

LEARNING THE LESSONS

IOPC Independent
Office for
Police Conduct

Improving policing policy and practice



CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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WELCOME



Safeguarding children must be our priority

Child sexual abuse and exploitation can cause lifelong physical and emotional trauma to survivors, their families and to the many other people impacted by it. Abuse can happen within families, can be inflicted by acquaintances or people in positions of trust. It can occur around a care home or in other places where there are vulnerable children and young people. Lone offenders and criminal gangs may exploit and groom children and young people.

Online abuse and county lines present policing with new challenges as exploitation crosses forces and the importance of strong and shared intelligence becomes more critical than ever.

“ This issue highlights several cases where children and young people were not safeguarded, and where there is clear learning for police forces ”

Our work still involves the handling of allegations of historic child sexual abuse and the accounts of survivors provide really difficult reading about how vulnerable young people were ignored, stereotyped and not believed when they shared their accounts of exploitation.

This issue of Learning the Lessons highlights several cases where children and young people were not safeguarded, and where there is clear learning for police forces.

At the centre of these referrals are children and young people who are often too frightened or embarrassed to report their abuse. They may be vulnerable to exploitation. They may not even recognise they are being abused.

Raising awareness, increasing reporting, disrupting offender activity and increasing safeguarding measures all help protect children and young people from being sexually exploited and must be top of the policing agenda.

I hope this issue is informative and encourages reflection and shared learning on how we can work more effectively to protect children and young people from abuse and exploitation.

Michael Lockwood
Director General,
Independent Office for Police Conduct

Content warning

This issue contains descriptions of child sexual abuse. Reading the report can have an emotional impact. There are some support organisations that it may be helpful to contact if you are affected by any of the content in this issue. For more information see page 54.

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Key to case topics

-  **Crime and investigation**
-  **Information management**
-  **Call handling**
-  **Public protection**
-  **Professional standards**
-  **Forensics and evidence gathering**
-  **Guidance note**

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Leading the IOPC's work around CSA

In this article we meet **Steve Noonan**, IOPC strategic lead for child sexual abuse (CSA).

What is your role in relation to the IOPC's work around CSA?

I am the IOPC's strategic lead for CSA, and I also lead our Directorate of Major investigations. This directorate is responsible for delivering our Operation Linden investigation, the second largest investigation we have ever undertaken after Hillsborough. My team has also delivered many other large scale and historic investigations centred on CSA.

What is the IOPC currently doing around CSA?

The IOPC receives a number of referrals related to CSA. Around 4% of all referrals received between 8 January 2018 and 21 September 2021 were CSA related, which means we are busy in this area and deal with a range of recent and non-recent referrals.

We recognise that over time the policing approach to CSA has changed and many improvements now place the survivor at the centre of the investigation. However, the referrals we receive often highlight there is still work to be done and improvements that need to be made.

Sharing learning from our work is extremely important. We work closely with a range of stakeholders both within and outside policing to make sure the

recommendations we make during the course of our work are relevant to policing and help improve policing practice.

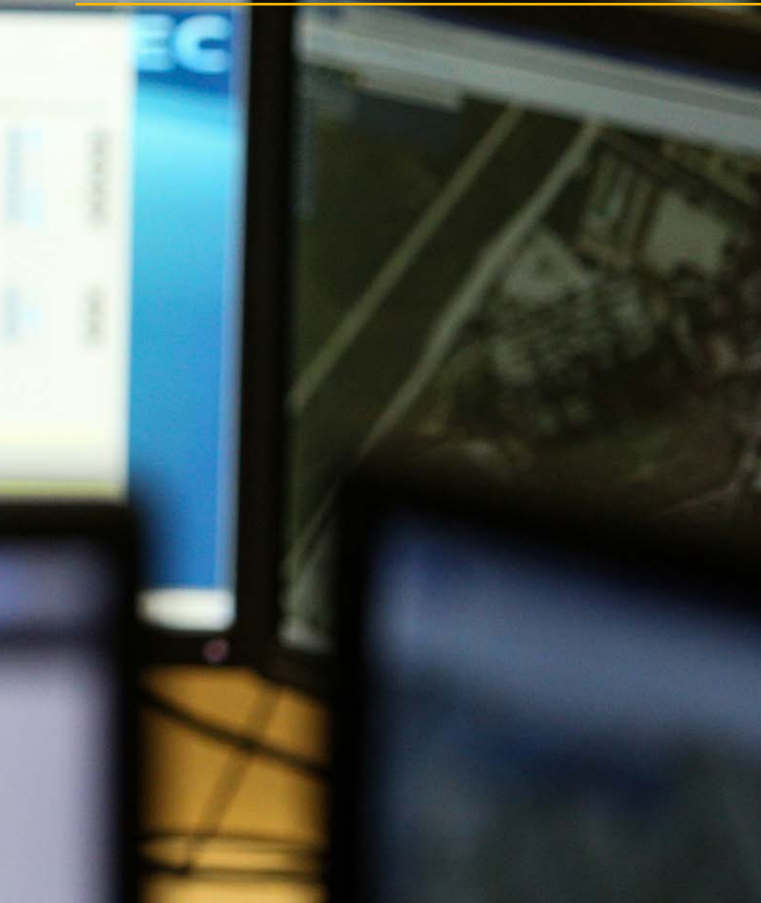
What are the biggest challenges you face when investigating cases involving CSA?

In both recent and non-recent cases one of our biggest challenges is accessing material and records. In non-recent cases, quite often the material simply no longer exists. In more recent cases there can be an absence of record keeping, which makes understanding what happened and why extremely difficult.

We are heavily dependent in our investigations on hearing from survivors about what they have experienced. Many survivors find it incredibly difficult to talk about what they have experienced, and the act of retelling that experience, and re-living traumatic events, can be incredibly difficult. The survivors who have engaged with us have shown incredible strength, courage and bravery in sharing their experience.

How does the IOPC work with survivors of CSA?

The IOPC's Survivor Engagement Management (SEM) team initially provides bespoke and personalised



“ The survivors who have engaged with us have shown incredible strength, courage and bravery in sharing their experience ”

engagement plans for survivors of CSA. It works with survivors throughout the life of an investigation to make sure their engagement with the IOPC is meaningful and supportive. There is an emphasis on signposting to agencies who can support survivors, both during and beyond the investigation. The team make sure survivors are informed, empowered, safeguarded and supported by collaborative working across agencies with emphasis on a “survivor first” approach to all CSA investigations.

The IOPC’s SEM team work collaboratively with partner agencies including Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) services, Rape Crisis, Victim Support and the National Working Group exploitation response unit (NWG). This collaborative work involves information sharing by consent to make sure survivors are supported by all services from a position of

knowledge, safeguarding response planning and exit strategy planning. This ensures survivors are not abandoned once investigations are finalised. The SEM team work to make sure survivors are not overwhelmed by too many services at difficult and emotional times. Information from the investigation is shared in the best way for the survivor at the best time by working with those closest to the survivor to identify their needs.

Are there any recurring themes arising from CSA cases the IOPC is investigating?

Through our cases we regularly see issues with:

- examination of digital devices, including delays, understanding of what can be done, and insufficient examination
- recognition of, and response to, issues relating to CSA by call handlers
- record keeping
- multi-agency working

How does the IOPC work with others around CSA?

Where we identify potential learning, we engage with relevant bodies such as the National Police Chiefs Council, College of Policing and Home Office. This helps us to understand whether issues are local or national, who recommendations should be directed towards, and write recommendations that will be achievable and lead to the desired impact. We use Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services reports to inform our work. This can be particularly helpful when we look at non-recent cases to understand how practice has changed. We also meet regularly with stakeholders in this area, such as academics and non-statutory organisations, to understand their perspectives and how this can inform our work. ■

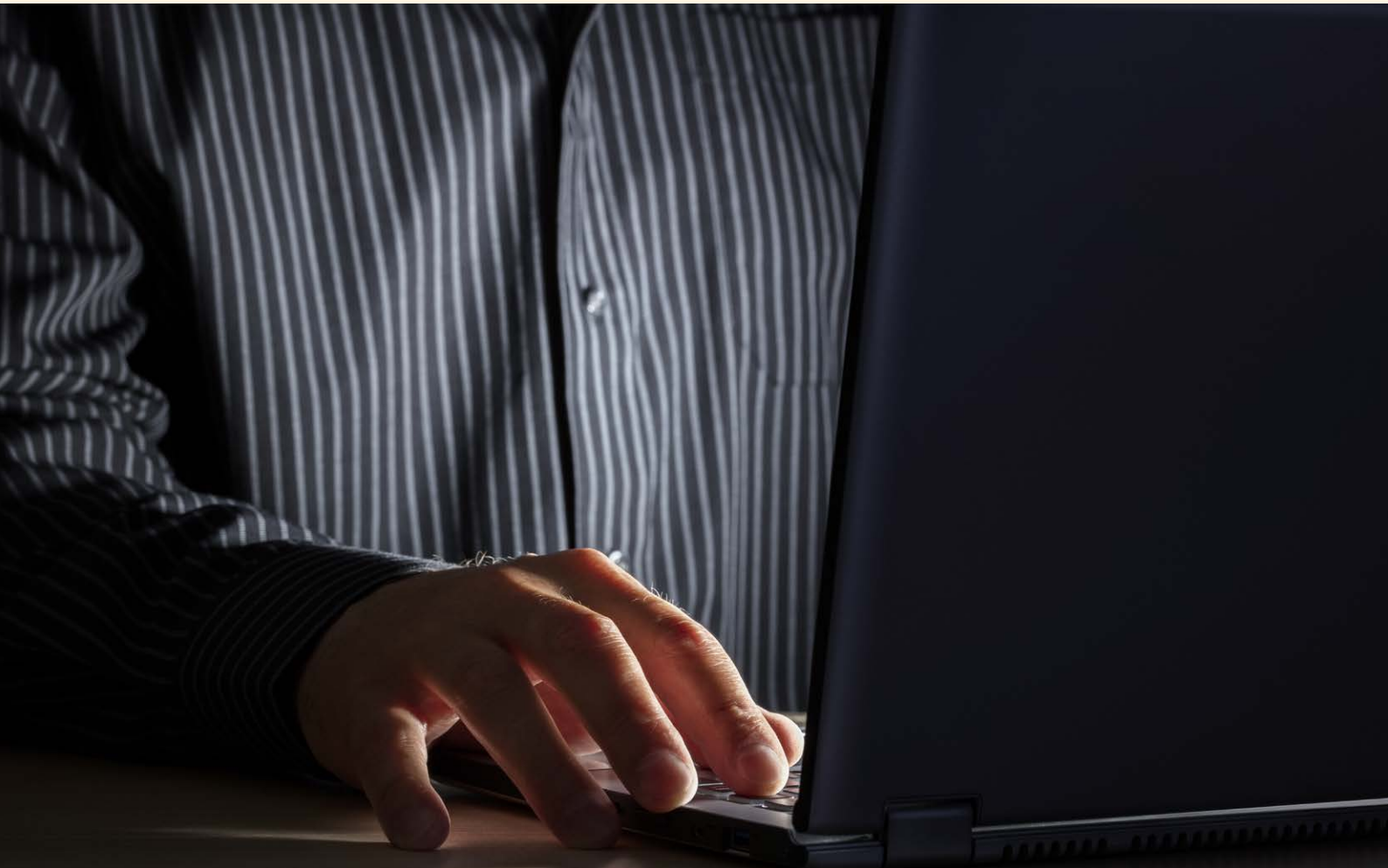


Steve Noonan leads the IOPC’s Directorate of Major Investigations.

CASE STUDY 1



Intelligence around indecent images of children



The National Crime Agency (NCA) sent an intelligence report to a force. It said that on a specified date, the user of an identified email address had uploaded two category ‘C’ indecent images of children. Category ‘C’ images are the least serious.

An intelligence officer at the force took control of the report and reviewed the content. During the IOPC investigation, the intelligence officer confirmed that, in his view, the report was not time critical and could be prioritised for action the following day. The next morning he created a report on the force’s NICHE records management system. This mirrored the intelligence report from the NCA.

The intelligence officer began researching the intelligence and created an intelligence profile. This profile identified the suspect was a bus driver who lived with a woman. The woman had a nine-year-old child who lived with the woman’s ex-partner.

The intelligence officer completed a risk assessment and recorded the suspect was not in a position of trust with any children. He recorded the risk as low. He justified this by saying the suspect’s partner’s nine year old child lived elsewhere with the woman’s ex-partner. The intelligence officer said he also carried out open source research and acknowledged this would have likely included Facebook.

The IOPC was not made aware of any force policy

“ During the IOPC investigation, the intelligence officer confirmed that, in his view, the report was not time critical ”

“ The IOPC found no evidence to show the matter was progressed by the officers ”

at the time detailing the extent of any research that should be carried out in these circumstances.

The intelligence officer said he sent his intelligence profile and risk assessment to two detective inspectors in the serious crime team. He requested positive action on the investigation within 14 days.

The IOPC found no evidence to show the matter was progressed by the officers. Officers within the serious crime team acknowledged there were serious staffing issues in the department at the time. There was no clear process for who recorded these reports and tracked their progress. The force rectified this after the incident.

