lillywhite and Skidmore, 2006). While (Friedman and Willis, 2013) makes the assertion that research is mostly focused on females, with little known about the experiences of boys and young men.

While this observation is quite perplexing in an age where equality is actively promoted, there were examples of very positive multi agency projects working on relevant awareness campaigns relating to boys and young men who experience exploitation. The Blast Project in Leeds and Barnardos, both are examples that provide templates for the pro-active support networks and safeguarding opportunities that are vital to help male victims of sexual exploitation.

The issue of Boy victims has also been the subject of many recent research papers, notably (Lillywhite and Skidmore, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2017) in which the argument that there are similar rates of exploitation for boys and girls is made. Research in Canada affirms this assertion where it was found 1 in 3 street boys reported being a victim of sexual exploitation (Saewyc et al., 2008).

A Startling Statistic…
(Radford et al, 2011) also makes reference to the prevalence of sexual abuse, the author makes the assertion that 1 in 20 children in the UK have been sexually abused, while the most recent survey by the office of national statistics, estimates 11,000,000 children currently residing in the United Kingdom. if the figures are representative of research conducted by (Radford et al, 2011), an estimated 550,000 children would be victims of some form of sexual abuse. Putting this in to perspective it demonstrates the gulf between reporting and those who have potentially been victims of exploitive situations.
Definition of ‘consent’ in relation to sexual activity

One of the most important, and often misunderstood aspects surrounding the legal responsibilities on professional bodies, as well as the accountability of perpetrators of CSE is the definition of consent in relation to sexual activity. This issue may in part account for the widely used ‘child prostitution’ terminology present in many earlier publications on the subject, that now is largely recognised as being incompatible with child protection legislation.

The two components covered by legislation are the age of the individual and the circumstances in which consent can be given. This not as simple as it first seems, and in the context of child sexual exploitation, ‘consent’ refers to whether or not a child or young person understands how consent can be given, their rights to withdraw consent and the circumstances in which consent cannot be freely given, due to the victim be compromised by the actions of a perpetrator. Examples of this would include: influence of alcohol or drugs, grooming, threats of violence towards the young person or their family, or the presence of coercion and control creating a power imbalance between victim and perpetrator.

It is in these circumstances where it can be seen that, a young person who at 16 – 17 years old has already attained the age of consent, can still become a victim of sexual exploitation, due to the situations they are exposed to, and the individual circumstances that increase their vulnerability. Public protection authorities therefore must be rigorous in their investigations to ensure all aggravating factors are detected, while at the same time ensuring the victim is safeguarded from further abuse.

A legal argument in relation to the competency for a child to provide consent, can be found in the judgement of (Gillick v West Norfolk, 1984). The ruling which is now more commonly known as the Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines. Originally referred to look specifically at whether a doctor could provide contraceptive advice or treatment to those under the age of consent without permission or knowledge of their parents. The original direction by the presiding Judge Mr Justice Woolf, has been
more widely applied in the assessment of whether a child has the suitable level of maturity to make their own decisions and to understand the implications of those decisions.

... ‘the child must be capable of making a reasonable assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the treatment proposed...’ (Mr Justice Woolf, 1985)

Although not tested within the context of sexual exploitation, the Gillick ruling provides for a legal basis in which it can be argued an individual who has attained the age of consent, has the capacity to make such decision based on their understanding of the situation they are involved in. This is often a critical point, as we have already established, one of the barriers victims encounter in relation to safeguarding is the fact they do not believe they are a victim, and they are in fact involved in a consenting adult relationship. Regardless of this, any professional who encounter or work with children need to carefully consider the best method of balancing children’s rights and wishes with the responsibility to keep children safe from harm and exploitative situations.

An important assertion in respect to the relationship between consent, grooming and sexual exploitation of children is made by (Melrose and Pearce, 2013)
‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

In the above diagram, a social model of abused consent, by (Melrose and Pearce, 2013 p.68) the concept and situations in which ‘consent’ is yielded is described in a manner that accounts for how different societal needs or pressures contribute towards the child vulnerability. Central to this model is how each component can be interlinked, demonstrating how consent is often justified or misinterpreted.

This model perhaps shows the best link between the psychological attributes of perceived consent by a victim towards their abuser, the grooming process and the reasons the abuse occur, either through non intervention on the part of a safeguarding authority or a particular need – perceived affection, peer involvement or the sense of social acceptance.

It also allows a greater understanding, of the issue of ‘consent' its complexities and how it often goes well beyond a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer, and adds another dimension to medical or legal definitions which have been explored in this discussion topic.

