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# 'Time to listen' – a joined up response to child sexual exploitation and missing children

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## Executive summary

Tackling child sexual exploitation can be done. The five joint targeted area inspections (JTAIs) have found evidence of progress being made in many local areas, which is resulting in better support for children at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation.

There is, however, no room for complacency. More can be done to ensure that all children and young people receive consistently good support from all agencies and in all areas. Poor practice by some professionals and some key agencies means that some children at risk of exploitation still do not get the response they need quickly enough.

Responding effectively to child sexual exploitation requires all partners to take responsibility for their own work and to work collaboratively with each other.

Political will and determination to drive improvements are in place and significant investment has been made in the development of services to tackle child sexual exploitation in spite of the climate of reduction in funding for some key agencies. All five areas inspected had strategies and plans in place to tackle child sexual exploitation but the impact of plans and strategic leadership in influencing frontline practice was too variable. It is crucial that local areas translate this strategic commitment into effective frontline practice.

Where strategies and plans were effective, agencies were clear about their responsibilities, senior, middle and front-line managers oversaw and implemented plans, and staff had the skills, knowledge and training to recognise and respond to child sexual exploitation.

Prevention and raising awareness in local communities was seen to be a real strength. This was most effective when the work was informed by a good understanding of the local risks and patterns of offending and young people were involved in developing prevention and awareness resources.

In the majority of cases, professionals worked collaboratively to engage and work with children and families affected by child sexual exploitation. Engagement with young people was good where professionals carefully planned their work together, were persistent and skilled in engaging with young people and understood their specific needs and strengths, as well as the impact of abuse and trauma.

Young people have spoken of the importance of building a relationship with a professional and feeling that they are involved in decisions and are respected.

This approach is not evident in all cases. Some children had too many professionals involved with them and a lack of coordination, together with assessments that did not always consider all of the child's needs, meant that support for children was not



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meaningful to them or meeting all their needs. In a small number of cases, we saw that professionals had poor understanding of child sexual exploitation. This was evident through their inappropriate use of language and affected their ability to engage with children effectively. Of particular concern are the findings that frontline health professionals do not all have the skills needed to identify child sexual exploitation and not all children have easy access to sexual health services. In some instances, even when health professionals are provided with the tools and checklists to identify sexual exploitation, they do not always use them.

In most cases reviewed, police responses were effective, and in some instances, impressive. However, there were a small number of cases where there were significant delays in police responding to children who had reported child sexual exploitation. All children deserve the kind of responses we have seen in some areas, where responses from the police are timely and focused on the needs of the victim and where professional skill and diligence results in the conviction or disruption of perpetrators and good support for victims.

A key element of effective joint working to address child sexual exploitation is an effective child protection system. We identified significant weaknesses in child protection work in one local area that had not been identified and addressed by managers in children's social care. Without robust management oversight within agencies and across partners, it is difficult to implement an effective multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation.

Responses to children missing require further development in most areas visited. The challenges for agencies, in particular the police and children's social care, were evident but more needs to be done to enable the police and children's social care to have a better understanding of the reasons why children go missing. Understanding of the barriers to ensuring effective responses when children go missing, including making return home interviews work, needs to improve. There should be learning from those areas that are responding well when children go missing, and, importantly, intervening to prevent children going missing in the first place. Research to understand the barriers to effective responses to children who go missing and to support a better understanding of the experiences of children is required by central government to drive improvements in practice and should inform a review of the current 'Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care'.<sup>1</sup>

We saw many good examples of effective joint working during the inspections. All agencies, including the police, children's social care, health, youth offending services

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<sup>1</sup> 'Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care', Department for Education, January 2014; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care).



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and the voluntary sector, must learn from these examples of good and effective practice. The challenge of tackling child sexual exploitation is not going away. Multi-agency systems within local areas must build on the strengths identified in this report so that all children get the services and support they need.

## Key findings

- Although the pace of change is variable across areas inspected, there has been progress in the multi-agency response to tackling child sexual exploitation since 2014.
- Tackling child sexual exploitation can be done, but only if all partners take responsibility for their role as a discrete agency, work collaboratively with each other and have a shared understanding of how to tackle child sexual exploitation.
- Strategic goals must be clearly identified, understood and agreed across agencies, which also must commit resources to tackle child sexual exploitation. However, collective commitment at a strategic level is not always translating into effective practice.
- The local authority, police, health and other key agencies like probation and youth offending must share information and intelligence to fully understand the local patterns of child sexual exploitation, to disrupt and deter perpetrators and to identify, help and protect children. They need to be aware that patterns of offending evolve and change rapidly, for example the increase in online grooming. A dedicated professional, with good access to a range of multi-agency information to ensure that those children who are at risk and the profile of offenders are understood and managed, is needed to best inform local areas.
- Raising awareness across the community is crucial. Children can help in developing materials to support other children to understand the risks and issues. Schools have a critical role. The wider community, including parents and carers as well as public services such as transport and recreation and the business community, needs to take responsibility for their role in protecting children.
- Children benefit from being able to build a relationship with one trusted individual, and being actively involved in decisions about their lives. Professionals in all agencies, and particularly social workers and health professionals, need the time and capacity to build relationships with children if they are to effectively identify children at risk and help protect them.
- There needs to be a better understanding of why children go missing at an individual and a strategic level if agencies are to do more to protect them. Local authorities need to gather all available intelligence to understand why a child has gone missing, including sensitively encouraging children to talk about why they ran away. The current requirement that every child who has been missing should receive a return home interview is not working well enough.