Over a year later the NCA sent another intelligence report to the force, advising that a couple of months earlier the same man had uploaded one category ‘C’ indecent image of a child.

Two officers within a newly formed digital investigations team worked on developing further intelligence. They researched open source information and identified via social media that the suspect worked for the force. At this point, the risk associated with the case was considered high.

The IOPC found no evidence the information about the suspect’s employment would have been available to the intelligence officer who carried out research over a year previously.

Another officer in the team said while researching force systems, he established the intelligence provided to the force the previous year had not been actioned.

The research confirmed the suspect was currently employed by the force and had been for more than two years.

The suspect was arrested and charged with multiple sexual offences involving children in the previous five years.

The man was later sentenced to a custodial term for these offences. ■

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS/MANAGERS

- What does your force policy or guidance say about the extent of research that should be carried out by officers and staff as a result of intelligence?
- How does your force prioritise the threat/harm/risk of indecent image intelligence reports and make sure there is sufficient investigative capacity?
- How does your force make sure children are safeguarded when it is found they have been in contact with perpetrators of indecent image offences?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICE OFFICERS/STAFF

- What other checks would you have considered before categorising the man as low-risk when the first intelligence report was received?
- What action would you have taken to progress the case?
- How do you check assumptions on whether a suspect has access to children or not?

ACTION TAKEN BY THIS POLICE FORCE

- The force now tracks intelligence reports on the NICHE crimes system through officer and team work streams. The force has also created a standalone digital investigations team that takes on all high-risk cases.

OUTCOMES FOR THE OFFICERS/STAFF INVOLVED

- During the investigation, there was no indication any police officer who was subject to the IOPC investigation behaved in a manner justifying disciplinary proceedings or had committed a criminal offence.

 [Read the full learning report](#)



Protecting children from harm

In this article we meet Deputy Chief Constable **Ian Critchley QPM**, the new National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation.

What is your role in child sexual abuse investigation?

I am responsible for developing the quality of the way we protect children from harm, while making sure victims and witnesses feel confident to come forward and bring offenders to justice. To do this we must recognise policing is part of a partnership and systems approach to tackling child sexual abuse.

I am the representative for policing at a national level with our partners and stakeholders. For example, those in government such as the Home Office and Department for Education, other law enforcement agencies like the National Crime Agency, charities and other third sector organisations we work with, and forces across the country. I aim to make sure all policing colleagues, including those dedicated to protecting children, have the right skills and equipment and their wellbeing is supported.

Tackling child sexual abuse has been identified as a key priority by the government, and the publication of the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy gives us a real opportunity to bring the subject to the forefront of our work in policing. The Child Protection and Abuse Investigation Working Group comes under the wider NPCC violence and public protection portfolio. This is a great opportunity to work with colleagues from various interdependent working groups to continually develop and improve.

How do you think policing of child sexual abuse has changed in recent years?

There has been significant change in the last ten years in how policing responds to child sexual abuse both strategically and operationally. Under my predecessor, Chief Constable Simon Bailey, policing has made

significant strides forward, but we need to continue to develop. The policing approach to child sexual abuse has learned from mistakes in the past, seeks to make sure this learning informs current practice, has processes to disseminate good practice, and continues to evolve – but we are not complacent and recognise more needs to be done.

This year marks ten years since the death of Jimmy Savile, and the surge in victim reporting which followed. Our knowledge of the scale and nature of child sexual abuse has increased, which improved the training and development we provide officers and staff, how crimes are recorded and the increased availability of specialist officers to deal with very complex investigations. Our understanding of child sexual exploitation continues to improve, as does the impact of the on-line threat and how best we can respond to those risks.

We know victim confidence has improved and more and more victims are coming forward and engaging with policing than ever before. They can be confident they will be listened to, treated with empathy, and an impartial evidence-led investigation will take place. There is much more to do and we are keen to continue working and strengthening our relationship with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, and be able to respond to issues and recommendations identified by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, IOPC and other reports. This will make sure we continuously develop our approach.

We know the Covid 19 pandemic has had an effect. Lockdown restrictions increased the vulnerability of children to online sexual abuse, with more children online and unsupervised, and vulnerable children had less interaction with professionals throughout lockdown. The widespread use of social media has led to increased reports, and the All-Party Parliamentary

Group for social media has just released its 'Selfie Generation' report, highlighting the challenge this poses. Getting quick access to the technology criminals are using to target and groom children is vital – to obtain evidence to secure prosecutions and to identify victims so police can end their exploitation.

How do you work with other stakeholders/agencies?

There needs to be a 'whole system' approach to dealing with the threat of child sexual abuse. In order to tackle it in all its forms, we need everyone to play their part. This is why working successfully with stakeholders and other agencies is so important. Ongoing stakeholder engagement is a really important part of the working group. We seek the views of our partners, aware they will often see things through a different lens, the most important of which is that of victims and witnesses. While I seek to look forward, sometimes we do need to look back, apologise, and acknowledge when we get things wrong. Partners can give valuable feedback and build positive working relationships enabling this to be done constructively. This is so important at all levels of partnership, whether locally in force or nationally.

There are also issues which emerge where policing has a role to play, but is not the lead agency. For example, 'Everyone's invited' involved working in partnership nationally with the Department for Education and National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. I am a strong advocate of the national 'Tackling Child Sexual Abuse' strategy. This strategy needs to drive action across every part of government, agency, sector, charity, community, technology company and society more widely. We know much of this crime remains hidden, and I seek your support in driving this across policing.

You are relatively new to the role. What are the key challenges the police face when dealing with child sexual abuse and what are your priorities for future work?

I have committed much of my policing career to working in this area and helping policing improve. I wrote the first National Police Child Sexual Abuse Action Plan and consistently seek to develop our approach. I took this role on the retirement of Chief Constable Simon Bailey, who held this portfolio for a number of years. Having been in this role for three months now, I have spent some time meeting with different colleagues, and external stakeholders and partners, to see where the priorities and key objectives are.

It is clear there are a number of challenges for policing, both across online and contact offending. Combating the threat of online child sexual abuse is one of our highest priorities. We are seeing an increase in severity, complexity and volume. The sheer volume of child sexual abuse material available on the open web, alongside the relative ease of entry to this material, as well as technical measures such as anonymisation, encryption, destruction tools and use of the dark web, challenge our policing response. The National Strategic Assessment suggests it is likely there are between 550,000 and 850,000 UK based individuals who pose varying degrees of sexual risk to children. This must drive us to continue in our efforts.

Roughly two thirds of all child sexual abuse is contact offending, both intra and extra familial. There has been increases in recorded crimes, increases in child perpetrators, and increased awareness of non-recent and peer on peer sexual abuse through the 'Everyone's Invited' movement. Despite intrafamilial child sexual abuse making up approximately two thirds of all child sexual abuse reported to the police, a great deal remains unreported. Even with increased data reporting, we know recorded crimes are likely to be a poor reflection of the true scale. Against all of this are the countless police officers, first line responders and investigators, working so hard to combat the threat of child sexual abuse. A key priority is their welfare and making sure we enhance digital capability and capacity. There is work ongoing across policing, and with academic partners, to make sure we look after our staff who make such incredible efforts in this area.

Anything else you would like to add?

We are really keen to strengthen mechanisms to share good practice, identify shared risks, and benefit from each other's ideas. We work with the College of Policing and other programme leads on this; and hope the working group can provide a space for this in the future. If anyone has any thoughts on this, or wants to contribute, I would direct them to my staff officer. Policing recognises we cannot hold all the answers to the complex issue of vulnerability in all its manifestations. We remain keen to hear the views of those working tactically and strategically in this area – and who often bring a new perspective, good practice, valuable learning, and insight which can be invaluable in informing decision making and shaping future practice. ■

Ian Critchley joined Merseyside Police in 2016 as Assistant Chief Constable, and was promoted to Deputy Chief Constable in May 2021



Police first responders to a report of rape or sexual assault

photo: Alamy

As a first responder, you are likely to hear a victim's account of child sexual abuse first. Whether the report is about something that is recent or non-recent, the victim may still be traumatised.

The quality of your initial response may influence the victim's decision to support the investigation. The College of Policing has put together a briefing note for first responders, and it is summarised here.

Your manner with the victim will be important for an appropriate and empathetic response. Victims of rape or sexual assault come from all backgrounds and the assault circumstances will vary. Victims tell us that there are many reasons why they don't report or delay reporting (Hohl and Stanko 2015). It can be because they fear they will not be believed or will be blamed or judged for their actions, or they fear repercussions from the suspect or family for reporting.

In all cases, it is important to:

- **ensure** the victim's safety, understanding any risk posed by the perpetrator to the victim or other people
- **identify** any immediate medical needs
- **initiate** the investigation and consider evidence preservation from the outset

- **reassure** the victim that they have done the right thing in coming forward and reporting
- **be** non-judgemental
- **show** empathy and sensitivity
- **maintain** impartiality
- **identify** if an interpreter or registered intermediary is required
- **speak** to the victim in an environment in which they are comfortable
- **understand** that rape and sexual offences in intimate/ex-intimate partner relationships may occur as part of a pattern of coercive or controlling behaviour or stalking and seek evidence connected with either of these offences
- **remember** that many victims may be under the age of 18 and are therefore still children and need to be dealt with in accordance with current Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance and APP on child abuse investigation.

More information

Read the full briefing note from the College of Policing online: <https://library.college.police.uk/docs/appref/C909E0418-First-Responders-Brief.pdf>

CASE STUDY 2



Girl found in hotel room with two older men



At around midnight a member of staff at a hotel called 999. They reported concerns about a girl aged 16 who was in a hotel room with two older men.

The staff member said he tried to get the girl to go home but she had no money. In a later complaint to the force, the man said he became aware of the girl after receiving an anonymous call saying a girl in one of the hotel rooms was being groomed by two men.

The call handler asked the caller why this was an emergency. He said the girl seemed to be vulnerable and was in a room with two men. The call handler said this was not an emergency and he should have called 101. She said 999 “is there if a crime is in progress or someone is in immediate danger”.

The call handler told the IOPC she carried out a systems check on the girl but the IOPC found no evidence these checks took place.

The hotel staff member spoke to the girl to find out her name and date of birth. He found she was 16 years old. This information was passed to the call handler. The hotel staff member also told the call handler the girl had recently been in full time social care.

The call handler spoke to the girl and asked her why she was at the hotel. The girl said she was meeting the

“ the IOPC found no evidence these checks took place ”

two men who she knew, and was due to meet other friends who could not get there.

The girl said she had moved out of care that week and was now in independent accommodation. The call handler said if the girl needed help to get home she would have to arrange this herself because the force was “not a taxi service.”

The call handler was asked by the IOPC to explain how she could be sure the girl was in the hotel room willingly and had not been coerced when she got to the hotel. She replied to say she could not.

The call handler also told the IOPC she decided the girl was not overly vulnerable because she had been moved into independent accommodation by social care. She said she did not believe she needed to ask more probing questions because the hotel staff member just said she needed help getting home.

Following the hotel staff member’s complaint about

the handling of the call, it was found the girl was known to social services and the force for child sexual exploitation concerns. She also had a designated specialist social worker.

Specially trained police officers were sent to interview the girl to achieve best evidence. During the interview, she disclosed the names of the two men she had been with and she had been the victim of an attempted rape while in the hotel room. Both men were found and arrested shortly after. ■

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS/MANAGERS:

- What training or advice has your force given to help call handlers identify cases where a young person might be at risk of child sexual exploitation or grooming?
- What steps has your force taken to make sure adequate systems checks are carried out on potentially vulnerable victims?
- What action has your force taken to help develop professional curiosity amongst officers and staff working within your force?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICE OFFICERS/STAFF:

- What other questions would you have asked the girl to find out if she was vulnerable?
- How do you demonstrate a professional curiosity when reports of potentially vulnerable individuals in potentially dangerous circumstances are received?
- Are you aware of schemes such as Operation Makesafe and Operation Nightwatch in your area that train the night time economy in spotting the signs of exploitation?
- Would you have recognised the presence of a 16 year old girl with two adult men as sufficient indication of vulnerability to justify attending and carrying out a welfare check?
- Would you have made any other enquiries to determine whether the hotel was being used regularly for child sexual exploitation?

ACTION TAKEN BY THIS POLICE FORCE:

- The force now has a dedicated lead for vulnerability.
- The force has developed its policing plan with five strategic priorities. Early intervention is one of the key priorities, with delivery plans being formulated for key areas including the identification of vulnerability and early support to those who are vulnerable.
- The force has developed a multi-agency child exploitation strategy with governance provided by the Safeguarding Children's Board.
- An early intervention and prevention unit was launched, with a dedicated problem solving co-ordinator appointed to drive prevention activity relating to child exploitation.
- The force commissioned a College of Policing peer review to consider how well it recognises and responds to vulnerability. Recommendations from the review were built into delivery plans.
- The force launched a vulnerability communications campaign, reflecting the policing plans ambition for all staff to 'understand and recognise vulnerability'.
- The College of Policing vulnerability training programme has been delivered across the force.