The subject of consent and sexual exploitation is often taken for granted or assumed, and as a result, the victim may feel a sense they can be directly blamed for the abuse they experience and as such not believed by safeguarding authorities. It is therefore essential both the legal arguments and social theory is embedded in the approach by both law enforcement and safeguarding authorities to ensure children are safeguarded and professional negligence is avoided.
Assessment of Risk.

The risk assessment of a victim of exploitation is a very important aspect of the safeguarding process, with crucial, often burdensome judgments made in complex incidents demanding a combination of reasoning skills and practical acumen. This is undoubtedly a core skill of those involved in the safeguarding process. It also helps those involved create awareness associated with the behaviour of both the victim and perpetrator, identifying the risk associated with secondary exploitation and identifies the interventions that may be most effective in each individual case.

Police and safeguarding professionals working with victims of sexual exploitation are often expected to predict or attribute risk to victims of exploitation. These assessments normally address what the current level of risk to a child is and whether there is any auxiliary future risk attached to the victim or their individual circumstances. The assessment in most circumstances is ‘actuarial’ in its form where guidance indicates an intimation of a particular level of risk (e.g. low, medium, or high).

Barnardo’s were instrumental in their first use, and conducted a pilot study in to their own Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF) the findings published in the report by (Clutton and Coles, 2007) indicated the use of the assessments helped to establish a picture of the demographics associated with the victims they support, vulnerability, risk levels and most importantly the prevalence of exploitation locally. On a local authority level, it was acknowledged that assessments helped in providing an overview of the nature of sexual exploitation that was effecting the area.

A critical observation on risk assessment is that it adds to the ever increasing administrative workload conducted by law enforcement and other safeguarding organisations, and there is a danger the increased demand for assessment combined with lower levels of staffing places increased pressure on those who are responsible for ensuring consistency and detail are preserved. This observation was noted in the Danial Pelka serious case review, and although not a sexual exploitation case, the issues raised in respect to staffing and safeguarding are relevant to a discussion involving safeguarding children from exploitation.
However, inversely assessment is also a vital component of the safeguarding process especially in the context of multi agency (MAPPA) collaboration, as can be seen from the Barnardo’s pilot study. It can also be the case any dynamic assessment can be an indicator of whether there has been any modification of risk whether as a result of a particular intervention or if there are any significant behavioral characteristics or indication of long term risk factors. From research and responses to the research questionnaire it is apparent that any assessment should be as broad as possible and consist of evaluations of the factors associated with exploitation including the opinions and responses of the victims, rather than just focus on a perceived level of risk.

Information should also serve to guide and focus risk management, taking in to account social factors that contribute towards vulnerability. Similarly to domestic abuse, there is an acceptance drug or alcohol abuse, mental health and social depravation can greatly contribute to the risks of exploitation, (Jutte et al., 2014) this is not to say the problem does not exist in more affluent areas, this is clearly not the case, however the presence of these factors in particular are much greater in less well off areas, making the associated risks of exploitation greater. (Jutte et al., 2014) Other assessment factors should include historical events such as convictions for crime and violence, and hospitalization. This observation in particular makes it vital for a multi agency approach, so the information and assessment outcome is as comprehensive as possible.
Current Legislation

In a similar context to other issues surrounding the protection of vulnerable people such as domestic abuse, it must be emphasised that the terminology used to describe child sexual exploitation does not actually refer to a particular action or specific criminal offence. In its broader context, it encompasses an array of behaviours and characteristics, that are enshrined in pre-existing legislation, ranging in severity of the offence and the possible consequences to the perpetrators of exploitation.

In the first instance, reference to a child’s welfare can be found in section 47 of the Children’s Act 1989, which puts a duty on professionals to protect those who they believe maybe at risk when there is; ‘reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.’ While the main statutory powers can be found within the wide ranging Sexual Offences Act, 2003.

The following section is a brief overview of statutory acts and will discuss current legislation and factors that contribute, to the prosecution of CSE cases.

Sexual Offences Act 2003

An updated and revised source of primary legislation, the Sexual Offences Act offers a plethora of legal powers aimed at protecting young people from the acts associated with sexual exploitation, including the recognition of grooming, and the coercion and control of children. The following sections refer to those directly used in relation to sexual exploitation and disrupting the grooming process. Section 14, involves the arranging or facilitating commission of a child sex offence, while section 15, makes the meeting of a child following sexual grooming an offence.

This Act unquestionably offers stronger protection to children from exploitation, than many of its predecessors, the terminology and definition associated with sexual exploitation has changed within legislative frameworks, redefining dated concepts of child prostitution, that attached a social stigma to victims of abuse.
however as we have seen ascertaining actual numbers of victims and convictions is almost impossible, due to the need to separate cases from the various offence categories within the act.