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- The response to children missing should be based on a proper assessment of all known risks by the police that are appropriately shared with the local authority. Current risk assessments by the police are inconsistent and their effectiveness is limited for some children because episodes of children going missing are sometimes seen in isolation without considering wider vulnerability. This is exacerbated by the inappropriate use of 'absence' as a category for some children who are missing.
- In too many areas visited, the health community has insufficient resources. In a minority of cases, key frontline healthcare professionals had an inadequate understanding of the signs of child sexual exploitation.
- Where frontline staff are well trained to use risk assessment checklists and apply professional knowledge and skill to recognise risks, this is making a real difference to children.
- We saw effective and persistent approaches by the police to tackle child sexual exploitation in two areas and in other cases during the joint inspections. However, unacceptable variation in police practice and performance between and within areas remains and means that some children have to wait too long to get the help and support they need.
- The most effective assessments of the risks of child sexual exploitation involved young people and all the professionals working with them. These assessments incorporated risks and protective factors in schools, peer groups and local neighbourhoods and were regularly updated as children's circumstances and the risks they faced could change rapidly.
- Responding effectively to child sexual exploitation requires fundamental and established multi-agency child protection procedures to be implemented effectively. Too many cases were seen where these procedures were not followed, such as a failure in one area by the police to jointly investigate with children's social care reports of child sexual exploitation. In some other areas, there was a lack of attendance by key professionals at multi-agency meetings such as case conferences to share information and make joint decisions.
- Responses by professionals to children and families affected by child sexual exploitation varied widely. In most cases, professionals were highly committed to engaging with children, listening to their views and understanding their experiences. However, in some cases, their engagement with children was being hampered by poor-quality assessments and planning that failed to address all of the children's needs. There were a small number of cases where inappropriate language and ill-informed comments about promiscuity and the giving of consent by professionals could have conveyed to the child they were held responsible for the abuse.
- Leaders' and managers' oversight and supervision of frontline practice are critical. While there are many examples of good management 'grip' in the inspected



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areas, inspectors still found examples of significant failures within health, the police and in one local authority.

- Individual agencies and organisations can use their powers in a range of ways to protect children. These should all be exerted to their full extent, such as local councils' role in granting taxi licences.

## Introduction

1. Since Professor Alexis Jay's report into the sexual exploitation of children in Rotherham,<sup>2</sup> both central government and partners across local areas have made efforts to tackle the sexual exploitation of children. Ofsted's 2014 thematic review of child sexual exploitation in 2014, found that not all local authorities and partners visited were making sufficient efforts or progress and, as a result, children and young people were not being protected from sexual exploitation.<sup>3</sup> As practice in this area continues to develop and our understanding of the prevalence of child sexual exploitation improves, there continues to be the need to identify and share good practice and effective ways of working across the sector and between partner agencies.
2. Understanding child sexual exploitation is not simply about identifying the characteristics of children who are vulnerable to abuse. As recent research shows, it requires a wider perspective and understanding of 'the contexts, situations and relationships in which exploitation is likely to manifest'.<sup>4</sup> Some of these contexts or relationships include, but are not limited to:
  - gang-association
  - missing from home, care or school
  - adolescent mental health issues
  - harmful sexual behaviour
  - drug and alcohol misuse
  - teenage relationship abuse.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham (1997–2013)', Alexis Jay, 2014; [www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1407/independent\\_inquiry\\_cse\\_in\\_rotherham](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1407/independent_inquiry_cse_in_rotherham).

<sup>3</sup> 'The sexual exploitation of children: it couldn't happen here, could it?', Ofsted, 2014; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-exploitation-of-children-ofsted-thematic-report](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-exploitation-of-children-ofsted-thematic-report).

<sup>4</sup> Dr Carlene Firmin, 'Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation and associated vulnerabilities: A briefing for inspectorates', University of Bedfordshire, The International Centre Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking; [www.beds.ac.uk/ic/publications/briefings](http://www.beds.ac.uk/ic/publications/briefings).



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Children who go missing from home or education may be more vulnerable to exploitation, or they may go missing because they are being exploited.

3. Children and young people experiencing difficulties in any of these contexts or relationships, or children who go missing, will come into contact with different agencies, be it health, such as sexual health services, the police, youth offending teams, education services, or children's social care. That is why tackling child sexual exploitation requires all agencies to take ownership and responsibility for the prevention and identification of child sexual exploitation, including their role in the protection of children. It is the responsibility of all partners to strategically coordinate and share information to help disrupt and identify perpetrators of abuse and to protect child victims.
4. In 2015, the government published its 'Tackling child sexual exploitation' cross-government action plan. It included a commitment to delivering a new system of multi-agency inspections to 'reinforce the need for joint working at all levels and better assess how local agencies are working in a co-ordinated manner to protect children and young people'.<sup>5</sup> This report summarises the findings from the 'deep dive' element of five JTAIs conducted by Ofsted, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation) between February and June 2016.<sup>6</sup> The inspections were conducted in Central Bedfordshire, Croydon, Liverpool, Oxfordshire and South Tyneside.
5. The deep dive aspect of the inspection evaluated the experiences of children and young people at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation. It also looked at children missing from home, care or education, given the links between children missing and child sexual exploitation.
6. Inspectors reviewed the work within and across key agencies, including children's social care, the police, adult probation services (National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies), youth offending teams, health services and local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs). All inspectorates jointly tracked and sampled cases of children who were subject to, or at risk of, child sexual exploitation and of children who had been missing from home, care or education. Inspectors met a

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<sup>5</sup> 'Tackling child sexual exploitation', Home Office, 2015, p. 2;

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation--2).

<sup>6</sup> Joint inspections of child sexual exploitation and missing children: February to August 2016, Ofsted, 2016; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-inspections-of-child-sexual-exploitation-and-missing-children-february-to-august-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-inspections-of-child-sexual-exploitation-and-missing-children-february-to-august-2016).



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range of senior leaders, middle managers and frontline staff and spoke with children and their parents and carers. The inspectors also reviewed a wide range of documents about individual children's experiences and the strategic management and oversight of work across agencies.

7. Where case examples are used in this report, we have altered the details and changed names changed to ensure that children cannot be identified.

## **Tackling child sexual exploitation can be done**

8. We know that responding effectively to child sexual exploitation is one of the most complex challenges facing professionals working in the child protection system. As Ofsted said in the 2014 thematic survey report, it was clear to inspectors that many areas had been too slow to face up to their responsibilities. As a result, child sexual exploitation was not being effectively tackled. In the joint inspection of the five areas, inspectors found evidence of significant progress being made in several areas. This was having a clear and positive impact on the experiences of children and young people at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation. In the majority of cases, agencies identified and responded to children at risk. Child sexual exploitation can be tackled if agencies work together effectively but it is the responsibility of all partner agencies to learn from good practice and continually improve their ways of working.