OUTCOMES FOR THE OFFICERS/STAFF INVOLVED:

- The call handler was referred to the force for gross misconduct. Following representations made by the appropriate authority, she was found to have a case to answer for misconduct in respect of the allegations she may have breached a number of the force's Standards of Professional Behaviour and subsequently the terms of her employment contract. They were noted to have included but not been limited to honesty and integrity, authority, respect and courtesy, work and responsibility and discreditable conduct. She received a written warning.

 [Read the full learning report](#)

G Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse – Key messages from research on looked-after children and child sexual abuse (2019)

Care leavers

“Children in care may come to associate care with control and be unable to make or initiate independent decisions or exercise protective life skills. They may be attracted by what become controlling and exploitative relationships because of this. Young disabled people who have been in protective accommodation are at risk of exploitation when they move into supported or independent living. Support from the vulnerable adults service is recommended.

“The instability of frequent moves in care and the risks of sexual exploitation in the community may lead some care leavers into sexual exploitation; they require intensive emotional support both before and after leaving care. Attention needs to be paid to the protective factors that develop resilience – such as education, future orientation and relationships with positive peers – before a young person leaves care, although effective targeting of perpetrators is also essential.”

More information

<http://www.csacentre.org.uk/resources/key-messages/looked-after-children/>

G Operation MakeSafe

Operation MakeSafe was first introduced in South Yorkshire but is now used across several policing areas. It aims to empower businesses who may encounter instances of CSE, such as care homes, hotels, taxis and others.

The aim of the programme is to deliver awareness training to those who work in the relevant organisations, to make sure they understand why it is their responsibility to report concerns relating to CSE, are able to spot the signs of CSE, identify potential victims, and take action to report concerns.

Those who participate in the programme are encouraged to tell police by calling 101, or in an emergency 999, and quote “Operation MakeSafe”. Call handlers in participating forces are trained to obtain the relevant information and direct the response accordingly.



Improving the police response to child abuse and exploitation

The College of Policing has developed a range of learning and advice products for responders, investigators and managers who deal with child sexual abuse. This has been developed in consultation with practitioners, subject matter experts and external partners.

Child sexual abuse in our society remains high. Increased calls into specialist child support services during the coronavirus pandemic and thousands of online disclosures through the 'Everyone's Invited' campaign has highlighted the problems.

Victims are reluctant to disclose or report to police for many reasons, such as fear, embarrassment or trauma. When disclosures or reports are made, the response needs to instil trust and confidence in the ability of officers to understand and empathise; conduct a professional and unbiased investigation on the facts of the case; and provide support according to victim needs and without judgement. The College of Policing is committed to equipping officers, whether through initial response and case building or systematic leadership, with the knowledge and skills to respond appropriately.

Responders

Recent research focused on vulnerability and risk has enabled the College of Policing to deliver learning and knowledge material. This provides understanding on how personal risk factors combined with situational risk might equate to a risk of harm.

We promote the use of professional curiosity to look beyond the obvious and to detect 'clues' that indicate areas of risk, open lines of enquiry for evidence gathering, and understand the impact of trauma. These are core skills for responders.

We also emphasise the need to identify risk and take effective safeguarding action to prevent further harm. This may be through support and referral for victims or disruption tactics for management of perpetrators.

Our vulnerability and risk training programme delivers this learning through a range of real life case studies where victims speak about personal experiences, including through the lens of child sexual exploitation

and abuse. There are several learning products attached to the programme that officers can access for self-learning. They are hosted on the College Learn website.

This learning is underpinned by and aligned to our new evidence-based guidelines for vulnerability and risk. The guidelines will be published soon.

We provide advice within Authorised Professional Practice (APP) for child abuse investigations. It sets standards for responding to sexual abuse of children. We are currently reviewing the advice in light of new learning on pathways for offending (particularly online), to highlight intervention opportunities, new multiagency arrangements for protection of children, grooming, extortion and blackmail linked to sexual offending against children.

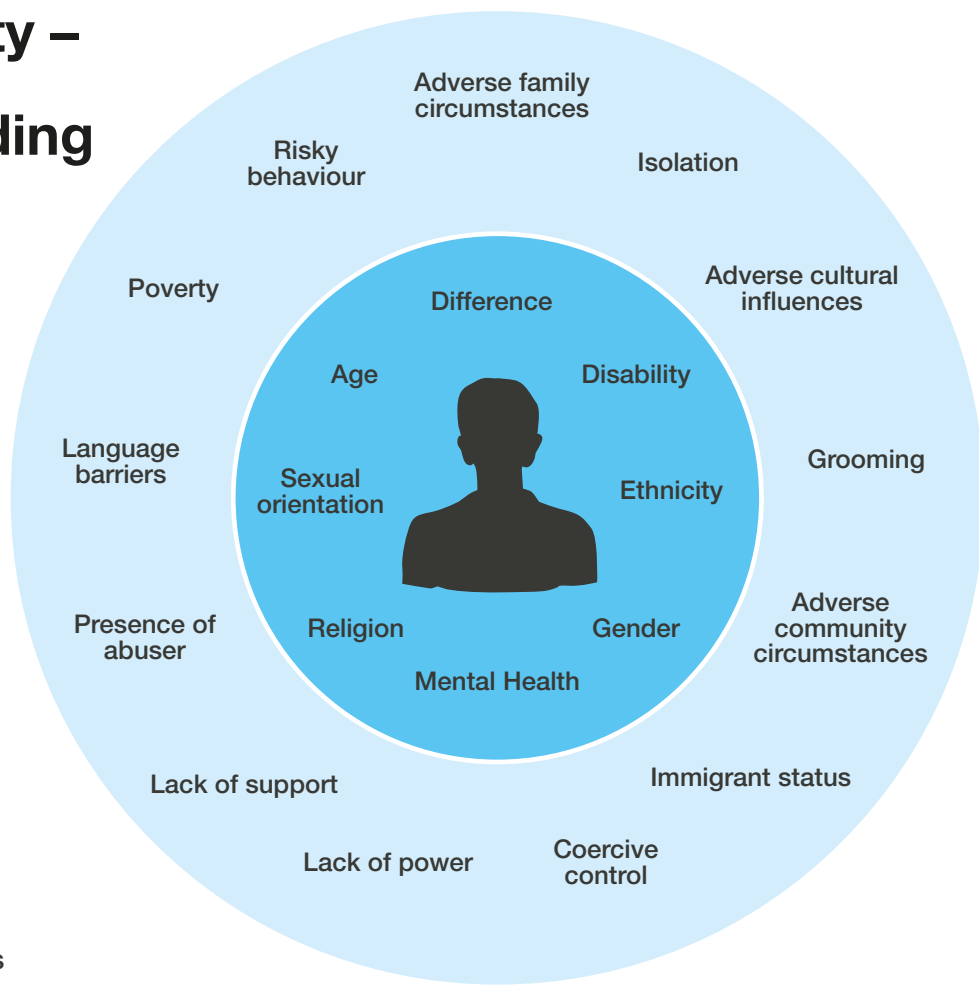
College of Policing APP for rape and sexual offences provides responding officers with a brief on minimum standards expected when responding to any report of rape. It promotes officers conducting investigations in a professional, non-judgemental and empathetic manner.

Investigators

Investigators who are not part of specialist teams can access higher levels of investigative training through the Prioritising Investigations Programme at level 2 (PIP2). Other training and support products are available at the College of Policing depending on which areas of crime investigators may need to have competence. Forces, line managers and individuals need to assess their learning needs so investigators are competent to carry out the investigative tasks assigned to them. Allocation of investigations must also take account of the knowledge and experience of investigators.

For specialist investigators, our specialist child abuse investigation development programme (SCAIDP) builds on the core learning at PIP 2 and covers the impact of abuse on children and the implication for investigations; sex offender's behaviours and management of risk; investigation and interviewing; and partnership working for protection of children. Officers who complete the programme are entered onto a national register and are expected to maintain professional status through annual professional development in the field.

Vulnerability – an aid to understanding



Managers

The College of Policing has developed the Public Protection and Safeguarding Leaders’ Programme (PPSLP). It is aimed at senior managers who oversee management of high levels of risk on behalf of their force. The programme equips leaders to establish systems within their force that deliver an effective partnership response to child sexual abuse and other areas of public protection, with a focus on prevention and education. PPSLP has been delivered by the College of Policing over the past year and will continue during 2021/22. It is receiving excellent feedback from delegates.

In addition, continuing professional development (CPD) products are available in the vulnerability programme for senior leaders at all levels.

Online offending

As more perpetrators move to using the internet as a means of offending, the College of Policing has made sure officers’ technical skills are enhanced through online investigation. Operation Modify helps new and serving officers, police staff and volunteers acquire the digital skills needed to undertake investigations effectively.

It consists of ten episodes. They follow an investigation from the beginning of an initial incident and show how to identify sources of digital evidence and respond to digital opportunities. One of the episodes focuses on victim considerations. All ten episodes and a summary module are available on the College Learn website.

The ‘toolkit’ for tackling online grooming helps responding officers to understand intervention at an early stage. This prevents escalation to more serious offending and can be found on the College Learn website.

We are also looking to deliver future training for investigators on the child abuse image database (CAID), particularly grading of images and use for identification of victims and perpetrators. We will also host a digital learning package for the KIRAT prioritisation tool for indecent image sharers. ■

Sharon Stratton is a former detective with the Metropolitan Police Service. She now works as the Policing Standards Manager for vulnerability and public protection in the Crime and Criminal Justice Faculty at the College of Policing.





Collecting emerging practice around child sexual abuse interventions

A service, known as the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP), is working to collate interventions being used by police forces to address vulnerability and serious violence, including child sexual abuse. It received renewed funding from the Home Office earlier this year to continue its work into spring 2022 to share lessons learned. In this article **Phil Ashford** shares some of the emerging practice around child sexual abuse interventions.

Using body worn video footage to better engage with young people

An Adolescent Risk Team (ART) has been established by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to better safeguard a group of young people outside of the home who were at risk.

The group was a cause for concern for the Multi-agency Risk, Vulnerability and Exploitation Panel after the young people were referred to them by a child sexual exploitation multi-agency panel.

The MPS ART currently works alongside social workers, schools and other statutory and voluntary agencies with the children and their families to gain a full picture of the ongoing risks to individual children and the community so that the response is effective.

The team considers proactive opportunities to quickly target exploiters, or persons of concern, and this includes seeking orders, search warrants and child abduction warning notices.

One of the learning practices ART has adopted, to further improve police responses to vulnerable adolescents, involves reviewing body worn video after



photo: Alamy

an officer has engaged with a young person known to be at risk.

ART's impact is currently being evaluated by the College of Policing with a view to developing an evidence base for the work.

National guidance for hotels about CSE

The National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) is developing guidance around CSE in hotels in collaboration with the National Police Chiefs' Council working groups for Child Protection and Abuse Investigations and group-based CSA/E.

The NBCC was approached by national hotel chains saying guidance they have received from forces about CSE prevention was inconsistent, affecting their ability to ensure the right measures were in place and staff were trained properly to help stop children being exposed to CSE.

The guidance is being developed in collaboration with other professionals, including a number of well-known national charities, for dissemination to all forces to help them understand hotel chain's role in CSE prevention.

Better information sharing between police and the Probation Service

Devon and Cornwall Police Force's Direct Access Project allows specially trained and vetted probation service staff to easily access police ICT systems - including WebSTORM (police incident logs) and UNIFI (the crime and custody management system) to provide faster information sharing between the two organisations.

The initiative means the probation service has immediate access using a laptop or web-based tool to the right information so they are aware of any risks and can intervene to help any further offending and more effectively safeguard children.

The ICT systems are used to provide a list of statutory offenders who have come to police attention within the past 24 hours. These offenders are supervised by the National Probation Service or the Community Rehabilitation Companies and there are approximately 4000 currently at any one time in a force area - either in the community or in custody.

Service staff are also signposted to full details of any incidents, crimes, custody records and/or intelligence.

The project has been invaluable over the pandemic while many staff were having to work remotely. With access to the system, information was able to be shared in a timely way so reduced face to face contact did not affect work.

The University of Liverpool has been asked to evaluate this work to identify any benefits for rolling out to other forces. ■

More information

Email the College of Policing:

vkpp@norfolk.pnn.police.uk

Visit: whatworks.college.police.uk/Research/Pages/VVC_evaluations.aspx

Phil Ashford is a Senior Project Manager at the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP).



CASE STUDY 3



Police first responders handling of a reported rape of a 15-year-old

A foster carer contacted the police to report a 15-year-old girl she was caring for had returned to her address after being reported absent. On her return, the girl said she had been raped.

Two officers went to the address. One of the officers told the IOPC he believed he was there to find out where the incident had taken place. It is unclear why he believed this. Force policy stated one of the “immediate actions” of an initial responding officer to a report of serious sexual assault is to obtain an initial account.

At the house, one of the officers asked the girl about where and when the incident occurred. She said she was raped in the stairway of a multi-story car park during the day.

The other officer left the room to speak to a senior colleague. Body worn video captured the conversation between this officer and a police sergeant. The officer expressed doubts over the girl’s report because she said it happened in what the officer believed to be a busy car park at a busy time of day. He was recorded as saying “it might be a bogus one.”