**Child abduction warning notices**

Child abduction warning notices, formerly known as harbourers warnings. Are specific pieces of the safeguarding process aimed at disrupting the behaviour of the perpetrator. These notices are issued to individuals who it is suspected are involved in the grooming of children, by making reference to the fact they do not have any permission to associate with that child, and by doing so commit an offence liable to arrest under both the Child Abduction Act 1984 (Section 2) and Children Act 1989 (Section 49).

Despite the fact, they are recognised as a useful tool in the safeguarding process it must be noted that they have significant flaw in respect to the exercising of their powers, this is because breaching the conditions, does not necessarily imply any offence. This is due to legislation stipulating that the individual named on the notice must ‘take’ or ‘detain’ a child, which as it has been observed in previous sections of this dissertation is difficult to prove due to children willingly going with or remaining with their abusers due to the power exerted through grooming.

Another significant limitation, is that there is no universal age in which they can be issued, with police only able to issue notices for victims up to the age of 18 if they reside within a local authority setting. For those who live at home the maximum age is 16.

**Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.**

Similarly to the child abduction warning notices, the Anti social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, provides measures for the police to ‘Target harden’ and limit the opportunities for abusers to offend by disrupting locations used to commit the exploitation. Sections 43, 59 and 76 provide for powers relating to Protection and closure notices which have proved useful for adopting strategies in relation to the buildings used for exploitation.
For the purposes of issuing a notice requiring closure, a police officer must have ‘reasonable grounds’ to believe the premises, were or likely to be used for the purposes of a sexual offence involving children, and that the closure is necessary to prevent the premises being used for such purposes. (S.76 Anti social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014)

In respect to commercial premises such as hotels, guest houses or similar establishments Section 116 of the act, provides the police with the authority to request information about guests, if they reasonable believe child sexual exploitation is or has taken place on the premises. This section, is intended to provide officers with sufficient investigatory powers in respect to premises of this type.

In respect to this legislation, a key talking point is the distinction between ‘reasonable grounds’ and ‘reason to believe’ – as despite having similar wordings, they have very different meanings in law. The key is in the distinction between belief and grounds. The concept of belief is linked to the legal argument of ‘probable cause’ which is having knowledge of fact, not amounting to direct evidence would lead to any reasonable person to conclude the same thing. ‘Grounds’ however require a greater burden of proof, requiring an officer to have specific information or evidence that an offence has or is likely to be committed.

**Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984 (PACE)**

Although there is no direct legislative provision in respect to sexual exploitation and the power of entry, section 17(1)e of the act provides for entry to ‘save life or limb or preventing serious damage to property. The implication of this is the argument that a victim of sexual exploitation may be at risk of serious harm, and as such PACE provides for grounds to enter In these circumstances.

One criticism of current statutory approaches, is by not having a specific offence, the appropriateness and use of pre existing legislative sections for sexual exploitation prosecutions can appear clumsy, which leads to the debate of whether current legislative approaches are inadequate in the safeguarding of children from sexual exploitation.

As it stands, the answer is no. However, it must be pointed out that legislation alone is not enough to protect victims, legislative process is merely a ‘tool’ in a very large
box and there is also significant public and political motivation to ensure more is done to protect children from sexual exploitation. One particular issue relates to the lack of distinction between offences and the circumstances behind them. A point in which it can be seen that when attempting to quantify the prevalence of sexual exploitation in children, the collection and monitoring of data is largely impossible, something which is deeply floored when attempting to target specific regions or areas for vital safeguarding interventions.

It can also be argued that the extension of the substantial powers already in existence may also be counterproductive, in the sense it may over complicate or stifle pre existing legislative process and safeguarding methodology.
Identifying Options

Target Hardening, crime prevention and CSE

Although the participants were not asked explicitly about their respective uses of crime theory in connection with how they organise their responses, it is a clear aspect of discussion as it directly impacts how specific responses and tactical options are calculated and deployed to maximise safeguarding options.

Crime theory, has long been the premise of crime prevention strategy using environment criminology and crime analysis in an attempt to understand and prevent offences from being committed. Initially developed by Cohen and Felson in 1979, the routine activity theory is a form of environmental criminalistics, that states for a crime to be committed, three component factors have to come together in a particular time and place, that increases the likelihood of victimisation. (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1978) similarly developed a theory of criminal behaviour within their environment. According to this theory, a motivated offenders’ interaction on the environment is based up on ‘nodes’ specific places and locations where a suitable target can be acquired.

In relation to sexual exploitation, these principles can be applied in the initial response to highlight specific area of offending or hotspots and any specific trends relating to how the offender operates, thus enabling the targeting of multiple crime strands, including potential victims and places where they associate.