## **Mapping and profiling children and those that abuse them**

9. The starting point for local areas in tackling child sexual exploitation has to be developing an accurate picture of child sexual exploitation in their locality. Understanding the cohort of children at risk is essential in enabling agencies to target services to meet local need and develop preventative approaches that encompass the risks that children face in that area. Understanding risk must also include profiling of offenders who seek to abuse and exploit them. Ofsted's 2014 thematic survey found that multi-agency arrangements to tackle child sexual exploitation, where they did exist, were too often poorly informed by local issues. The collation and sharing of information between agencies, such as the police and children's social care, was not effective and therefore not supporting a joint understanding of child sexual exploitation in their area. All five areas visited for the joint inspections had carried out some analysis to understand and map the profile of known perpetrators and victims of child sexual exploitation. Some areas were able to demonstrate how they had used this information to target resources to meet local need or develop preventative approaches. Some good work is already happening, but there is still more to do.



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In **Croydon**, a range of analyses have been undertaken by the partnership to better understand and map the profile of known victims of child sexual exploitation and the changing pattern of offending. For example, the child sexual exploitation subgroup has a good understanding of how the profile of child sexual exploitation has changed in the borough over the last year with less use of hotels as venues to exploit children, to use of private residences and forms of transport other than taxis and increasing levels of online grooming. The subgroup is able to evidence how this analysis is resulting in the development of services to target identified risk, for example in recognition of the prevalence of peer-on-peer abuse, work is being developed to identify and address sexually harmful behaviour at a much earlier stage through joint working between children's social care and the youth offending team.

10. In areas that were effective, there was a shared understanding between children's social care, the police and youth offending teams that patterns of offending and the ages and gender of those at risk can alter over time, as can modes of grooming children. For example, the recent increase in many areas in the frequency of online grooming.
11. All agencies need to be well informed and forward thinking in mapping child sexual exploitation. There is no room for complacency if services are to work together to tackle the changing nature of child sexual exploitation. In those areas where this work was most effective, the process of analysing local risks was developing continuously. With increasing recognition of peer-on-peer abuse, some areas were beginning to map relationships between young people to identify all those at risk, as well as those who may be exploiting or grooming young people. Sharing information between agencies, including schools, allows prevention work to be targeted. Information and intelligence must be shared across agencies and analysed and wider networks of gangs and criminal activity understood within the context of child sexual exploitation. A dedicated resource is required to manage this 'mapping' work with agreed access to a range of multi-agency information. The impact of good information sharing was evident in the accounts of young people, who recognised that sharing information between agencies about the range of risks was leading to actions that were helping them to stay safe.

### **Oxfordshire**

Ellie and Georgia have been subjected to child sexual exploitation and report that they have received a comprehensive service from the 'Kingfisher' team (multi-agency child sexual exploitation team). They describe how the police, social workers and youth offending team workers gathered and shared information about local gangs, young people thought



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to be a risk to Ellie and Georgia, and about the places where the girls had been sexually exploited. The girls understood that the police had used this information to take action against those who posed a threat to them. Both young people spoke of the sustained and trusting relationships they had with social workers in the team and how they had been helped to understand what sexual exploitation is and that they now felt well supported and more protected.

## Raising children and young people's awareness of child sexual exploitation

12. In Ofsted's 2014 thematic survey, we found that local authorities and partners that took part in the thematic were successfully using a range of innovative and creative campaigns to raise awareness and safeguard some young people at risk of child sexual exploitation. Our joint inspections provide evidence of continued, effective work to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation with children and young people, and, in doing so, helping to identify children at risk.
13. We also found that schools played an essential role in raising awareness among large numbers of children about the risks of child sexual exploitation. We saw a range of approaches used, including supporting some children to speak out about their experiences of being exploited.

In **Liverpool**, work in schools is a key aspect of prevention work. Significant work with school leaders in partnership with School Improvement Liverpool is raising awareness effectively of child sexual exploitation in secondary schools. The use of a drama production is resulting in increased referrals from schools to children's social care. Headteachers are clear about referral pathways, and articulated well their involvement in multi-agency child sexual exploitation meetings leading to greater confidence in identifying children at risk of exploitation.

14. The involvement of young people and local community groups in developing bespoke materials to highlight the risk of child sexual exploitation was seen to be very effective. For example, in South Tyneside the Junior LSCB has helped to develop and distribute materials to promote understanding of child sexual exploitation. The LSCB manager has worked closely with some minority ethnic communities to produce bespoke posters and leaflets to reach local communities. In Croydon, consultation with young people showed that they were more likely to recognise risks to their friends than to themselves. Leaflets were then designed by young people to help them identify risks to their peers and to know what to do when they were worried about their friends.



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15. Raising awareness was most effective when local patterns of offending were known and used to inform prevention work with young people.

In **South Tyneside**, all schools include child sexual exploitation as part of the personal, social, health and education curriculum and all secondary schools have hosted a drama production, which has been adapted to reflect local issues. This ensures that the material is relevant to young people and is helping them identify the key warning signs in their local area. The play has been seen by children looked after with the support of specialist nurses and shown at the general practice (GP) safeguarding education forum. South Tyneside is working effectively with three other local authority areas to develop child sexual exploitation prevention work, with children aged 10 to 12 developing drama and support materials. Work has begun in primary schools this year.

## Engaging the wider community

16. Tackling child sexual exploitation is everybody's business. Ofsted's 2014 thematic survey found that awareness-raising across the wider community was not coordinated effectively. This year, however, we saw that joint work by agencies to raise awareness was a key strength across the areas visited. Developing a 'whole-council approach' to tackle child sexual exploitation, involving a range of council departments such as housing, transport, the parks, and children's social care, was well established in areas visited. This was supporting the wider community to build confidence in recognising and reporting safeguarding issues.
17. As with engaging with children and young people, engaging the wider community was most effective when informed by a shared understanding of how perpetrators in the area were targeting and grooming children. Recognition that staff who work in the night-time economy may be able to alert the police to the grooming of children has resulted in the inclusion of staff of licensed premises, security staff, and staff at fast food outlets in awareness-raising and training on child sexual exploitation.
18. Community engagement was effective when aligned with disruption activity developed through community safety partnerships and the police. For example, in Oxfordshire, a 'hotel watch' scheme informs hotels about 'signs to watch out for'. Information from hotels about young people at risk of child sexual exploitation has increased in volume since this work started. The police are using this information to disrupt offenders' activities. In South Tyneside, 94% of taxi drivers have been trained in identifying child sexual exploitation and training is a condition of receiving a licence. As a result, between 2014 and 2015, there has been a 53%



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increase in reports from taxi drivers of concerns about child exploitation to the police.