The same officer then spoke to a detective constable over the radio to discuss his concerns and next steps. He reiterated the concerns he had expressed to the sergeant but the detective constable said the scene and evidence needed to be secured regardless.

The officer at the house said he would wait for late turn officers to arrive but the detective constable suggested early evidence should be secured as soon as possible. The detective constable asked the officer at the house if he was going to contact the serious sexual offence unit.

The officer replied he would do “in due course once we have bottomed out what the full story is then we will do but let’s get that stairway secure and we will go from there.” The officer went back into the room where the other officer and the girl were.

While the other officer was out of the room, the officer who stayed with the girl asked her to go through what happened. She said she had met a “boy” and went to the car park to smoke with him. He then forced her to have sex with him. She confirmed she had never met him before. The officer asked “if you don’t know him and you’ve never met him before, why did you go to the stairwell with him?” The girl stressed her foster carer reported a rape and not her.

The officer questioning her said that ultimately “it’s

going to be you standing in the... dock giving evidence to say that you’ve been raped by a stranger”. There was no evidence to suggest the officer discussed the girl’s potential eligibility for special measures if the matter proceeded to court. Under the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act, she met both the criteria to be considered a vulnerable witness as she was under 18, and an intimidated witness as she was the victim of a serious sexual offence.

The officer went on to say “if you have been taken into a stairwell and you have been asked to perform a sexual act on a male that you do not know and you are saying that he has had sexual intercourse with you without your consent you are telling me that you have been raped. If it is not as simple as that and you want to discuss it with me without your foster carer being here, we can do that.” This was not in line with the force’s first principle for investigating serious sexual offences, which is reports will be accepted “in the first instance as being truthful”. The girl confirmed she did not consent and had been raped.

The officer asked if the girl was happy to “go ahead and make an allegation...”

The IOPC found the officer used language which force guidance advised should be avoided when dealing with rape and serious sexual offences. This included using the word “allegation” 10 times during the conversation.

The officer also asked the girl if she was happy to go to a medical centre. By medical centre, the officer was referring to a Sexual Assault Referral Centre. She said she was planning to do this.

In the girl’s initial account she said she had told the male who raped her she did not want to get pregnant. In response the officer said “but if you said to him, I don’t want to get pregnant, then is that you? What made you say that? ...did you not tell him to stop?” The girl said she was clear in telling him she she did not want to have sex with him.

“ The IOPC found the officer used language that the force guidance advised should be avoided ”



Around this time, the officer asked the girl if she was happy to go to court. She could be seen on the body worn video to nod her head.

The other officer returned to the room. The officers gave the girl information about the checks that would be carried out at the Sexual Assault Referral Centre. The girl said she did not feel comfortable with some of the checks they outlined. One of the officers said “if you do not go through with that we cannot help you”. The other officer also emphasised the girl would need to decide quickly if she did or did not want to proceed. The original officer who questioned the girl said “unfortunately you don’t get to pick and choose what parts you do and what parts you don’t do, it’s either the whole thing or nothing.”

Attendance at the Sexual Assault Referral Centre is voluntary. Once someone has attended the Sexual Assault Referral Centre they are under no obligation to support a prosecution. It is unclear why the officer made these comments to the girl.

The girl responded saying “then we can just leave it as nothing cos there’s things I don’t feel comfortable with.” The officer who stayed in the room and questioned the girl responded “so you’re not gonna report to us the rape?” The girl said “I already told you.” When asked if there was a yes or no, she said “No”.

The girl went on to say she had already given details of the incident, to which the officer who had earlier left the room said “This is just the beginning... Unfortunately you’re gonna have to repeat this story.” The girl said “It’s such a hard decision for me to make... you lot are basically pestering me to make

this decision.” The girl’s foster carer told her to go to her room and think about what she wanted to do. The officers switched off their body worn video.

The officers said when the girl came out of her room she seemed much more relaxed and ultimately agreed to hand over her clothing as evidence.

Shortly after, two more officers on the later shift arrived at the address. The officers told the IOPC the officers who were there originally told them the girl was unwilling to co-operate with the investigation. One of the officers on the later shift who went to the address later recorded the incident as a crime. ■

ⓐ College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) Police response to concern for a child

“An investigation begins with a report of child abuse. Officers and police staff should establish as much detail as possible to support a thorough investigation. A victim or witness making a report may not always identify it as such. Police officers and staff need to ask relevant questions and clearly identify reports as child abuse.”

More information

<https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/child-abuse/concern-for-a-child/>

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS/MANAGERS

- What guidance or advice does your force give to support officers in recording initial accounts from vulnerable victims of crime?
- How does your force equip officers to communicate with victims with respect, compassion and empathy?
- What training does your force give to officers and staff on avoiding victim blaming language and behaviours?
- Does your force give officers clear guidance on how body worn video should be used when capturing initial accounts?
- What training does your force provide on the importance of the 'victim or child's voice' being heard?
- What training does your force deliver to officers on trauma informed practice, particularly with care experienced young people?
- How does your force make sure officers specifically trained in dealing with vulnerable young people are sent to incidents where their skills may be required?
- Given the age of the victim, how would you have expected officers to provide information about the forensic examination and role of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICE OFFICERS/STAFF

- What would you have done differently?
- How would you have dealt with the girl's concerns about giving evidence differently?
- What advice would you have given the girl about access to support services and next steps in the investigation?
- Do you know what your local Sexual Assault Referral Centre offers by way of services for young people?
- How would you explain what a medical examination involves to a young person who had been the victim of a sexual assault?
- How do you think the behaviours of the officers involved impacted on the girl's ability to disclose?

OUTCOMES FOR THE OFFICERS/STAFF INVOLVED

- The officer who led the questioning of the girl was found to have a case to answer for gross misconduct for his handling of the incident. He received a final written warning.
- The officer who left the room during the questioning and raised initial concerns about the truthfulness of the girl's account was found to have a case to answer for misconduct and received a written warning.

 [Read the full learning report](#)

The Children's Society: Appropriate language: child sexual and/or criminal exploitation – guidance for professionals

“It is imperative that appropriate terminology is used when discussing children and young people who have been exploited, or are at risk of exploitation. Language implying that the child or young person is complicit in any way, or responsible for the crimes that have happened or may happen to them, must be avoided.

“Language should reflect the presence of coercion and the lack of control young people have in abusive or exploitative situations, and must recognise the severity of the impact exploitation has on the child or young person.

“Victim-blaming language may reinforce messages from perpetrators around shame and guilt. This in turn may prevent the child or young person from disclosing their abuse, through fear of being blamed by professionals. When victim-blaming language is used amongst professionals, there is a risk of normalising and minimising the child's experience, resulting in a lack of appropriate response.”

More information

<https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/appropriate-language-child-sexual-and-or-criminal-exploitation-guidance-for-professionals/>

CASE STUDY 4



Failure to seize a suspect's phone

Intelligence was received by the police that an Internet Protocol (IP) address for a house occupied by a married couple and their children was accessing a website that shared indecent images of children.

The intelligence was initially handled by a member of staff in the sexual crime unit at the force. Checks established the man was a volunteer with a local group where he sometimes had supervised access to children. A Kent Internet Risk Assessment Tool (KIRAT) risk assessment was carried out. This assesses the risk of contact offending in suspects in indecent images of children (IIOC) cases. This resulted in a 'high' risk rating. Under force policy, this requires positive action within seven days.

The staff member sent the risk assessment and intelligence package to the divisional hub inbox. The intelligence included an incident that took place 12 months previously. The woman at the address had previously called the police to report she had found suspicious searches relating to children while using Google search on the family computer.

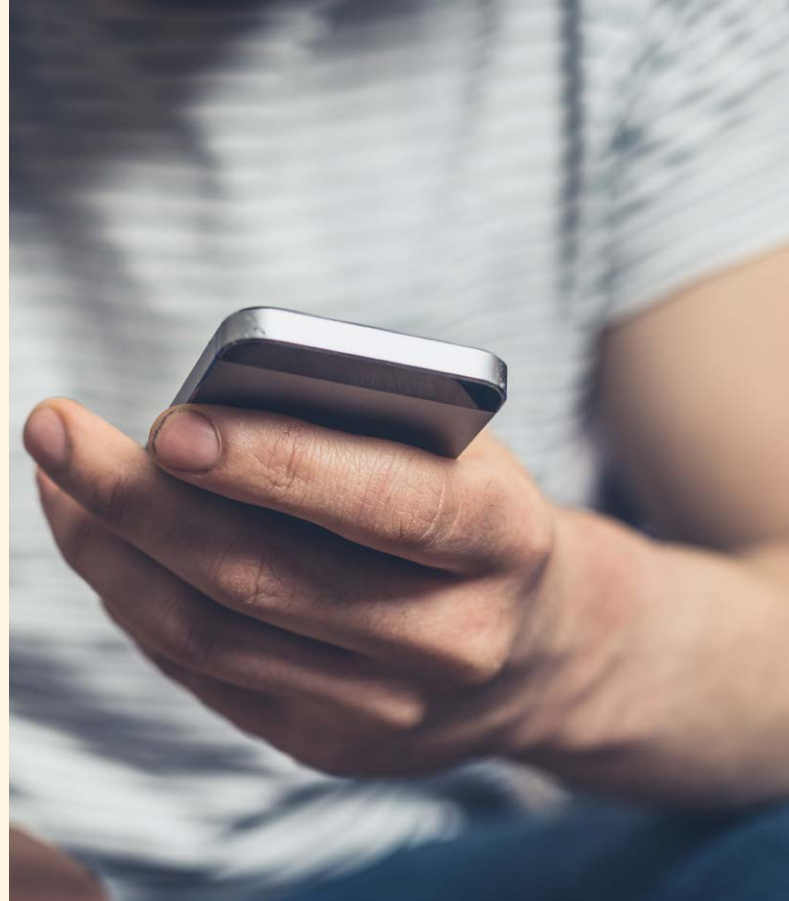
The intelligence was allocated to a detective sergeant. A warrant was granted under Section 8 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 to go to the address and seize "electronic devices... and any other device capable of storing data."

A referral was made to social services based on the information the force had received. This referral stated there were young children who lived at the address. She requested a social worker remain on standby while the search was carried out. The children at the address went to their grandparents while the search took place. Later that day social services went to the house unannounced and spoke to the parents individually. A working agreement was put in place by social services that the man should not have any unsupervised contact with the children until the outcome of the computer investigation was known.

A search was carried out at the address. Various electronic devices were seized, including various computers and a mobile phone.

None of the officers at the address could recall if the man at the address was searched or asked if he had a mobile phone.

The detective sergeant who was allocated the investigation did not believe there was sufficient evidence to arrest anyone. The man and woman agreed to attend voluntary interviews at the police



“ The man removed a phone from his pocket and began using it in front of the officer ”

station following the search.

One of the officers who attended the search carried out the voluntary interview with the man. A review of the interview footage showed the officer asked the man about his phone. The man removed a phone from his pocket and began using it in front of the officer. The officer did not challenge this and the phone was not seized either during or after the interview.

The officer was asked by the IOPC why he allowed the man to use the phone and did not seize it. He said he did not do so because he believed he would have been committing assault and he had not seen anything inappropriate or any attempt from the man to hide or delete content.

The IOPC asked the officer about his powers to seize the phone. He said it was his honestly held belief at the time that he did not have the power to seize the phone because the man was not under arrest. He said that although Section 19 of PACE is a general power of seizure, it refers to being “lawfully on the premises”. He said PACE did not define what premises were, and therefore he believed it to be anything other than a police station.

The electronic equipment seized by the officers was submitted to the force’s digital investigation unit (DIU) by the detective sergeant in charge of the case. The submission was made as a “standard” (routine) submission. The detective sergeant said the reason it was made as a “standard” submission was there was a lack of evidence to make any arrests and no indication of risk to the children. The detective sergeant believed any risk to the children was managed by social services, therefore the submission did not meet the threshold for an urgent or critical submission.

An analyst in the DIU in receipt of the submission told the IOPC he was not aware of the man’s volunteer work, the ‘high’ KIRAT risk assessment, or the woman’s call to police reporting suspicious internet searches. He said had he been aware of this information, it would have made a difference to the urgency with which the DIU dealt with the submission.

The detective sergeant was asked by the IOPC why she did not highlight this information in her submission. She said she was never told what should or should not go into a submission. Instead she had learned ‘on the job’.