An example adoption of the Problem orientated policing (POP) model, that endorses the approaches of crime theory and a process of SARA assessment (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment) includes Lancashire police’s Engage Project. The identification and analysis of the root causes and issues that contribute to sexual exploitation in the Lancashire area, enabled the formulation of the most appropriate responses in respect to safeguarding and the pursuit of the perpetrators.
‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

However, one particular aspect key to identifying links and prevailing trends in which crime modelling is heavily reliant, is the use and analysis of various intelligence based data and sources. It must be emphasised that, while this process is particularly effective due to the National Intelligence Model (NIM), challenges still persist in relation to disclosure and availability of data across platforms utilised by different forces. These observations are amongst those cited in work by (Bullock, et al 2006) and are significant considerations in light of some high profile cases such as the Ian Huntley case, where it was found intelligence was not shared amongst agencies, that would have potentially prevented contact with young people.

![Diagram showing the links between NIM and SARA](image)

(Figure 6:- SARA meets the NIM – Baker, 2005)

The diagram above, demonstrates how NIM and SARA are inexplicably linked. Currently, all UK police forces must demonstrate NIM compliance, which requires strategic assessments of policing problems, highlighting police focus and activity. As is evidenced in Lancashire’s approach, in undertaking a child sexual exploitation focused problem profile, 5 critical factors consist of the 5WH – Who, What, When, Where and How. As can be seen, this intelligence is very much driven by the crime theory elaborated up on in this chapter.

Intelligence outputs may well identify specific issues relating to the young persons home life, domestic or substance abuse, for instance that may prove to be a catalyst for prolonged missing episodes or other ‘Push’ factors associated with exploitation.

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The quality of the intelligence generated allows for a greater depth of information to which a particular intervention may prove most effective. For instance, early intervention to stabilise a potential exploitation victims family environment, may remove those ‘push’ factors reducing the risk of secondary exploitation, or indeed preventing them from occurring in the first place.

Locations of interest or ‘hotspots’ may identify where grooming may occur locally, as well as premises that may be complicit in the exploitation of vulnerable people, which provide many options and legislative approaches for intervention.

Intelligence and problem profiling also have a vital role in identifying victims which statistically are under represented, such as in the case of boys or those from the gay community; the number of reported cases are low, but support agencies such as the BLAST project among others, have indicated this is not representative of the actual trends in child sexual exploitation. Intel outputs such as these often dictate a need to work with representatives or members of a particular community to address concerns and identify potential strategies.

Another aspect of the safeguarding process, is to once identified the provision of support services, both overtly and covertly to ‘target harden’ the victim against repeat, secondary victimisation. These support services are usually independent charities, and offer a variety of support and risk assessment strategies that work with victims through a referral process. However, while there are examples of good relationships and interoperability with police authorities and other safeguarding agencies via multi agency meetings as the results point out, communication is sometime lacking, which is often the most vital component of any safeguarding venture.

Another dimension worthy of discussion is Operation Encompass, a domestic abuse venture that involves the disclosure to a child or young persons school that they have been involved or exposed to a domestic abuse incident the previous evening. While this is specifically a domestic abuse innovation, there are clear connotations with child sexual exploitation that would suggest a similar approach would benefit victims of exploitation due to the fact emphasised by this project of the link between

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children going missing both from home and a school environment. It may be surmised the support offered by a project such as this, may promote better interaction and education amongst practitioners and provide another intelligence source when victims are missing or do not attend educational establishments.
Independence is Key – Use of Specialist in the safeguarding process

As we have seen from the results to this project, is that there remain significant barriers to both the police and victims of sexual exploitation in interacting with each other. Often a consequence of the grooming process or poor previous encounters, mistrust and preconceptions about the role of law enforcement is common place amongst those who are victims of sexual exploitation.

Indeed, the importance of the role of intermediaries in the support process is emphasised in comments by a participant of research used in this dissertation. when asked about barriers for victims communicating with law enforcement one aspect was ‘Not using intermediaries to engage with young people’ – Participant C1

As a direct implication of this observation, it can be seen the significance of having an individual who can act as a go between, to build positive relationships between all parties involved in safeguarding and the support of victims. To that end, as has previously stated, we can learn lessons from the key developments in domestic abuse support. The creation of Independent domestic violence advisors (IDVA) have as recognised by the Home Office provided ‘dedicated advice and assistance outside of the criminal justice system’ (Home Office, 2005). Therefore, it can be argued the use of similar ISVA advisors should be considered from the onset, to maximise the opportunity for victims to understand their options, legal rights and any additional services and support available to them.