## **Working with children and young people at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation**

19. Through effective work and relationship building with children, professionals are able to identify and assess children at risk of, or subject to, sexual exploitation, as well as providing them with the support they need. In 2014, we found that screening and assessment tools, where they existed, were not well or consistently used to identify or protect children and young people from sexual exploitation and that plans for partners across the area to support individuals were not robust. Our joint inspections have found evidence of many examples of effective work to identify, assess and support children and young people at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation.
20. Where work to engage children and young people with services is effective, they feel listened to and respected, with services that are responsive to their individual needs. When this is achieved, improved outcomes for children are clear to see. For example, as positive relationships with professionals develop, children begin to build trust in staff. This helps them talk about their experiences of exploitation. Some young people were able to clearly articulate the positive difference the support they had received had made.

In **Oxfordshire**, child protection agencies place children and young people who have experienced child sexual exploitation at the heart of their practice. One young person who had been subjected to exploitation said he had received a wide range of support from his social worker. He said his social worker had taken the time to get to know him well and built a trusting relationship with him. As a consequence, he felt the help he received had been timely and he felt well supported and better protected. The young person received support to develop his understanding of exploitation, insight into the risks and help to ensure that risks reduced so that he was safe. The young person felt that his social worker had contributed to ensuring that he received support with many aspects of his life. For example, through assistance with housing needs, emotional support through child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), help with finances, improved relationships with parents, as well as completing 'Real Love Rocks' to understand healthy relationships. The young person spoken to stated 'I don't know where I'd be without my social worker right now. She is great!'



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21. Where practice was effective, professionals understood the importance of working with all those who were caring for the child, including foster carers and residential staff. These professionals also worked to gain a comprehensive view of all aspects of the child's life, including friendship groups, links with peers in the neighbourhood and school, and places where they may be at risk of exploitation. This kind of work was often seen in youth offending teams, where the range of risks and needs were often well understood.
22. Similarly, the perseverance and skill of workers in developing relationships with children who go missing was seen in some cases to result in effective outcomes and improvements that led to a reduction in missing episodes. With young people less likely to spend time away from home, the risk of sexual exploitation was reduced.

Idris described how agencies in **Croydon** had helped and supported him through a difficult time when he was frequently going missing, and helped improve his well-being and break harmful friendships. His head of year at school had been supportive and he now attends school regularly again. His social worker had helped to improve family relationships and communication. The police were particularly helpful and he felt they had taken some of the responsibility off him by monitoring his phone and making sure support was in place when risks increased which helped. He also spoke highly of 'Safer London', which helped him the most by supporting him to end 'bad' friendships and not go missing for almost a year. The worker helped him to build new friendships and begin to think of the future with new goals and ambitions. All workers were sensitive to his culture and beliefs and those of his family. They understood well how the sexual exploitation had impacted on the family members. Support was in place for them as well and this made Idris feel the future was more secure and he could remain at home.

23. Where children at risk or subject to child sexual exploitation are identified early, identification is predicated on children and young people having good access to services and the ability of staff on the frontline of services having the skill, training and support to recognise and respond to signs of sexual exploitation. Staff understand the threshold for referral to children's social care and pathways for referral to support the children and their families. All partners need a shared understanding and approach to identifying risk. In one area, each agency had a specific tool to help them accurately assess risk so that children were promptly referred to the right agency to help support them. The role of health professionals in this regard was seen as particularly significant.



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In **Croydon**, the integrated genitourinary medicine (GUM) and contraceptive and sexual health (CASH) service, provided by Croydon Health Service NHS Trust, undertakes high-quality risk assessments of all young people under 18 years old who present to the service for screening and treatment. The risk assessment form is comprehensive and informed by the Fraser guidelines,<sup>7</sup> so that practitioners are appropriately assessing whether children have the maturity to make their own decisions and understand the implications. The 'Spotting the Signs' of child sexual exploitation assessment tool is embedded within the assessment to ensure that risks of exploitation are considered. As a result, children receive good quality risk assessments capturing extensive social histories and practitioners record additional detailed information as they conduct the assessment. Where necessary, referrals are made to the multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH) or letters setting out updated information and emerging concerns are sent to GPs and/or the young person's social worker, which result in good information sharing and swift responses to identified risk.

24. In some areas, sexual health services being available in schools or youth centres meant that young people were making good use of these services and confiding in health practitioners leading to the early identification of risk. Sexual health services that provided a range of services to young people as well as outreach support were enhancing their ability to identify a range of risks. In better examples, professionals were listening to children about what they felt was most important and using the child's view to inform which intervention and support to prioritise.

In **Central Bedfordshire**, young people identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation receive effective advice and support. The CASH service provides a good service to children and young people, both through group programmes and one-to-one sessions. The work focuses on providing advice on maintaining appropriate sexual relationships (to help young people recognise if they are in an abusive relationship), sexual health, self-esteem, emotional well-being, bullying and family relationships. Brook and Terrence Higgins Trust CASH outreach workers also attend social events in local clubs and bars aimed at lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, to raise awareness and promote good sexual health practices amongst these groups. As well as giving all young people advice and support, these workers are also in a good position to identify and reach those who are at risk of exploitation.

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<sup>7</sup> 'Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines', NSPCC; [www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/legal-definition-child-rights-law/gillick-competency-fraser-guidelines](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/legal-definition-child-rights-law/gillick-competency-fraser-guidelines).



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25. National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies visited during the inspections were mostly knowledgeable about child sexual exploitation, identifying risk and making referrals where appropriate to the local authority. Presence of probation services staff in the multi-agency safeguarding hub who could make swift checks on adult offenders improved communication between agencies.
26. Staff in most youth offending teams were found to be particularly skilled at identifying the holistic needs of young people at an early stage. This was making a positive difference. Youth offending team workers often had high levels of contact time with young people and used this time to build relationships and help young people understand and reduce the risks they were exposed to. This meant that the young people's offending behaviour was understood in the context of wider issues and experiences, such as previous abuse or trauma, including experiences of being subject to child sexual exploitation and/or exploiting other children.
27. Some young people were receiving a range of support from youth offending teams, including some insightful and sensitive decisions about the sequencing of interventions to protect them and reduce offending. Feedback from some of the young people using these services was positive. They spoke about how services were helping them to make positive changes and build resilience.
28. We saw cases where risk assessments had led to effective multi-agency planning as a result of partners having a shared understanding of models of risk assessment. Where practice is strong, the local-authority-led assessments are well informed by all agencies. Assessments clearly represent the views of the child and their family, and provide a good understanding of the day-to-day experiences of the child and an in-depth understanding of the family situation, parenting experiences and family history. Individual needs of the child in relation to all their personal characteristics, including ethnicity, culture, gender and sexuality, are particularly significant where child sexual exploitation is present. Professionals need to be able to consider all of these factors, the interplay of risk and protective elements on the current risk to the child.
29. While traditionally, social work assessments have focused primarily on the child and family, the most effective assessments of the risks of child sexual exploitation seen incorporated risks and protective factors in schools, peer groups and local neighbourhoods. In areas with effective practice, assessments were regularly updated as children's circumstances, and the level of risk they were exposed to, could change rapidly. The multi-agency group, including health, police, children's social care, education and in some cases, youth offending teams, needed to make



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sure that there was good communication and regular information sharing, combined with updating of assessments, to inform a shared understanding of risk and agree timely responses.