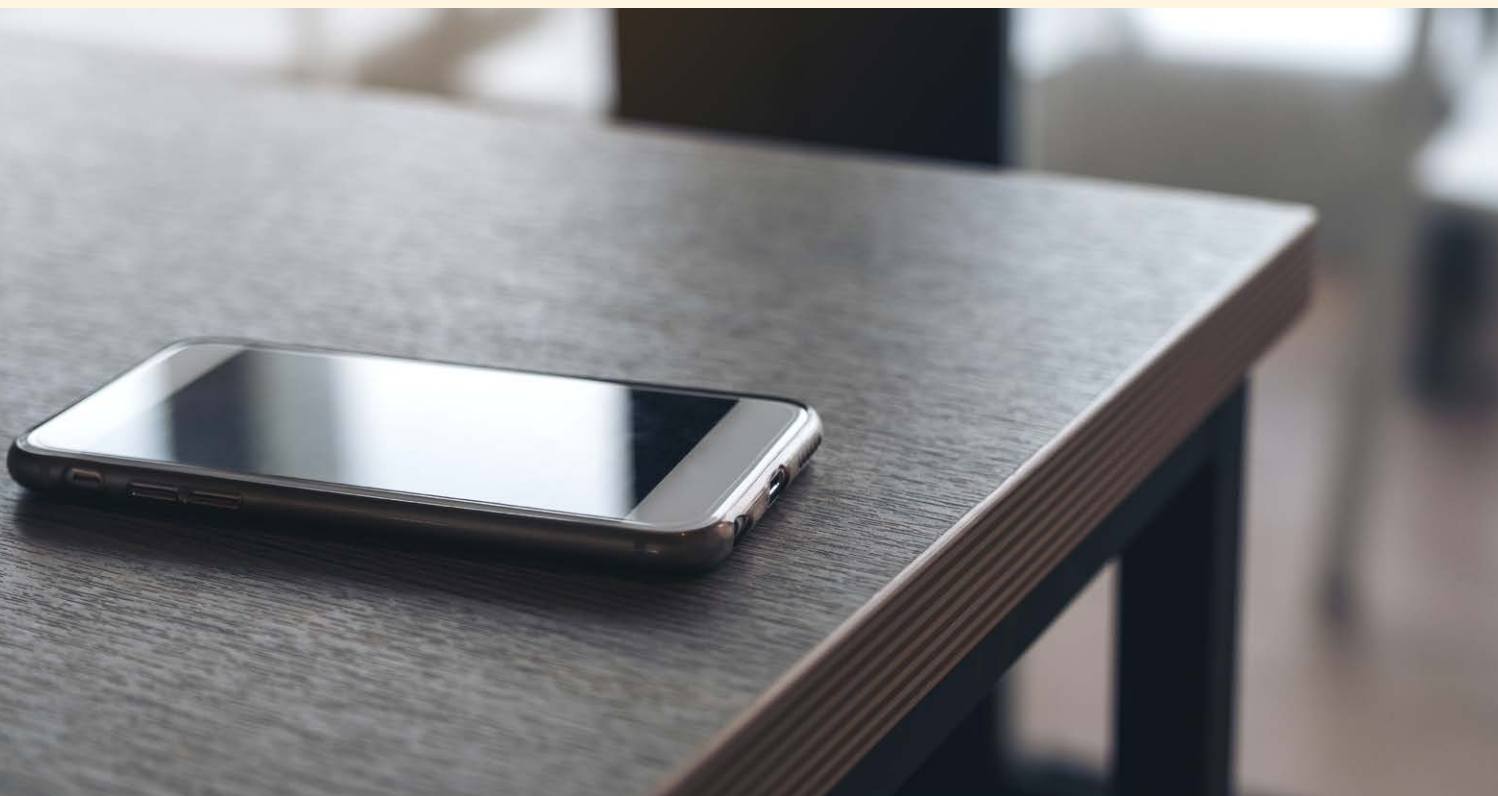
Around a month later an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) took place. An ICPC is a meeting

to discuss and record all concerns about a child or children. The aims of the meeting are to consider whether a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed and the nature of the concern about the child; to assess the degree of risk to the child’s health and well-being, and whether the child needs protection; to decide whether the child should become the subject of a child protection plan; and make any recommendations about any further action needed to help the child. The conference was attended by two social workers, a health visitor, a police officer, and a representative from both the secondary school and primary school the children went to.

A member of staff from social services who attended the ICPC told the IOPC that at the time there was not enough evidence to confirm or discount either the man or the woman as the person who had accessed the indecent images. She said in the absence of any bail conditions or any evidence that confirmed the involvement of the parents, the ICPC voted unanimously to manage the family at ‘child in need’ level pending the outcome of the DIU investigation.

The social services staff member said the difference between a ‘child in need’ and a child protection plan is that a ‘child in need’ is voluntary and relies on the willingness of parents to engage, whereas a child protection plan gives social services legal rights to see the children.

A year later the man was arrested for possession of indecent images of children following the outcome of the DIU investigation. Following the arrest, two of the children at the address disclosed the man had sexually abused them. ■



KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS/MANAGERS

- What training does your force give to officers on the level of information that should be included in submissions to teams examining electronic equipment as part of indecent images of children investigations, including any information which could impact on the urgency of the request?
- What training or guidance does your force give to officers to make sure they are aware of their powers to seize items under Section 19 of PACE?
- How do you make sure officers who attend and carry out property searches make sure they consider asking occupants to volunteer electronic devices on their person?
- How do you make sure people know how to make proper submissions to teams when analysis of electronic equipment is needed?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICE OFFICERS/STAFF

- What would you do if you were carrying out a voluntary interview with the man and he took his phone out but you were not sure of your powers to seize the item?
- What would you have done differently if you were carrying out the search at the property?

ACTION TAKEN BY THIS POLICE FORCE

- The force have completed a review of their guidance around IIOC image cases.
- The force has a monthly meeting in relation to IIOC image cases which is attended by a single point of contact (SPOC) from every division where good practice and feedback is shared.
- The force dip samples crimes where feedback and learning is provided.
- A new IIOC image case policy is currently in the process of being signed off by the force.
- The force has rewritten it's training package for new detectives following learning. It now includes a paper feed exercise to assist officers in understanding the intelligence and applying for warrants based on the information held.

OUTCOMES FOR THE OFFICERS/STAFF INVOLVED

- The detective sergeant in charge of the case was found to have a case to answer for misconduct. This was in respect of the allegation she failed to pass on relevant information to the digital investigations unit when making a submission. A misconduct meeting was held. The conduct level was not proven and no further action was taken.
- The officer who carried out the voluntary interview with the man was found to have a case to answer for misconduct. This was in respect of the allegation he failed to seize the mobile phone from the man in interview and allowed him to operate the phone in front of him. A misconduct meeting was held at which the conduct level was not proven and no further action was taken.

 [Read the full learning report](#)

Section 19 Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984)

“(1)The powers conferred by subsections (2), (3) and (4) below are exercisable by a constable who is lawfully on any premises...

(2) The constable may seize anything which is on the premises if he has reasonable grounds for believing

(a) That it has been obtained in consequence of the commission of an offence; and

(b) That it is necessary to seize it in order to prevent it being concealed, lost, damaged, altered or destroyed

(3) The constable may seize anything which is on the premises if he has reasonable grounds for believing

(a) That it is evidence in relation to an offence which he is investigating or any other offence; and

(b) That it is necessary to seize it in order to prevent the evidence being concealed, lost, altered or destroyed.”

More information

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/60/section/19>

The long term impacts of child sexual exploitation

Becoming victim to child exploitation has devastating effects on our children, their lives and their family's lives. Whether you are already managing the strategic or operational response within your area, providing the research and validated learning from past cases or developing provision or resources, everyone is aiming to improve the outcomes for young people and their families. In this article, **Sheila Taylor MBE** talks about the long-term impacts of child sexual exploitation on children and the network she founded to help professionals.

It has become obvious over the past few years, the more we engage with adults who have been abused through exploitation, that the terminology we use to introduce them is, in itself, a challenge.

Over time we have been requested to use the terms victim, survivor, thriver, those with lived experience, living with the experience and expert by experience. These varying terms offer an insight into how people view their own experiences, different aspects of the impact of exploitation and how it may be reflected in how they see themselves.

The impact on all those who have experienced abuse through exploitation manifests in different ways, at different times, and to different triggers. Some survivors have been extremely brave and publicly spoken of their experience and trauma, others have gone about fundraising to support organisations who support young people today, advocating in other ways. Others carry their trauma well-hidden and develop a life they feel able to live and leave that experience buried and unspoken of.



However, many survivors suffer significant mental health issues, problems with fertility and pregnancy, ongoing sexual health concerns and physical pain associated with trauma and unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drug and alcohol addictions. Until recently the long-term effects on both survivors and their families have not been clearly recognised. There have been a number of research papers on the effect of child abuse, including the independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) who have taken a keen interest in understanding those long-term effects in the hope of raising awareness of the issues.

The Truth project has taken testimony from many survivors of abuse from across significant numbers of institutions including care homes, faith groups and sport. For more than 20 years, through various avenues, I have been in the privileged position of hearing accounts from individuals who were going through exploitation at that time, who had recently been extricated or removed from the experience, and from a wide range of experiences of those with historical



“ Young adults who have been subject to abuse require long lasting support and have additional risks ”

accounts. None of it is easy to hear and is impossible to imagine what that can mean for each individual and equally impossible to write down in a way that allows those without experience to understand those long-term effects.

I have learnt, through those years of being involved in ensuring all young people in today's society, that each have their own horrific experience. This has not only impacted on them, but also on their family, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends and colleagues.

Much research has suggested that young adults who have been subject to abuse require long lasting support and have additional risks. This can include alcohol and drug misuse, mental health issues, becoming enmeshed in criminal behaviours, domestic abuse, honour based abuse, estrangement and difficult family relationships, difficulties forming personal relationships. They may also have employment and housing issues, social care involvement with their own children, difficulty finding their place in society, communication difficulties, and mistrust of practitioners and the legal process. These are a broad overview of the range of issues but in no way demonstrates the impact. Many survivors can remain 'trapped', functioning at an age and maturity corresponding to the age of when the exploitation happened. No child can journey through their abuse without any impact. ■

About the NWG

The NWG Exploitation Response Unit (formerly National Working Group For Sexually Exploited Children and Young People) is a charitable organisation formed as a UK network of over 14,500 practitioners who disseminate information down through their services, to professionals working on the issue of child exploitation (CE) and trafficking within the UK.

They offer support, advice, provide updates, training, share national developments and influence the development of national and local policy informed by practice.

The NWG Exploitation Response Unit is the only child sexual exploitation network working across voluntary/statutory agencies tackling child sexual exploitation, with links across Europe, South East Asia, Africa, Canada and USA exchanging knowledge, understanding and dedicated to seeking ways to find alternative solutions.

More information

www.nwgnetwork.org



Sheila Taylor MBE has 27 years' experience in the voluntary sector empowering young people to achieve against all odds and tackling the issues of child sexual exploitation and internal trafficking within the UK. She is the CEO of the NWG, which she founded in 2011.

The work of the Children's Society

We spoke to national charity The Children's Society to find out about about two forward-thinking initiatives forces benefit from. One takes a holistic approach to preventing child sexual abuse (CSA) and the other supports survivors straight after a disclosure.

Support Rethought

Support Rethought is a new service for children affected by sexual abuse. It offers an immediate lifeline to children in Tyne and Wear, Nottinghamshire and Devon who have recently told someone they have experienced sexual abuse by providing therapeutic support to the child following a referral

The support can be taken up to six weeks after a child suffered sexual abuse and then told someone about this. The referral might come from police, other professionals or a parent/carer.

A specially trained Children's Society project worker works with the child survivor and their parent or carer (where the parent/carer is not suspected of being involved in the abuse) over six to eight weekly sessions to immediately assist with any issues that could include, for example, problems sleeping, anxiousness, and intrusive thoughts.

National Programme Manager Becky Fedia explains why timely help is so important: "The service offers immediate coping tools which can help with managing trauma symptoms and building a safe relationship between the young person and their parent or carer to ease into the process of recovery."

Support Rethought also brings Children's Society staff,



and the charity's partners together, to consider:

- any systemic issues for change, and/or fine-tuning or completely revisiting, existing support pathways for child sexual abuse victims and survivors
- any learning that informs strategic decisions about policing CSA
- best practice for dissemination, including bringing national experts together and supporting the sector to consider how to improve responses to victims of CSA

The Children's Society hopes that, following the pilot's evaluation in early 2022, they will be able to roll out a national programme.

National Prevention Programme

The National Prevention Programme devises bespoke learning interventions to positively impact policing child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE) and modern slavery and human trafficking. It is underpinned by a wealth of



photo: Laura McCluskey/The Children's Society

knowledge drawn from police intelligence, insight and the charity's own work and research.

The programme is vast. It notched up 187 learning opportunities and reached around 7,365 police staff, and a further 4,635 other professionals, over the year to March 2021. It included:

- A network of 11 prevention officers collaborating with forces' nine regional organised crime units, the Metropolitan Police and British Transport Police, as well as dedicated police national CSA analysts to glean intelligence to inform training and learning resources for preventing and improving responses to CSA/E.
- Topics covered included problem-solving CSA issues; working with 'unusual' partners to tackle CSA, for example businesses, licensing teams and community groups, and challenging victims stereotypes and assumptions such as assuming CSA victims are always female or expecting victims to 'appear vulnerable' when, in fact, anger and

aggression can be responses to trauma.