Specialist Courts and Special Measures

Yet another aspect of the domestic violence strategy is the expansion of specialist domestic violence courts. (Home Office, 2005) Like those who suffer domestic abuse, child victims of sexual exploitation make traumatised witnesses and the experiences and often bewildering legal processes involved in giving evidence, facing their abusers and cross examination of testimony, may invoke traumatic experiences, or mental disassociation where recollections can be easily distorted or confused. (Bidrose and Goodman, 2011). This coupled with the inability to make or maintain eye contact, may lead a presiding judge or jury to make counterproductive inferences about a victims credibility as a witness and veracity of testimony.
This observation, would seem to reinforce the opinion there is a need for a similar approach to that taken for victims of domestic abuse. Published in 2001, the Auld report examined the arguments for specialist courts for domestic abuse. The report cited a pilot project in Calgary that invited as many safeguarding agencies in to court to discuss the most appropriate course of remedial action. The report author Sir Robin Auld concluded.

‘like other ‘restorative’ approaches that I saw in North America, its success appears to be, not so much in devising alternative procedures, but in gathering together the resources of a number of concerned agencies and focusing minds on the issue’.

Since the 2001 report, there has been widespread use and acknowledgement of the value these courts bring to the safeguarding process involving domestic abuse, which poses the question, why their use has not been extended to child sexual abuse cases prior to now.
Chapter 6 – Recommendations and Conclusions

The research and literature review aspects of this dissertation identified a number of overarching issues that contribute to identifying and safeguarding victims of exploitation. These issues form the overall recommendations that follow in this section.

Training and Education - Victims, the Public and the Police
As we have seen, young people who experience exploitation often feel they are in a position where they feel they cannot report the abuse, either due to fear of their exploiters, the perception they won’t be believed or the fact they see their exploitation as being nothing more than a normal relationship.
A key theme therefore must be education. Not only for victims, but also the general public and the police. In this respect, sexual exploitation should be the focus for a national educational programme delivered in all schools to both boys and girls. For safeguarding professionals and law enforcement, sexual exploitation should be integral in continued professional development with regular training to support and update knowledge.

The public are often on the peripheral of the safeguarding process, but arguably encounter those who are both victim and offender on a more regular basis, pharmacists, hoteliers, taxi drivers and park attendants are examples of individuals who are often uniformed about sexual exploitation, and better awareness would promote better information and intelligence about potential offenders victims, and where the exploitation takes place.

A second recommendation in respect to training would be to involve young people and victims of sexual exploitation in any content of training. This is due to responses indicating some victims do not feel their stories or opinions were appropriately taken in to account. The Blast project in Leeds, takes this approach using DVD publications and presentations and is very successful in its practitioner programmes.

Preventing Victim Withdrawal: Continued Support
Another key theme found in research surrounded support, communication with police. In many cases, forthright allegations are withdrawn due to victims becoming
disillusioned or scared of the prosecution process. It is recognised by the college of policing that children are at a particularly vulnerable position when testifying in the criminal justice process, they may find the process frightening and stressful which if not properly addressed may increase the probability of the victim withdrawing from the investigation process. Key to preventing this is maintaining a level of support and communication with victims – One possible option in this respect is the funding and use of Key workers. These people could act as a ‘named person’ whose role would include ensuring the child receives the appropriate care needed, and builds a positive relationship with the victim promoting engagement in the criminal justice process and disclosure.

Policy and Guideline Development
As a serious and complex offence, child sexual exploitation requires an equally dynamic and flexible professional approach, policies and guidelines need to take in to account a variety of approaches from a multitude of agencies, all aspiring to meet similar objectives for protecting vulnerable people. Part of this recommendation is the suggested revision of the UK government’s violence against women and girls guidelines. While in their current form, the policy is both relevant and meaningful, it does not reflect the bigger picture which includes violence against boys and members of the LGBT communities.

Improve Intelligence
Another issue to consider would be how to improve the quality of intelligence inputs in regards to both victims of exploitation and those who regularly go missing. The use of return home interviews and associated risk assessment take a vital role in this regard, and should be developed in association with associated safeguarding professionals to ensure a single document can be deployed across agencies.

A second recommendation, was touched up on earlier in this work. Given there are proven links between sexual exploitation and children going missing, disclosure of data on exploitation and missing episodes should be provided to schools, in the same regard as Operation Encompass, the domestic abuse campaign. This would
provide additional opportunities for support and intelligence flow to and from educational settings.

**Mental Health**

As those who have experienced sexual exploitation have been through a very traumatic experience, access to a specialist mental health professional must be guaranteed and offered in every instance. This may be a necessity to break the cycle of exploitation and grooming. Mental health is however another issue of political significance with local access and provision proving problematic in many areas.
‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Suggestions for Further Research

As I myself have encountered, the subject of child sexual exploitation is a very emotive issue that poses many obstacles to researchers, however difficult the subject matter may be, it is still in need of further research and recognition. The biggest limitation of my own research was in scale and size, both in respect to the issues of exploitations, and the requirement to produce a balanced critical report with such a small scale research project. Therefore, any future research task needs to delve deeper into the prevalence of exploitation within the UK and the variety of methods used to respond to the problem on a local and national scale.