30. Inspectors observed a range of effective work to support and advise children at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation. In cases where engagement was positive, children felt that professionals were not only viewing them as victims, but were taking into account other aspects of their lives, their needs and strengths. Some professionals were persistent and skilled in their attempts to engage with young people and this persistence was paying off. Staff were sensitive to the specific needs of young people, including issues of sexuality, gender and culture. They had a good understanding of adolescent development, the impact of sexual exploitation and why young people may be reluctant to engage. In addition, they understood the need to respect young people, many of whom had experienced traumatic abuse, and to work at their pace. There was a strong sense of partnership with young people so that they took an active role, for example making choices about which professional they wanted to work with most closely. Professionals, including health, the police, social workers and staff in youth offending teams were able to recognise the causes of young people's behaviour and the emotional impact of abuse.

In **Central Bedfordshire**, Sadia had been placed in foster care, following the breakdown of her relationship with her family. She was found by professionals to be at high risk of child sexual exploitation due to the people she was associating with. Sadia was finding it very difficult to come to terms with her feelings of rejection by her family and had started to misuse alcohol as she felt it helped her manage her emotions and feelings. She was also desperate to be accepted. As a result of this, she committed a minor offence with a new friend. The workers responsible for Sadia, (a social worker, a youth offending team worker, her foster carer and the CAMHS worker) understood how her sense of rejection, alcohol use and need to be wanted made her highly vulnerable and increased the risk of exploitation.

In order to reduce this risk, the workers focused on developing a good relationship with Sadia and introducing her to new friends. She worked with the CAMHS worker to develop better ways of coping with her sense of rejection. Sadia responded very well to this approach, stopped misusing alcohol and had not reoffended. Her youth offending team worker understood that any potential reoffending was linked to her emotional needs and, by supporting the work of other partners to address these needs, addressed her offending behaviour. The workers took a considered and sensitive approach to the work. Sadia was not overwhelmed by the



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number of professionals involved and understood why she needed support. As her emotional well-being improved, she made new friends. The risk of child sexual exploitation was managed well.

31. Commissioning arrangements in some areas were ensuring better access to support services for children.

There is a clear strategic approach in **Croydon** to commissioning and working with the voluntary sector to build capacity and expertise in working with children at risk of child sexual exploitation and those who are missing. This approach was seen to be making a positive difference in cases reviewed for this inspection. Safer London (a children's charity), for example, provides a range of services to children and their families. This includes direct work with over 300 young people in Croydon in 2015–16, with high rates of engagement (92% of young people remain engaged in direct work at three months after first contact). The feedback from children and young people who access this service is very positive.

32. Inspectors found effective support for those children who go missing in some of the areas inspected.

In **Croydon**, analysis of return home interviews identified that many young people who had been missing required ongoing support but were not engaged with any specific agency. Two workers were commissioned to work in the 'Missing team' to provide support to young people for up to six months. Workers are skilled in engaging with young people, understanding their experiences and strengths as well as their problems. Trusting relationships are established and this is resulting in a reduction in the number of missing episodes for some young people.

33. Examples of highly effective work by the police with victims of child sexual exploitation were observed. In some areas, police had learnt lessons from multi-agency operations or previous high-profile cases. This was resulting in skilled approaches to engaging with and supporting victims of child sexual exploitation regardless of whether or not prosecutions would proceed.

**Northumbria Police's** 'victim strategy' ensures that the service and support from the police is the same whether there is a prosecution or not. The approach to victims is applied whether the victim is a child or an adult. The 'victim strategy' means that a trusted individual is identified for the victim to speak with. A meeting of those who know the young person is held to discuss risks and identify the 'trusted individual' who can talk to the victim about risk, support and welfare and whether they want to be involved in a prosecution. This may be a social worker who can then take



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the statement from the child/young person. Some young people do not want to be involved in an 'achieving best evidence' interview and therefore the victim is asked about how they want to tell the police about what happened. They may not want to tell the whole story and careful consideration is given to creative ways of explaining what has happened. The approach is characterised by persistence, patience, help and support for the victim, capturing evidence where possible. The approach adopted by the police is that every piece of information is valuable and if it looks like someone may be at risk, the team will routinely go and speak with them. Victims are supported through the court process and beyond. Victims may not be prepared immediately to give information but by maintaining relationships and contact, examples were seen where young people had provided information at a later stage that had resulted in a prosecution.

34. In areas where the police were working effectively with victims, when children did not wish to engage with police, other means of pursuing the perpetrator and securing a conviction were considered and action taken where possible to disrupt the activity of perpetrators. For example, police used a range of methods to track perpetrators, including the use of surveillance, so that if another criminal act was identified, then the police could arrest and charge the alleged perpetrator to prevent further exploitation of children. Proactive approaches to pursue perpetrators were seen to be very strong in Northumbria and Thames Valley Police and evident in some cases in other areas.

### **Thames Valley Police**

Within the investigations, there are consistent attempts to engage children to ensure that evidence is obtained. For example, in cases where children didn't wish to engage with police, other means of tracking the perpetrator and securing a conviction were considered. For example, a child who has special educational needs made two separate reports of rape within a year. Officers on both occasions have fully investigated her allegations. They have used an intermediary, forensics, CCTV, phone records and witnesses in an attempt to find out what happened.



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## Ensuring a consistently good response to child sexual exploitation

35. Local areas should not be complacent about the progress they have made in tackling child sexual exploitation. While the efforts made in all the local areas visited should not go unrecognised, we know that helping and protecting children is the hardest thing to get right.<sup>8</sup> The joint inspections identified a number of areas where more needs to be done to ensure consistently good services for those at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation, as well as identifying some significant concerns about some aspects of single and multi-agency practice.