- Leadership training covering prevention, protection and disruption, including how to engage with, and safeguard, young people while using the full range of police powers to disrupt their abuse.
- Recognising emerging forms of CSA/E crimes such as 'plugging' as part of criminal exploitation of a child to carry drugs - where a perpetrator(s) forces a child to carry drugs inside themselves (in the vagina or anus) - and grooming boys using online gaming platforms for CSA/E purposes.
- The #LookCloser Campaign – a collaboration with the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre and the British Transport Police. The campaign encourages everyone to learn the signs of CSE and CCE, modern slavery and human trafficking and how to report it. It also aims to bring about cultural change across forces to use language which reflects that children who have been exploited are victims and encourage a better understanding of and responses to CSA/E victims and survivors.

The Prevention programme will continue to deliver learning to and alongside police forces throughout 2021.

Prevention Programme Manager James Simmonds-Read said: "We want to work together with forces, supporting them to understand what children, who experience CSA/E, have been through and for them to rethink how young victims may behave or present themselves and ensure they are safeguarded.

"There are stereotypes around child sexual abuse and exploitation victims. For example, some may be perceived as criminals because of their acts when, actually, these children may have also been groomed and coerced into crime.

"Many are controlled through sexual abuse but feel unable to disclose this and are therefore seen only as criminals. It is therefore vital that officers are able to identify the signs of exploitation and that these children are offered help and referred to the National Referral Mechanism, the national system for identifying victims of modern slavery and trafficking." ■

More information

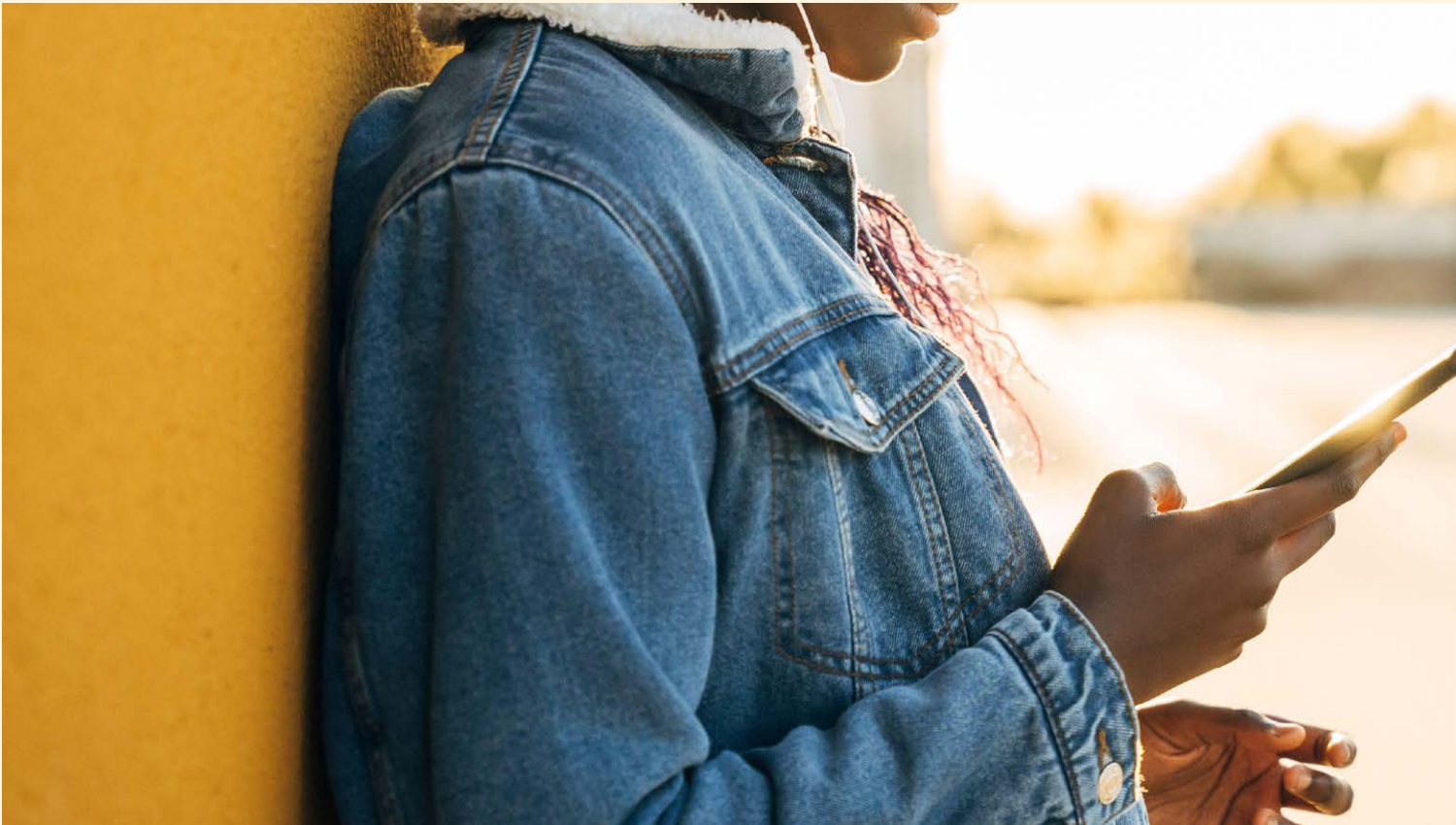
Visit: www.childrensociety.org.uk

**The
Children's
Society**

CASE STUDY 5



Failure to adequately follow up concerns within a family



A woman contacted the police to report concerns for two of her nieces. The woman said she believed her sister's partner had an inappropriate relationship with one of her nieces, Miss A. This began 10 years ago when Miss A was 13 years old. The younger of the nieces, Miss B, was five years old at the time of the call.

The woman said she had become aware of a text message. The message referred to Miss A terminating a pregnancy. She had longstanding concerns about the relationship between Miss A and her sister's partner.

She said she told police Miss A's address and believed she would have advised them to approach with caution. She could not recall telling police to keep her report hidden, but did ask to remain anonymous.

Three officers visited the woman who made the initial call, during which she disclosed incidents which had prompted her concerns. She explained Miss A had a sister (Miss C) who also lived with the suspect.

One of the officers recorded details of this conversation, including the woman had long standing concerns and believed the suspect to be of "bad character". However, information about key incidents

disclosed by the woman were not included in the log. He did record that Miss B had witnessed the suspect viewing pornographic material while in his care. Another of the callers nieces, Miss C (who was 14 years old at the time of the call), witnessed the suspect and Miss A kissing when she was 13 or 14 years old.

The log indicated response officers made primary checks on the suspect. These found he had been the subject of a similar allegation around five years previously. This allegation was not progressed because the Crown Prosecution Service was concerned about the interview.

The investigation was picked up by an Acting Detective Sergeant (A/DS). The A/DS asked response officers to prepare a report for Miss B, but not Miss C who lived with the suspect. The report was added to a police database containing information and reports about incidents where a child, young or vulnerable person comes to the notice of the police and there are concerns for their wellbeing or safety. These reports are shared with other agencies, such as social services departments. This helps them to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.



photo: Alamy

“ The woman recalled speaking with an officer who said there was nothing the police could do because Miss A was “over age” ”

The investigation was passed to the referrals desk and was picked up by the referrals manager. The referrals manager spoke to the woman who made the initial call. He recorded she repeated the concerns she had raised in the call. He also recorded the suspect was not the legal uncle of the nieces and “nor is there a direct blood relationship.”

Records show the referrals manager also spoke to social services. The social worker recorded that the referrals manager said he felt the woman who raised the concerns “might have an agenda”. The social worker explained there had been a general rise in malicious reports around this time. Therefore,

any information which provided an insight into why someone would report a concern was “helpful and was likely to influence my decision making”.

Force policy suggested the referrals manager could have considered visiting Miss B and Miss C who were still minors and made further enquiries with the local authority. They could also have made a referral for Miss C, who had not been the subject of one.

The investigation was moved to a specialist child abuse unit. The officer in charge was a detective constable supervised by a detective sergeant. There was no evidence the referrals manager recorded a formal verbal handover with these officers.

The incident log showed the main line of enquiry was to contact Miss A and find out if she wanted to make a disclosure to the police.

After a number of days, the detective sergeant spoke with the woman who had raised the initial concerns. The detective sergeant recorded a summary of this conversation. It stated the allegations were historical, but acknowledged there may be a risk to Miss B, who was the subject of a referral.

The woman said she recalled speaking with an officer who said there was nothing the police could do because Miss A was “over age”. The woman said the officer did not ask to speak to any other family members who also had long standing concerns.

The detective constable in charge said she was aware the detective sergeant and the woman had agreed the woman would make contact with Miss A to see if she wanted to make a disclosure. Throughout the duration of the investigation, no officer made any attempt to contact Miss A directly. Officers stated they did not contact Miss A because they had agreed the woman should have the opportunity to make contact in the first instance.

A risk assessment was carried out which found no risk factors in relation to the three nieces. It highlighted the suspected history of previous abuse about the allegation against the man from five years ago. It also recorded it was unknown whether the following factors were relevant to the household: chaotic/co-sleeping, and emotional stressors within the household and others.

Officers spoke to the woman several times in the coming days and weeks but she always reported she had been unable to raise the matter with her niece.

The detective sergeant and detective constable

were asked in interview about their approach to identifying potential witnesses. The detective constable said she did not feel it was appropriate to do this before they had spoken with Miss A. They were also asked about other lines of enquiry, such as obtaining a statement from the woman who made the initial call, or contacting the school(s) of vulnerable witnesses. The detective constable said she did not pursue these

opportunities because the niece had not made a substantive allegation.

Around five weeks after the initial call, the detective sergeant and detective constable closed the investigation.

Five years later the man was arrested on suspicion of the systematic sexual and physical abuse of Miss A. ■

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS/MANAGERS

- How does your force make sure officers and staff investigating safeguarding concerns fully consider the risks posed to all children in a household or family network?
- How does your force make sure all relevant details about safeguarding concerns are recorded and shared with investigating officers?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICE OFFICERS/STAFF

- How would you have balanced concerns about the anonymity of the informant and relationships within the family with the need to progress the investigation?
- When you pass a case onto a new team, how do you make sure they receive an adequate handover?
- How would you have made sure you contacted potential victims to gain an initial account if you were investigating this case?

OUTCOMES FOR THE OFFICERS/STAFF INVOLVED

- The A/DS who passed the investigation to the referrals desk was found to have a case to answer for misconduct. This was in respect of the allegations he did not examine the potential risks posed by the man to Miss C, who was in his care and consider if she was a possible victim of sexual abuse. He also failed to record his assessments and decisions regarding safeguarding of the girl on the incident log. He received learning.
- The referrals manager was found to have a case to answer for misconduct. This was in respect of the allegations he did not hold a formal verbal handover with the investigation's detective sergeant when the case was transferred to investigating officers. He also did not consider making a referral for Miss C (who was under 16 years of age at the time of the report and had allegedly observed inappropriate behaviour), as well as failing to record any rationale for this. The referrals manager had retired from the force by the time the investigation took place.
- The detective sergeant who supervised the investigation was found to have a case to answer for gross misconduct. This was in respect of the allegations he did not consider all the evidence available to the specialist child abuse unit, including evidence from similar past allegations against the

man; did not make sure officers tried to contact the alleged victim and potential witnesses; and authorised the closure of the investigation despite being aware potential lines of enquiry had not been pursued and there were potentially other vulnerable people at risk from the man. The force did not accept the IOPC's findings and dealt with the detective sergeant outside the formal disciplinary process.

- The detective constable who was the officer in charge of the investigation was found to have a case to answer in respect of the allegations she did not consider all the evidence available to the specialist child abuse unit, including evidence from similar past allegations against the man; did not make sure officers tried to contact the alleged victim and potential witnesses; and requested to close the investigation despite being aware potential lines of enquiry had not been pursued and there were potentially other vulnerable people at risk from the man. The force did not accept the IOPC's findings and dealt with the detective constable outside the formal disciplinary process.

 [Read the full learning report](#)

CASE STUDY 6



Responding to allegations of CSA of an autistic child



A man called the police on 101 to report concerns about his neighbours' children. He told the police he wished to remain anonymous.

The man told the police he was concerned about his neighbours' five year old son who he believed was sharing a bed with his great uncle. He said the boy's parents treated him "worse than a dog". He also said he believed the adults at the property took drugs and had a criminal record for grievous bodily harm.

The call handler performed a search for the adults at the property and completed a Threat, Risk, Harm, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement, Safeguarding (THRIVES) risk assessment. She noted there was potential harm as an allegation had been made the boy was being treated "badly". She recorded shift officers should go to the property that morning.

The call handler transferred the incident to the crime allocation team who carried out intelligence checks. There was no evidence any checks were carried out on the great uncle.

A police sergeant endorsed the incident log and recorded the following actions should be taken:

- carry out a welfare check on the child

- find out who was living at the address
- conduct background, intelligence and Police National Computer (PNC) checks
- assess living conditions and report any concerns
- submit a Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) if any concerns were noted

The police sergeant made no specific mention the concerns were about the great uncle in his instructions.

An officer went to the address a couple of days later. He recorded he had spoken with the parents who lived at the address with their five children, one of whom was

“ The boy was described by his mother as autistic, which may have made it more difficult for him to communicate with the officer ”

autistic. He recorded the house was clean and there was food. He also noted the grandmother, who also lived at the property, shared a bedroom with the oldest child in two single beds. He recorded the parents occasionally shared a bed with one of the children due to the fact he was autistic. He recorded there was no evidence of drug use and he had no concerns about the welfare of the children.