Research Concept 1

As it has been proposed in this work, and in previous research that domestic abuse can be a factor that increases both vulnerability and a child going missing, further research projects may focus on the direct link between the two, to ascertain how many victims of exploitation have come from families where inter partner violence was present and whether it was a direct factor in them becoming exploited.

Research Concept 2

A factor which came apparent during this research was the involvement in crime by child victims, either as a consequence of or as a means to facilitate the repayment of an implied ‘debt’ owed to their exploiters. As a result of this observation, provision should be made to ascertain the numbers of child victims of exploitation are currently in youth custody within the UK and whether there are any safeguarding or support interventions that need to be considered to prevent reoffending and identify perpetrators of abuse.
Conclusions

It is highly likely the subject of child sexual exploitation will be a key priority area for both safeguarding professionals and law enforcement authorities alike, due in large to the very real potential for serious physical and psychological harm to the victims as well as the strength of public opinion and attention cases such as these often attract.

The comments, observations, and associated research from this project reveal that although police and other public sector agencies are committed to producing and engaging in good multi-agency safeguarding practice, it is still often private charitable trusts or organisations that are at the forefront of awareness campaigns.

The initial point of contact for the victim, in whatever capacity or job role has a vital role in the first response as they will typically often be the first person an exploited child will disclose to. Therefore, it is imperative that professionals understand, appreciate and provide solace to those who disclose abuse they have experienced, as any negative interaction will inversely impact on the level of engagement and any subsequent disclosure.

The findings of this project also support much of the existing literature in relation to the links between going missing and sexual exploitation, furthermore, it was identified in research and by participants that inter-disciplinary cooperation was a core theme for the response to the multiple challenges sexual exploitation often pose professionals. For this reason, the improvement of policies, practice, and continued professional development of those who work with victims is vital to prevent potential shortcomings and failings that prevent the effective support and safeguarding of children and young people, especially in the cases where victims are unaware themselves they are victims of sexual exploitation.

As has been elaborated in earlier chapters, officers and other safeguarding professionals also need to understand the mechanisms of grooming, and how elements of domestic abuse such as coercive and controlling behaviour can impact on the victim, both in the initial stages of disclosure and later, where they may be at
an increased risk of repeat victimisation. This is where if implemented effectively, legislative processes can provide the basis of an initial safeguarding remedy.

nonetheless, the necessity the implement these safeguarding steps, and any subsequent action cannot be achieved without a well designed and delivered sexual exploitation training package, which is an essential part of ensuring professionals fully understand the complex offending patterns and erratic domestic situations victims often exhibit at the time of the initial interaction.

Since the HMIC 2016 Report ‘Missing Children, Who cares’ police response and investigative standard has become more standardised and efficient, with law enforcement having a greater understanding of vulnerability and the associated risks linked to child sexual exploitation. Additionally, national policy and guidelines have placed a greater emphasis on the responsibility of safeguarding and the identification of adequate responses when a young person has been reported missing.

It can also be surmised that critical observations originating from high profile cases and serious case reviews have led to law enforcement and other safeguarding authorities to become increasingly aware in all aspects of child sexual exploitation, including their responsibilities in responding to the problem. This in particular can only improve some of the observations of some of the participants. One issue of continuing concern relates to the need for a better communication in respect to case updates, so victims of sexual exploitation gain a better understanding of likely outcomes of their case, and feel supported throughout.

For myself, this project has raised more questions than answers, definitely in respect to the safeguarding process and the difficulties that can be encountered in dealing with sexual exploitation, this however was largely expected due to the size and scale of this piece of work. I think it is also important to remember statistics only offer one dimension and rarely provide a reflection of absolute truth, especially in respect to vulnerability. Indeed, Einstein once said ‘Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted’ – a fact worthy of recognition when considering any approach or policy guidelines to combatting the sexual exploitation of children.

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The Future of Investigation – Concluding Thoughts

While we do not know how the future of sexual exploitation investigation, the following quote provides a juxtaposition to the basics we as professionals should strive to achieve.

‘The highway code does not tell you how to drive, but how to survive the journey by flagging situations where danger may be lurking and extra vigilance is needed’. - (Pawson et al, 2005)

The connection between the message in this quote is best attributed to the manner we learn and develop our investigative approaches, by acknowledging and being vigilant to the dangers of past mistakes and serious case reviews, we as professionals can endeavour to ensure victims voices are heard and perpetrators are held to account in a court of justice.
Annex

Research Information

‘Missing The Point - The Links Between Child Sexual Exploitation and Young Persons Going Missing’

Scope of the research Project

My name is Richard Barker, I am currently conducting a masters research dissertation at the School of Social Sciences, Business and Law at Teesside University, as part of my ongoing MSc Criminal Investigation degree.