### Identifying and assessing the risks to children and young people

36. The accessibility of health services and the skill of health professionals, which supported successful early identification of risk in some areas, were not present in all areas inspected. Not all the areas visited were providing young people with easy access to contraception and sexual health services. In one area, the school nursing services was severely under-resourced, so school nurses were unable to provide safeguarding services, including identifying children at risk. In another area, school nurses did not provide sexual health services at their drop-in sessions.
37. Of further concern, in a small number of cases, health professionals did not identify risk when it was clearly evident. In one case, a child as young as 13 was described as having 'multiple sexual partners' – language that is inappropriate and reflects the professional's inability to recognise that the young person was being sexually exploited. A similar case was seen in relation to a 14-year-old girl attending a sexual health clinic.
38. Practice varied within and between police forces and, in a small number of cases, risk assessment was inconsistent and ineffective. For example, in one case, the police failed to recognise that a young person who frequently went missing was linked to two other young people who were victims of child sexual exploitation. This meant that the full risk to the child was not recognised and addressed.
39. Assessments of risk to children who went missing were not always robust. In one area, the risk assessment by the police when children are reported missing was based on the most recent episode rather than considering

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<sup>8</sup> 'The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector 2016: social care', Ofsted, 2016; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-social-care-annual-report-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-social-care-annual-report-2016).



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wider risks and vulnerabilities. This resulted in children being inappropriately classified as absent rather than missing, delaying the action to locate them. In a small number of cases, children were reported as missing and absent on several occasions before any assessment of why they were going missing and what help they needed was undertaken. In another area, there was a lack of consistency in the police assessment of risk across cases seen. For example, a small number of high-risk cases were incorrectly graded as medium risk. In one area, where the police had only recently introduced the categories of missing and absent, identifying those children most at risk was proving difficult.

40. Assessing the risk of child sexual exploitation to children who go missing across an area and developing strategic plans was undermined by a lack of information and understanding across the partnership about the reasons why children go missing. A lack of timely return home interviews contributed to this lack of information. In four areas, not all children who needed a return home interview were receiving one and, in one of these areas, although children were offered an interview, the rate of take-up was low. When the offer was taken up, information from the return interviews was not routinely shared with all professionals who were working with the child. Nearly all areas required further work across agencies, including schools, children's social care and the police to improve information sharing about children missing or absent from school.

In **Central Bedfordshire**, when the police and/or other agencies identify that a child is missing or absent from home or care, there is early notification and effective and timely information sharing between the relevant agencies involved with the child. There is a strategy meeting on any child missing for more than 24 hours. Agencies are aware of the need to report any child missing, with a nine-fold increase in the notifications of children missing over the last three years. Engagement with young people who have been missing for the purpose of conducting a return home interview has increased to 91%.

41. The ability to identify children at risk is directly linked to the level of effectiveness of the local multi-agency child protection system. Inspectors found that, in some cases, basic child protection processes were not being implemented in a timely way by the police and children's social care, so children were not adequately protected quickly enough. In one area, police and children's social care did not carry out joint investigations of allegations of child sexual exploitation as a matter of routine. As a result, in a small number of cases, risk was not assessed urgently and joint plans and actions to safeguard children were delayed.



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42. In the same area, meetings to progress child protection enquiries in cases of child sexual exploitation did not always take place, so risk was not assessed with the urgency required. There was confusion among professionals about multi-agency systems established to address cases of child sexual exploitation and child protection systems. Not all professionals, therefore, were clear about the pathways for children at risk of child sexual exploitation.
43. Areas were seen to be implementing initial checklists for the assessment of risk of child sexual exploitation with differing levels of success. In one area, while checklists were completed on all children at risk of child sexual exploitation, the approach to assessing the level of risk was inconsistent and varied widely. Workers did not fully understand the different risks that children faced and how risks combine to increase vulnerability to child sexual exploitation. The partnership had recognised this and a new toolkit with accompanying training was about to be introduced.
44. Analysis and prioritisation of risk were sometimes absent from multi-agency work so that, in a small number of cases, the focus of work did not seem proportionate to the risks. For example, in one case, there was low risk of child sexual exploitation but high level of concern about substance misuse. The young person was clearly asking for help with a problem of substance misuse but the focus of work was on child sexual exploitation, so the young person was not well engaged.
45. In some cases, professionals did not consider sufficiently the wider circumstances and needs of children, which meant that plans did not address all of the children's needs. Decisions were reactive rather than proactive, as agencies responded to the most recent concern. Lack of a holistic approach to children's needs limits the likelihood of long-term improvement and safety for the child. The complex vulnerabilities that some young people face in terms of their own offending behaviour, risk of both sexual and criminal exploitation and other vulnerabilities such as learning difficulties, were not well understood and addressed in one youth offending team.

## **Building effective, trusting relationships with children and young people**

46. Tackling child sexual exploitation requires those working with children to build effective, trusting relations with children and young people. Where relationship building is not effective, it is difficult to provide children and young people with the help and support that they need.



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47. Work with children and young people at risk of, and subject to, child sexual exploitation should proceed in a sensitive and understanding way. We know from serious case reviews that the language and approach of professionals is highly significant in influencing when and how children will tell adults that they have been abused.<sup>9</sup> Insensitive language risks damaging trust and reinforces victim's own sense of self-blame. In a small number of children's social care and police case records, the language used by professionals was inappropriate and could have easily conveyed to the child that they were seen as responsible for their abuse. For example, the term 'promiscuous' was used in relation to a clear case of sexual exploitation; the rape of a 15-year-old was described as 'consensual'; and the age gap between a victim and perpetrator was described as 'small' when the perpetrator was 23 and the child 15. Young people were described as 'making choices' when they were found in situations of harm or risk.
48. There are a number of barriers to children and young people engaging with services, not least a lack of trust in professionals and the fear children feel having experienced exploitation. Professionals should engender a sense for the child that they have some control over the support and intervention they receive. Building a trusting relationship with one professional often made a significant difference. However, in many cases seen, young people were involved with a high number of professionals. For example, in one case, a child had five separate appointments in a week with different professionals. This risked the child feeling overwhelmed and disengaging from those who were trying to support them.
49. In two areas, inspectors found that the ability of the police to build effective relationships was undermined because of delays in visiting children who have been subject to sexual exploitation. In one of these areas, this was due to limited resources available to carry out this work, and this was further complicated as children had a number of police teams working with them at a time when they were very vulnerable. This meant that they had to repeatedly tell different officers about their experiences of abuse. In a small minority of other cases, allegations were not robustly investigated, such as where victims were not willing to give a statement.