The officer told the IOPC he spoke with two of the children at the address, away from their parents. He specifically spoke to them about who lived at their house and “if anyone else had sleepovers at the house”. He also said he tried to speak to the five year old boy, but was unable to as he was “very clingy with his mother”. The boy was described by his mother as autistic, which may have made it more difficult for him to communicate with the officer.

The incident log indicated the officer did not carry out intelligence checks or submit a MARF. He also did not complete a THRIVES risk assessment as required by force policy.

“ The officer did not take an account from the neighbour who initially raised concerns, either in person or on the phone. This was identified as a potential missed line of enquiry by the IOPC ”

The officer did not take an account from the neighbour who initially raised concerns, either in person or on the phone. This was identified as a potential missed line of enquiry by the IOPC.

The incident log was transferred to the crime records bureau who subsequently closed it, noting there had been no arrests or cautions.

Around 10 months later the mother of the young boy contacted police on 101 to report her son had told his grandmother that his great uncle had sexually assaulted him.

The report was investigated as rape of a child under the age of 13. Both the five year old child and the great uncle were questioned. Around seven months later it was confirmed no further action was being taken by the Crown Prosecution Service over the rape allegations.

The IOPC was satisfied the force had suitable training measures in place and issues arising from this case involved the conduct of a single officer. ■

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS/MANAGERS

- What guidance does your force give to officers on when and how to access specially trained staff or other support where they need to take accounts from vulnerable young people?
- What process does your force have in place for making sure each line of enquiry is complete?
- What steps has your force taken to make sure officers and staff are aware of the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance and the principles it contains?
- What training or guidance does your force provide to officers and staff on completing risk assessments and what steps do you take to ensure they are completed?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICE OFFICERS/STAFF

- Would you routinely speak to social care to see if they have any concerns before responding to a similar report?
- When you became aware the boy was autistic, what steps would you have taken to identify any specialist resources to enable you to communicate with him?
- Would you have ensured an appropriate adult was present before speaking to the children?
- What other questions would you have asked and what further action would you have taken to make sure the children were not at risk?

OUTCOMES FOR THE OFFICERS/STAFF INVOLVED

- The officer who attended the address received management action in respect of the allegations he:
 - failed to conduct intelligence and PNC checks on adults at the address
 - failed to submit a MARF
 - failed to speak to the reporting person to gain more information
 - failed to specifically address the child co-sleeping with the great uncle

 [Read the full learning report](#)

G Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018): Strategy discussion

Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm there should be a strategy discussion involving local authority children's social care (including the residential or fostering service, if the child is looked-after), the police, health and other bodies such as the referring agency. This might take the form of a multi-agency meeting or

phone calls and more than one discussion may be necessary. A strategy discussion can take place following a referral or at any other time, including during the assessment process and when new information is received on an already open case.

More information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

G Supporting Autism

The National Police Autism Association (NPAA) supports members of the UK police and criminal justice community with an interest in autism and related conditions.

Membership of the NPAA is free and open to all UK police officers and staff, including special constables, PCSOs and police volunteers. The NPAA welcomes personnel from all territorial and national police forces including the Civil Nuclear Constabulary, Ministry of Defence Police and the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

The NPAA provides personal support to police officers, staff and volunteers through its network of champions (NPAA Coordinators) in UK police forces. The role involves being a point of contact for any colleague needing confidential support, and helping to moderate the NPAA's web forum. Forces may have a single coordinator, or a lead coordinator and a team of deputies.

The NPAA also hosts the Police Neurodiversity Forum, moderated by its team of coordinators. Members can discuss workplace, personal, family and public service delivery issues; share experiences and offer mutual support, in a supportive and confidential environment.

The NPAA welcomes discussions and questions around neurodiverse conditions (autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia etc.) and anything else! The forum is searchable and also serves as a knowledge base, with information on the conditions the NPAA supports and links to external resources.

More information

<http://www.npaa.org.uk/>

G Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018): Police

All police officers, and other police employees such as Police Community Support Officers, are well placed to identify early when a child's welfare is at risk and when a child may need protection from harm. Children have the right to the full protection offered by criminal law. In addition to identifying when a child may be a victim of a crime, police officers should be aware of the effect of other incidents which might pose safeguarding risks to children and where officers should pay particular attention. Harm may be indirect and non-physical as, for example, in the case of some domestic abuse which may involve controlling and coercive behaviour and economic abuse. An officer attending a domestic abuse incident should be aware of the effect of such behaviour on any children in the household. Children who are encountered as offenders, or alleged offenders, are entitled to the same safeguards and protection as any other child and due regard should be given to their safety and welfare at all times. For example, children who are apprehended in possession of Class A drugs may be victims of exploitation through county lines drug dealing.

The police will hold important information about children who may be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, as well as those who cause such harm. They should always share this information with other organisations and agencies where this is necessary to protect children. Similarly, they can expect other organisations and agencies to share information to enable the police to carry out their duties. All police forces should have officers trained in child abuse investigation.

More information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Inspecting the effectiveness of child protection work

HMICFRS has been inspecting the child protection work of every police force in England and Wales since 2014. We do this as a single agency and alongside other inspectorates.

Vulnerable people, including children, are often at the greatest risk of harm. The duty of the police to protect children is one of the most important things they do as part of day-to-day policing. The reports we publish are intended to provide information for the police, police and crime commissioners (PCCs), other safeguarding agencies, the government, and the public on how well the police and their partners protect children and secure improvements for the future.

Our programme of work examines the effectiveness of decisions made by the police at each stage of their interactions with or for children, from initial contact through to the investigation of offences against them. We also scrutinise the treatment of children in custody, and assess how forces are structured, led and governed in relation to child protection services.

The statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to interagency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, sets out what is expected of all partner organisations involved in child protection (such as the local authority, police, clinical commissioning groups, schools, and the voluntary sector) in England. The provision of social care services is a devolved responsibility in Wales.

As a result, the Welsh Government is responsible for child protection. The *Wales Safeguarding Procedures* sets out what is expected of all partner organisations involved in child protection.

In 2016, we, along with Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, launched the joint targeted area inspections (JTAI) of child protection. These short, focused inspections consider the effectiveness of statutory partnership arrangements for the protection of children.

How we inspect child protection

In both the National Child Protection Inspection (NCPI) and JTAI programmes, we put the experiences of children at the centre of our analysis. We use that analysis to support learning and development. We assess decision making, leadership, training, and awareness of safeguarding responsibilities.

We do not make graded judgements, but our reports give forces a detailed narrative describing the nature and quality of the decisions made to protect children. We also describe the strengths they should build on and where they can improve. Follow-up visits are an integral part of the NCPI programme as it allows us to look at the progress each force has made in response to our findings.

Within six weeks of publication of the inspection report, the force is required to provide an action plan to the inspectorate outlining how it intends to respond to any recommendations that have been made. Subject to the review of the action plan, we will revisit each force no later than six months after publication of the inspection report.

Inspections gather evidence through interviews with senior officers and police staff, officer focus groups, case reviews, reports, policies, and other relevant written materials.

Key themes from recent inspections

In our inspections we have found since the programme began in 2014, police forces are better at recognising and responding to risk and the signs of vulnerability in children. Returning to forces previously inspected, we found all had made progress in achieving better results for children at risk of harm.

The benefits of protective approaches to working with children, which focus on prevention, earlier intervention and support, rather than repeatedly reacting to individual incidents, is increasingly recognised by forces.

We continue to see in straightforward cases of child abuse and neglect that forces deal with these promptly and efficiently. However, too often the focus is on the latest reported incident, missing the underlying causes. Cumulative and escalating risk consequently is not spotted or considered at the earliest opportunity and children are not being asked for their views.

“ There is now a better understanding that children who go missing are at increased risk of exploitation ”

Police and wider safeguarding partnerships are operating at, near or above their capacity. The effect of this is we see processes develop or be designed to move large volumes of information quickly and efficiently from the police to their partners without risk being properly assessed. This simply overwhelms the system, and risks to children particularly risks that have not yet reached the acute stage are missed.

There is now a better understanding that children who go missing are at increased risk of exploitation. However, decisions still tend to focus on what has just happened and on locating and returning the child home. Officers do not always seek to understand the wider circumstances or risks faced by children, which often contribute to them going missing.

The way the police deal with people who pose a risk to children is inconsistent. The proliferation of digital devices increases demand for digital forensic examinations of these devices. However, despite forces developing better and more sophisticated approaches to the search for evidence of children being abused or exploited online, it often takes too long to examine seized electronic devices.

Enquiries to locate and arrest suspected offenders are often thorough, however there is less evidence of safeguarding planning for victims or children linked to suspects.

The increasing use of social media platforms and channels to distribute, share and view child sexual

abuse images on a global scale poses a significant and complex challenge for policing. This is a national problem we are aware of, requiring a coordinated response to understand and exploit opportunities to reduce the access to, and availability of, such images.

Our programme will make sure we respond to this growing area of risk, enabling inspections to continue to draw out both force and national level risks in online abuse and exploitation.

Examples of good practice

We have found many examples of good or innovative work to protect vulnerable children:

- In Wales, the police are part of a programme to give early support to children exposed to adverse childhood experiences. These are stressful events that occur during childhood, such as having a parent who is an alcoholic or abuses drugs. Research shows, in these cases, there are benefits to intervening early in a way that recognises the root causes of vulnerability and the cumulative impact of trauma over time. This programme is beginning to have a positive impact on the way officers think about children, which is leading them to intervene earlier in order to break cycles of abuse.
- In Camden, north London, the police have worked with partners to create the UK’s first ‘child house’, known as the lighthouse. It is designed to help make sure children who have been sexually assaulted are not further traumatised by the investigation of a crime. The model provides medical, advocacy, social care, police, and therapeutic support in one specially designed place.

Supporting forces to improve

To help forces understand the inspection programme and support them with their improvement activity, we provide bespoke support before, during and after an inspection. We also host individual force learning events and attend regional heads of public protection meetings to share findings and disseminate good or emerging practice. ■

Simon Alexander is a retired police officer and has been with HMICFRS since 2013. He is the Deputy Portfolio Director responsible for delivery of the National Child Protection Inspections.



CASE STUDY 7



Failures in progressing CSA investigations

A detective working in a Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT) began investigating a man for causing or inciting a 13 year old child to engage in sexual activity. Within a month the suspect was arrested and his electronic devices seized. He was interviewed in custody before being bailed and ordered to return on a date approximately two months later.

The supervisor on the investigation told the IOPC the case was low-risk because they had been advised there was not sufficient evidence to substantiate the offence.

The detective updated the crime report four months after the investigation began, recording that the suspect's phone did not have any indecent images of children on it but they were awaiting examination of the victim's phone.

A further four months later, the detective updated the crime report again, stating the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) had requested further work, including completion of an MG3. An MG3 is a formal report compiled for the CPS so it can make a charging decision.

In entries made over the following four months, the detective stated the MG3 was still being completed. He told the IOPC a significant reason for the delay was the length of time it took for the seized devices to be reviewed.

Two months after the first investigation began, the detective also began investigating a different man for allegedly taking, making or distributing indecent photographs of children. A search warrant was used at the man's home and his electronic devices seized. The man attended a voluntary interview around two months later.

The detective was contacted by an officer at a different force who was investigating alleged sexual offences by a suspect. This suspect was the second man under investigation by the detective. The officer from a different force provided exhibits, interviews, statements and digital equipment for forensic examination. The same month the detective updated the crime report stating he had found thousands of indecent images of children on the devices and was in the process of grading them, but the volume of information was challenging.

In interview with the IOPC, one of the inspectors in



“ The detective expressed concerns about his wellbeing and visited a GP

charge of POLIT during the course of the investigations said cuts in policing budgets had led to an increasing workload. Often managers were fulfilling duties usually performed by Human Resources (HR), including managing flexible working, sickness and recruitment. He said the cuts had also affected occupational health at the force. Officers in POLIT were no longer receiving counselling on a regular basis. No work on MG3s was carried out by the investigating officer while the digital items were being examined.

The supervisor on the investigations also expressed concerns about workload, saying they managed 22

staff, compared to the usual number of around six.

At several points during the course of investigations being handled by the detective, concerns were raised about his failure to update crime reports in line with policy.

The inspector who was initially in charge of POLIT when the investigations began, asked the supervisor to place the detective on an action plan for his failure to update crime reports. The supervisor did not do this, explaining he was himself the subject of a grievance process and did not feel supported through this. This left him feeling reluctant to address the poor performance of others going forward.

A detective chief inspector (DCI) at the force confirmed performance management of the detective would have been the responsibility of the supervisor, but “if they need more support then the DI [detective inspector] can step in”. The supervisor said the inspector who asked for an action plan to be put in place did not step in because she was busy working on other projects.

Approximately 10 months after the second investigation began, the detective arrested the second man for inciting a child to engage in sexual activity and the distribution of indecent images of children. The suspect was interviewed, and his bail was extended twice, taking it to four months after he was initially bailed. Both extensions were approved so a file could be submitted to the CPS, including an MG3.