My research project and dissertation is about investigating the links between children who regularly go missing or are at risk of trafficking and child sexual exploitation. As part of this I am keen to engage with professionals and specialists in this field, to explore the knowledge, skills and challenges, used to identify, refer and safeguard those at risk, as well as the different strategies and interventions available.

What would I have to do?

I would like to explore the subject, through the use of a research questionnaire. The questionnaire should not last more than one hour. Participation is entirely voluntary and you can choose to withdraw at any time. Your involvement and any information you provide will be kept completely anonymous and confidential.

What happens to any information or data I provide?

Responses to the questionnaires will be analysed in the SPSS package. If you wish to see a copy of the final write up, this can also be arranged. I will also give you an opportunity to see my findings and interpretations to ensure I have accurately reflected your opinions and views. All returned questionnaires and the responses will be held securely, and subsequently destroyed once the research has been completed.

Proposed Research outcome

The planned research has been added to the College of Policing ‘What Works Crime Reduction’ research map, which may also impact constructively on interested parties within the police service by identifying levels of awareness and highlighting any gaps in knowledge. It is also hoped that findings may help develop new insights in to effective interventions and disruption strategies.

About me

I am currently a serving special constable and have experience in working with young people, some of which come from a vulnerable background having worked in the outdoor education sector. If you would like to contact me about the research for any reason, or have any questions about it, please contact me on the following email - L1058021@live.tees.ac.uk

Alternatively, If you are unhappy with any aspect of the project, you can contact my academic supervisor, Ruth McGrath, Senior Lecturer in Policing, Teesside University: Ruth.McGrath@tees.ac.uk
Research Consent form

Consent form for participating in ‘Missing The Point - The Links Between Child Sexual Exploitation and Young Persons Going Missing’

1. I have read / had explained to me by Richard Barker the attached research information sheet relating to the study.

2. I understand the eligibility criteria to take part in this study.

3. I understand the purpose and objectives of the project and what will be required for participation. I agree to the arrangements described in the attached information sheet, as far as they relate to my participation.

4. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

5. I have been provided with a copy of this consent form and the accompanying research information sheet.

Participant Unique Prefix:

Date:

Signature:

Investigator’s name:

Date:

Signature:

All ethical aspects of this project have been fully approved by the School of Social Sciences, Business & Law Ethics Review Committee. If you have any reservations or complaints about anything to do with the ethics relating to your participation in this research, please contact the academic supervisor for the research project, Ruth McGrath, Senior Lecturer in Policing, Teesside University: Ruth.McGrath@tees.ac.uk
Research Questionnaire
‘Missing The Point - The Links Between Child Sexual Exploitation and Young Persons Going Missing’

Participation Statement
Any responses are strictly anonymous, research will not identify your organisation.

personal information and experiences pertaining to your clients is not required, the questions ONLY relate to general information and trends that you have observed regarding CSE, as well as any associated observations you can share.

Questionnaire Unique Prefix:

1. Within your organisation, how many young people (under the age of 18) have indicated that they have been victims of Child Sexual Exploitation in 2016?

2. Is this an increase over the previous year, if so by what percentage?
   - <10%: □ 11-20%: □ 21-30%: □ 31-40%: □ 41-50%: □
   - 51-60%: □ 61-70% □ 71-80%: □ 81-90%: □ >90%: □

3. Of those who have indicated that they are victims what percentage where
   Male: □ Female: □

4. What is the age range of the young People you support?

5. On Average, at what age do victims of CSE first become sexually exploited?
   - 10-12yrs: □ 13-14yrs: □ 16-17yrs: □ 18yrs: □

6. Does the organisation you represent collect data regarding CSE and how often young people go missing? If so how is this collected?
‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

7. What percentage of young people who have previously gone missing from a place of safety have been victims of CSE?

- <10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- 51-60%
- 61-70%
- 71-80%
- 81-90%
- >90%

8. How many times do young people go missing on average before CSE is identified as a contributory factor?

- Once
- Twice
- Three Times
- Four Times
- >Five

9. How many victims have been identified as having refugee status?

10. Of those who are refugee’s, what percentage have reported the abuse to the police?

- <10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- 51-60%
- 61-70%
- 71-80%
- 81-90%
- 91-100%

11. How far were the young people found from their place of residence?

- <1 Mile
- 2Miles
- 3 Miles
- 4 Miles
- >5 Miles

12. What percentage of victims of CSE were also victims of internal trafficking?

- <10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- 51-60%
- 61-70%
- 71-80%
- 81-90%
- >90%

13. What type of CSE is more prevalent?

- Peer to Peer
- Gang related
- Boyfriend/Girlfriend
- Other (Please Specify)

14. How many offenders are typically involved in the abuse?

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five +
15. Overall, how good a job do you think the Police are doing to tackle Child Sexual exploitation?