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<sup>9</sup> 'The Brooke Serious Case Review into Child Sexual Exploitation', Bristol Safeguarding Children Board, March 2016; [www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/bscb-serious-case-reviews](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/bscb-serious-case-reviews).



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In **Liverpool**, there is a lack of urgency in some cases to speak to victims once an allegation has been made. This leads to a delay in understanding the impact on the victim, rapport building and gathering evidence for future risk management. For example, failure to commence joint investigations at the point of referral results in a delay in police interviewing children and initiating criminal investigations. Risk is not always assessed urgently and joint plans and actions to safeguard children are delayed. Inspectors found some children waiting weeks before receiving effective interventions to reduce harm. In a small number of cases seen, there are repeat failures by the police to speak to suspects about specific allegations of child sexual exploitation. This results from a combination of factors, including lack of management oversight by the police and children's social care and a lack of clarity about the application of child protection processes.

50. In a small number of cases, police failed to demonstrate to victims that they were responding robustly. This risks young people losing confidence and trust in the police, and may discourage them from formally entering the criminal justice process. For example, in one case when a child reported a sexual assault, the suspect was invited in for interview rather than the more appropriate action of arresting him, such as would be the case in domestic abuse. This removed the option of bail conditions and restricted potential evidence and intelligence retrieval.
51. The concerted and proactive approach to gather evidence and pursue all lines of enquiry when victims do not want to provide a statement to the police was not evident in all areas. In one example, lines of enquiry were not pursued, such as the police seizing the phones and media devices of victims to review them for evidence and making enquiries to other agencies to gather information on victims and suspects. In another area, the police tended to be reactive rather than proactive with many agreed actions left to children's social care and social workers were left with the responsibility to contact the police where further information emerged that could lead to a criminal investigation.



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## The role of leadership in tackling child sexual exploitation

52. We know that the quality of leadership is one of the most important factors in providing consistently good services to children and young people who need help and protection.<sup>10</sup> To tackle child sexual exploitation effectively, leaders and managers in all agencies must support professionals to meet the needs of children and young people at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation. There needs to be collective ownership and determination to both understand the local prevalence of child sexual exploitation and to work together to tackle the risks to children.
53. It was deeply concerning that Ofsted's 2014 thematic survey found that two of the local authorities inspected did not have a child sexual exploitation strategy in place and that half had no action plan. Our joint inspections provide clear evidence that leaders are now more committed to responding effectively to child sexual exploitation. All areas had made a significant investment in the development of services to tackle child sexual exploitation. This investment should be understood and appreciated within the context of a reduction in local authority and police funding in many areas, with increasing demand for services.
54. Political commitment to develop and improve services was also demonstrated across all areas. This was aided, in part, by council members in all areas having received training on child sexual exploitation. Councillors with lead responsibility for children were seen to be active in using their role to inform others of the key local issues.
55. In areas that were performing well, strategic goals were clearly identified, understood and agreed across agencies, who committed resources to tackling child sexual exploitation.
56. The key for leaders is translating this collective commitment to tackle child sexual exploitation into effective practice on the ground. The joint inspections have identified concerns about the variable response that children receive from the police, health services, children's social care and youth offending teams, which demonstrates that this collective commitment is not yet translating into consistently effective practice in all areas. To do this, leaders need to:

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<sup>10</sup> 'Not seen, not heard: a review of the arrangements for child safeguarding and health care for looked after children in England', Care Quality Commission, 2016; [www.cqc.org.uk/content/not-seen-not-heard](http://www.cqc.org.uk/content/not-seen-not-heard).



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- have a good understanding of the local profile of child sexual exploitation and of children’s experiences
  - have a good understanding and oversight of frontline practice, including relative strengths and weaknesses and knowledge of what good practice looks like
  - be committed to providing staff with the time and resources, skills and knowledge to be able to engage with children effectively.
57. For example, when leaders across agencies understand the local profile of child sexual exploitation and are able to dedicate resources to tackling it, this was seen to make a real and positive difference. In some areas, we found that the progress in developing agencies’ understanding of the local profile of child sexual exploitation, based on effective multi-agency information sharing, enabled leaders to develop their own understanding and identify the right priority areas.
58. The approaches taken to profiling of offenders varied across areas and were not always effective. In two areas, it was clear that senior leaders in the police were using offender profile information to assess the nature and extent of child sexual exploitation across the force area and ensure that resources were targeted effectively. Other areas were beginning to develop more sophisticated information gathering and profiling, for example through the national police profiling of child sexual exploitation, although this was yet to have an impact. Analysis of information was not always based on a range of multi-agency information, however, and there were limited resources in most areas to undertake this work, which restricted the ability of agencies to progress this important work.
59. Challenge has an important role to play in helping to drive change across the partnership. LSCBs were found to be performing this role in some areas, helping to coordinate multi-agency input and providing robust challenge to partners in order to identify areas for improvement and progress actions identified in multi-agency strategic plans to tackle child sexual exploitation.
60. In some areas, use of external challenge and review is helping to support leaders in learning and development. For example, one area had a partnership with a local university to develop their work with gangs and understanding of the links between gang activity and child sexual exploitation. In another area, a specific inter-agency operation to tackle child sexual exploitation had taken place and we saw the LSCB capturing the learning effectively and building on this to inform future practice.



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61. When local authorities and their partners appointed identified leads or specialist posts to promote a response at a senior level to exploitation, it added considerable value. For example, those in lead roles were able to challenge senior leaders about the progress they were making in tackling child sexual exploitation.
62. The links between child sexual exploitation and other areas of risk to children need to be understood and addressed. In some areas, LSCBs were beginning to integrate work across areas of vulnerability such as child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and neglect, in recognition that responses to child sexual exploitation cannot be addressed in isolation but need to be understood in the wider context of abuse. The impact and effectiveness of this work is not yet evident.
63. Leaders and managers need to provide robust oversight of frontline practice. For example, sound management oversight within health services in some areas was ensuring that health professionals effectively and routinely assessed risk and made referrals where required. Where this was in place, frontline practitioners in health received regular, good supervision, a range of learning opportunities such as regular case consultation, and peer reviews. In one area, additional resourcing in safeguarding leadership across primary care, community health and the hospital sector supports effectively the development of frontline professional confidence and expertise.
64. In another area, safeguarding supervision across health providers was well established and was achieved by the hospital trust ensuring that frontline staff have good access to named nurses, named doctors and social workers for consultation on issues of safeguarding. Such initiatives were leading to better identification of signs of risks of child sexual exploitation. This work was enhanced by a range of learning opportunities.

**Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)** supports local health providers to deliver competent safeguarding practice through some innovative projects. For example, the CCG designated safeguarding team had implemented a GP case reflective model. This model involves one of the designated professionals attending each GP practice three times each year, to facilitate discussion among practice staff about one of their recent safeguarding cases or a referral. The initial evaluation of this work shows that GPs and their clinical and non-clinical staff report more confidence in assessing risk to children and young people. This was borne out during an interview with a GP who told us that his practice staff had benefited greatly from this initiative and it had allowed him to develop the knowledge and understanding of safeguarding, including child sexual exploitation.



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65. However, inspectors saw several examples of weak management oversight in the police, health and children's social care. In cases where risks were less clear, for example child in need cases, plans were not always in place, were not always monitored, reviewed and updated and managers were not challenging workers when plans did not progress. There was evidence in some social care records of successive reviews that led to the same action, with little evidence of progress in the child's situation. In one area, there were records of different multi-agency meetings for the same child that showed different levels of risk.
66. In another area, poor management oversight of frontline decision-making by children's social care and the police was resulting in poor practice in a number of cases of child sexual exploitation. Processes for identifying, referring and assessing risks associated with child sexual exploitation were unclear and were creating delays in decisions being made and protective plans implemented. This was not identified and addressed by middle and frontline managers and children were left waiting too long for interventions to assess the level of risk and/or to support them and their families.
67. Ensuring effective management oversight within and across agencies so that children's needs in terms of risk and support were met, including their long-term needs, was seen to be a real issue in a minority of cases. This means that managers, including senior managers, were not always assured that professionals were identifying child sexual exploitation at an early enough stage, or were progressing plans to work with children. This was exemplified in health services in one area, where risk assessments by health clinicians depended on the individual's knowledge, confidence and professional curiosity, rather than a consistent and clearly defined approach to identifying risk that was driven and overseen by managers. In another area, where children's plans did not progress, this was not challenged by managers.
68. The joint inspections make clear that leaders need to make sure that staff receive training to use risk assessment tools and ensure that staff across agencies understand the threshold for referral to children's social care and pathways for referral for support for children and their families. There is also a need for further training within agencies to improve the quality of assessment work with young people and multi-agency training to develop a shared understanding and approach to assessment. Assessments need to be meaningful to and engage young people, consider all known risks and strengths, take a contextual approach to sexual exploitation and be dynamic so that, when children's circumstances change, their needs are met with appropriate responses to reduce risk.



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69. Some of the issues identified, such as the inability of school nurses to provide safeguarding services, were a consequence of professionals not having the time to engage effectively with children. School nurses are one of the key frontline professionals who can make a difference to children's lives. When well trained and resourced, school nurses are ideally placed to identify risks of child sexual exploitation. Ofsted has already made clear public statements about the impact of social worker caseloads on their ability to do the job. These joint inspections have found similar challenges for health professionals. Where staff do not have the time to work with children and young people, we cannot expect risks to be mitigated effectively.

## Conclusion

70. This series of joint targeted area inspections has seen evidence of progress in most areas but also identified some significant areas for improvement in order to ensure that all children who are vulnerable and require support receive the appropriate intervention at the earliest opportunity. Each of the inspectorates will continue to maintain a focus on child sexual exploitation and children who go missing and the child sexual exploitation deep dive guidance will remain published. Future joint targeted area inspections are already planned to focus on issues such as children living with domestic abuse, those suffering neglect and those children sexually abused within the family. All of these can be precursors to children who go missing and become at risk of sexual exploitation and so will continue to contribute to the sector's understanding of child and adolescent vulnerability.
71. The 'Ofsted social care annual report 2016' set out the following year's priorities, which included children who go missing, care leavers and children who have disabilities.<sup>11</sup> Between now and December 2017, Ofsted will complete its single inspection of all local authority children's services. These inspections will continue to place a key focus on child sexual exploitation and children missing from home, care and school. Ofsted is currently consulting on the future of children's social care inspection.<sup>12</sup> We are clear that whatever the future model of inspection, the vulnerability of these children will continue to have a clear and unrelenting focus.

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<sup>11</sup> 'Ofsted social care annual report 2016', Ofsted, 2016; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-social-care-annual-report-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-social-care-annual-report-2016).

<sup>12</sup> 'Future of social care inspection', Ofsted, 2016; [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-social-care-inspection](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-social-care-inspection).



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72. HMIC is inspecting the child protection work of every police force in England and Wales. The findings of the inspections are intended to provide information for the police, the police and crime commissioner and the public on how well children are protected and their needs are met, and to secure improvements for the future. Currently, the findings of 12 inspections have been published with a commitment to carry out a further eight inspections per year. The aims of the inspection programme are to:
- assess how effectively police forces safeguard children at risk
  - recommend to police forces improvements to child protection practice
  - highlight effective practice in child protection work
  - drive improvements in forces' child protection practice.
73. The focus of these inspections is on the outcomes for, and experiences of, children who come into contact with the police when there are concerns about their safety or well-being.
74. The national child protection inspection methodology builds on earlier multi-agency inspections and complements the current joint inspection programme. It comprises self-assessment and case audits carried out by each force, as well as case audits and interviews with police officers, police staff and representatives from partner agencies.
75. CQC continues to focus on child sexual exploitation in its single-agency inspections of children looked after and safeguarding. Additionally, the 'Think Child' programme is being rolled out across the organisation, which is encouraging inspectors in all areas to have a greater focus on the needs of children and young people, particularly in relation to safeguarding. Revised key lines of enquiry are being introduced in all areas with specific emphasis on children at risk of, or suffering, child sexual exploitation.
76. HMIP Probation will ensure that the learning from the joint inspections is disseminated to all of its inspectors. Future inspection work of services for young and adult offenders will continue to have a significant component that focuses on the work to reduce risk with both perpetrators and victims of child sexual exploitation.



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