Excellent: □ Good: □ Poor: □ Very Poor: □

Comments:-

16. Did the respective authority keep you informed about what was happening?

Regularly: □ Occasionally: □ Once or Twice □ Never: □

Comments:-

17. How often does your organisation pass details to law enforcement agencies relating to a child going missing?

Regularly: □ Occasionally: □ Once or Twice □ Never: □

Comments: -

18. How effectively has law enforcement dealt with reports of a young person going missing?

Excellent: □ Good: □ Poor: □ Very Poor: □

Comments:-

19. Do children and young people, and their families, who have been involved in criminal proceedings feel that they have been well supported and protected, by law enforcement?

Yes: □ No: □
20. Overall, how good a job do you think the CPS are doing to tackle Child Sexual exploitation?

   Excellent: [ ] Good: [ ] Poor: [ ] Very Poor: [ ]

   Comments:-

21. What barriers or challenges have you encountered when communicating with law enforcement?

22. Are these barriers associated with missing persons, CSE or both?

   Missing Person: [ ] CSE: [ ] Both: [ ]

23. How many child abduction notices have been issued in relation to CSE?

   0: [ ] 1-5: [ ] 6-10: [ ] 11-15: [ ] 16-20: [ ] 21-25: [ ] 26-30: [ ]

   Other (please specify)________

24. How does the number of cautions and prosecutions for CSE relate to the number of referrals?

25. How many convictions of CSE have there been involving the cases you are aware of?

   0: [ ] 1-5: [ ] 6-10: [ ] 11-15: [ ] 16-20: [ ] 21-25: [ ] 26-30: [ ]

   Other (please specify)________
26. How many cases are you aware of involving elements of human trafficking and CSE?

0: □ 1-5: □ 6-10: □ 11-15: □ 16-20: □ 21-25: □ 26-30: □

Other (please specify)________

27. Does your organisation use any screening tools that aim to obtain information regarding a young person’s risk of becoming a victim of CSE?

Yes: □ No: □

28. If yes to above, are they used in conjunction with return home interviews of young persons? And who conducts them?

29. How do you come in contact with victims of CSE? Are any of these young people ever referred to you by other agencies or by the police? If so, which agencies?

30. Have you observed any differences between the boys and young men in your program compared to the girls and young women in your program? For example, are boys and young men more or less likely to be involved with the police and criminal justice system? Or are they more or less likely to seek services?

31. Have you observed any common themes in these youth lives/histories? For example, have you observed that most of these boys are runaways and/or
street youth? Or are many coming from foster care? Or have you observed
commonalities in histories of abuse?

32. What are the main reasons, young people do not report CSE to the police or
other safeguarding agencies?

33. Is there a clear and robust multi-agency strategy for information sharing,
preventing and managing CSE?

34. How is intelligence about children and young people missing from home,
school or care used to inform the response to CSE?

35. Are there any good and effective examples of a preventative approach to
CSE? How do you know that prevention activity is working? How is this
evaluated?
36. Are schools proactive in addressing the risks of CSE through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education?

37. What action has been taken to address the dangers associated with online grooming?

Thank you for taking the time to assist in this research, if you have any other questions or points that you feel is relevant to this research, please feel free to make some additional comments on the reverse side of the questionnaire or get in touch via my email address on the information sheet provided.
### Annex 2 – Children in Need and Child Protection Statistics – Year 2015/16
**Department for Education – Available at:** https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-children-in-need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of episodes with assessment factor information</th>
<th>Alcohol misuse</th>
<th>Drug misuse</th>
<th>Domestic violence</th>
<th>Mental health</th>
<th>Going/being missing</th>
<th>Child sexual exploitation</th>
<th>Trafficking</th>
<th>Gangs</th>
<th>Socially unacceptable behaviour</th>
<th>Self-harm</th>
<th>Neglect</th>
<th>Emotional abuse</th>
<th>Physical abuse</th>
<th>Sexual abuse</th>
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<td>82,400</td>
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<td>11,900</td>
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<td>37,000</td>
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<td>78,400</td>
<td>86,600</td>
<td>62,700</td>
<td>28,600</td>
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<td>2.7</td>
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<td>17.5</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘MISSING THE POINT’ THE LINKS BETWEEN GOING MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

References


Berelowitz, S. et al (2012) I thought I was the only one in the word, The Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation In Gangs and Groups Interim Report London: Office of the Children’s Commissioner


Richard Barker – L1058021