Around this time the detective expressed concerns about his wellbeing and visited a GP. The supervisor said a number of actions were taken to address the detective’s wellbeing, including reducing his hours and restricting his duties.

Around eighteen months after the first investigation began, the detective was signed off on sick leave. Two days after the detective was signed off, the second suspect was due to return from bail. There was no record of the suspect attending custody on the date he was due to return and no record of his bail being extended.

The supervisor said they needed to be assured a file was ready to go to court but it was not. This meant they could not sanction the arrest of the man because the file was not ready. He also said due to the volume of other work and the low-risk associated with the suspect, they were not able to apply any extra prioritisation to him despite the fact his bail had elapsed.

While the original detective was off work, the investigations were allocated to another detective who worked part-time but carried the same workload as a

full-time detective. She said she was unable to locate the documents required by the CPS and so could not progress the investigations.

Three months later the original detective returned to work. The supervisor said the detective was placed on a phased return with support from occupational health and a reduced workload. The detective stated he did not feel his workload ever reduced upon his return. He said he had regular one-to-one meetings with his supervisor but did not recall any contact from either of the inspectors in charge of POLIT during the course of the investigations.

Around six months after the detective returned from sick leave, the supervisor also went on sick leave. The inspector in charge of the unit reported sickness across the team was high and existing workload was continuing to grow.

Around two months later a different inspector took charge of the unit. This inspector said the investigations were not flagged to him when he arrived in the department and he did not know about them. He said he knew the detective had a backlog of old investigations but did not know the detail of them.

The inspector said he would receive reports the supervisor “didn’t seem very with it”. Around this time the supervisor also emailed the inspector saying he was struggling with his mental health. The inspector replied the same day with an occupational health referral. The supervisor was later prescribed medication and a couple of weeks off work.

Around this time, the detective put in an application to move to a different force. The inspector and the supervisor both said they believed the detective was going to complete his work and any outstanding enquiries or court files before he was released. He never completed his work, including the MG3s, before leaving the force.

The supervisor confirmed to the IOPC he never placed the detective on an action plan. Force policy stated that where an individual’s capability to perform the job does not meet the agreed standard required, no matter how hard they try, and even if it relates to their physical or mental capability, then an action plan should be considered.

Following the detective’s departure from the force, the investigations into both suspects were allocated to a detective who was a new recruit to the force. This detective did not receive any training on how to progress the cases when he joined the unit. He was allocated a mentor who had received no mentor training and had their own case load to progress.

Upon reviewing the paperwork for the case, this

detective said there was lots of paperwork missing or “kept all over the place”.

The investigating officer who initially worked on the investigations said he worked on one of the MG3 as part of the first investigation for two years seven months, and said he worked on the MG3 for the other investigation for one year eight months. However, despite having told his sergeant that he had completed the MG3s at the point he left the force, it became clear he had never worked on them. He spent over three years working both investigations – from being allocated them to the time he left the force. ■

G Police and Crime Act (2017)

Since this investigation took place changes have been made to pre-charge bail powers.

More information

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/3/section/62/enacted>

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS/MANAGERS

- How does your force make sure new recruits to units investigating serious sexual offences receive the appropriate training and support to progress the investigations allocated to them?
- How does your force make sure officers responsible for supervision and performance management have the capacity to do this effectively?
- What steps has your force taken to manage workload in units investigating serious sexual offences?
- What steps does your force take to support the wellbeing of officers working on highly demanding and distressing areas of work?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICE OFFICERS/STAFF

- At what stage might you have asked for help and support if you had a case or workload that was causing challenges?
- What supportive action might you take if you notice a colleague is struggling with work related stress and this is impacting on progression of cases?

ACTION TAKEN BY THIS POLICE FORCE

- The force is reviewing training received by officers in the POLIT unit.
- A new mentoring system is in place at the force.
- A review of how the digital forensics unit functions, is supported and funded is ongoing.
- Monthly one to one meetings are now held for POLIT staff.
- A force wide training programme called ‘Stepping Up’ is being provided to improve team management skills for supervisors.
- Workloads are now regularly reviewed to ensure adequate staffing and supervision.
- Every 12 months a survey is used to evaluate the continued suitability of staff for working in the POLIT team.
- Where the force recognises that an officer may be experiencing issues with performance or wellbeing as a result of being exposed to distressing cases for a long period of time they are offered the opportunity for a temporary or longer term move into a different area of work.

OUTCOMES FOR THE OFFICERS/STAFF INVOLVED

- The detective initially responsible for investigating the cases was found to have a case to answer for misconduct in respect of the allegation he failed to progress the investigations. He received management action.
- The supervisor who supervised the detective on the investigations was found to have a case to answer for misconduct in respect of the allegation he failed to adequately supervise the investigations. He received management action.
- Both inspectors who were in charge of POLIT at different times throughout the investigation were found to have a case to answer for misconduct in respect of the allegation they failed to adequately supervise two investigations, and received management action.

 [Read the full learning report](#)

G Supporting the wellbeing of Internet Child Abuse Teams (ICAT) Guidance

Strategies to help increase individual resilience

Gradual introduction to images

A sudden and unexpected exposure to a category A image, particularly those involving bestiality or sadism, is likely to cause shock and distress to most people. However, these kinds of images are frequently found in images sent for grading or investigation. For new ICAT members, a gradual managed exposure to traumatising images starting at level C is helpful. When there is time, discuss the images in order to build the knowledge and skills to accurately assess the age of the child and the nature and level of abuse.

Mental preparation

Mental preparation can include developing rituals to help prepare the ICAT team member to start working, undertake their work safely and then to close the work. This has been described as getting into the right headspace.

Detachment and dissociation

Looking at child abuse images is difficult if the viewer becomes empathetically engaged with the plight of the child. The role of the ICAT member is to investigate crimes and create a framework of evidence required. Concentrating on this analysis, rather than the child's emotional experience, is essential.

Self-monitoring and taking breaks

Having an awareness of physiological and emotional stress responses is a good way to recognise when to take a break, speak to a colleague or go for a walk. This can include noticing a tension in the neck and shoulders, a bloated feeling in the stomach or bowel, a tension headache or feeling angry, upset or isolated.

Maintaining boundaries

It's important to maintain boundaries between personal and working life. Try to make personal calls to family and friends outside the viewing room. Don't take family photographs or mementos into the viewing room. If uninvited thoughts of work intrude into your personal life, write them down and put them into a work folder. If these intrusive thoughts or images continue, seek help from your supervisor or Occupational Health.

Visual distractors

Find something to look at which increases normality. Many forces put large television monitors in their viewing rooms showing news broadcasts. These can create a sense of normality, as can the opportunity to look out of a window to see the weather or movement of traffic. Some research has suggested that viewing simple computer games such as Tetris can also help block the formation of traumatic memories (Holmes et al. (2010)).

Protecting others

ICAT workers can become so desensitised to the nature of their work that they forget others may be shocked and distressed when they overhear explicit discussions of child abuse. It's important to keep these conversations within the viewing room or other private locations.

Tenure

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that for most people working in ICAT, personal resilience gradually wears down. This may go unnoticed at first, but can lead to increased levels of mental health problems. A review of officers and staff working in ICAT (Tehrani (2016)) shows that some leave in the first year. However, most people who have volunteered for the role will remain resilient for at least four years. At five years in post there is a significant increase in symptoms of anxiety, depression, burnout and trauma in ICAT teams. While individuals will respond in different ways, it's good practice to plan on a tenure of four to five years. After this time, those who wish to leave can do so and those who wish to remain go through six-month psychological screenings to protect their wellbeing.

More information

https://oscar.kilo.org.uk/app/uploads/2019/03/C72I0319_Supporting-wellbeing-of-ICAT_online.pdf

CASE STUDY 8



Long delays in progressing sex offences investigation



A woman called the police to report a man over the age of 18 had engaged in sexual activity with her daughter. Her daughter was under the age of 16.

An officer went to the home of the woman and her daughter. The officer spoke with the daughter and seized her mobile phone. The girl initially told officers she did not want to engage with them and she viewed the relationship as consensual. The girl was under the age of legal consent and could not provide consent for sexual activity. She later changed her mind after the officer left and decided to give a statement.

The officer who initially spoke with the girl went to her home again at a later date. They arranged for her to go to the police station and give a statement. The officer they spoke to at the police station suggested the girl take part in a video interview with a specially trained officer. This officer arranged for this to happen and told the officer who was in charge of the investigation.

A few days later a temporary sergeant reviewed the investigation. They identified a statement still needed to be taken from the girl and a potential second victim had been identified.

Later, the temporary sergeant noted on the crime report an Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview needed to take place to progress the investigation. An ABE interview was carried out with the second victim, but not the first.

The suspect was arrested around 10 days later. He was bailed for one month with bail conditions not to contact or interfere with the two girls. The reason for his bail was to seek Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) charging advice and to examine his mobile phone.

“ The CPS gave the sergeant a 14 point action plan it needed addressing before it could reach a charging decision ”

The officer sent the case file to the CPS. A CPS lawyer was not allocated to the case until almost one month later. By this time the suspect had been re-bailed as his return date had passed.

The CPS sent the officer a number of actions they needed resolved before they could offer charging advice.

Over the next few months, several reviews took place. The officer in charge of the investigation was asked to urgently complete the actions in the action plan. The suspect was re-bailed several times in this period. Each time the suspect was re-bailed, his mother was contacted by telephone. He never attended the police station.

After several months, an inspector refused to authorise a further period of bail as the man had already been bailed three times. It was not considered appropriate or proportionate to do so again. The suspect was showing as no further action on force systems. It was noted if the CPS decided there was enough evidence to support a charge, the man would be reported for the offence and summonsed to court.

Another review was conducted by a sergeant. It was found material was still outstanding to be sent to the CPS. The officer in charge was asked to urgently progress this.

A month later the same sergeant completed a report which expressed concerns about the performance of the officer in charge of the investigations.

A couple of months later, a different sergeant took over supervision of the case. She asked the CPS to use her as a point of contact. The CPS responded the following day giving the sergeant a 14 point action plan it needed addressing before it could reach a charging decision.

The IOPC found it was clear from the CPS request that the force had not provided some evidence that had been asked for approximately six months previously, including ABE interviews requested at an early stage.

The sergeant identified no ABE interview had been carried out with the first girl the force received a report about. No witness statement had been taken from her sister. The sergeant told the IOPC the officer in charge told her certain actions had been completed which she later discovered had not.

The officer in charge of the investigation told the sergeant he had asked the first reported victim if she wished to give a statement. However, the girl and her mother told the sergeant the officer never asked this.

The officer also told the sergeant certain documents had been uploaded to force systems which the sergeant found were not there. The officer suggested they must have been deleted, but the sergeant explained it is not possible to delete documents from the system.

At some point in the next few months a different officer took charge of the investigation due to the absence of the previous officer in charge. Both the sergeant and the new officer in charge said the investigation made good progress after this point.

Around 15 months after the man was first arrested, the new officer in charge recorded all actions set by the CPS had been completed. The case was handed back to the original officer in charge.

Over two months later the case was back with the CPS for a charging decision. The officer in charge was asked to follow this up and did so 10 days later.

The investigation was still ongoing 18 months after the initial arrest. ■

Since this investigation took place changes have been made to pre-charge bail powers.

More information

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/3/section/62/enacted>

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS/MANAGERS

- How does your force make sure investigations are appropriately supervised and key investigative actions are completed in a timely manner?
- How does your force manage poor performance of officers investigating serious crimes?
- Where concerns are expressed about an officer’s performance, does your force prompt managers to routinely consider whether concerns around wellbeing may be a contributory factor?
- How does your force make sure that young people are kept up to date with the progress of their case in line with the Victim’s Code?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICE OFFICERS/STAFF

- How would changes to pre-charge bail powers implemented since this investigation change the way you would have handle this incident as the investigating officer?
- What would you do if a child under the age of 16 described sexual activity they had engaged in as ‘consensual’?

ACTION TAKEN BY THIS POLICE FORCE

- Under the leadership of an assistant chief constable, a review of the force’s response to investigation and supervision has taken place. All first line supervisors received further training, ensuring case action plans are embedded on all investigations (other than desk-based). The compliance of these is scrutinised monthly at chief officer level. All inspectors dip sample 10 investigations and their case action plans each month from a qualitative point of view.

OUTCOMES FOR THE OFFICERS/STAFF INVOLVED

- The officer in charge of the investigation was found to have a case to answer for misconduct failing to progress the investigation. He was dismissed from the force in relation to an unrelated matter.

 [Read the full learning report](#)

Child sexual abuse and children's human rights: the role of the Children's Commissioner for Wales

The Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales was the first to be established in the UK. Sadly its roots lie in a notorious case of institutional child sexual abuse.

The Waterhouse Inquiry, which reported in 2000, examined widespread abuse of children, mainly boys, in residential care in north Wales from the 1970s to the 1990s. The inquiry, and subsequent convictions secured by Operation Pallial, made it clear the children had been betrayed by those with power over them, including a care home manager and a senior police officer. Sir Ronald Waterhouse recommended children should have an independent person to listen to them and to protect their rights by scrutinising the record of government and other public bodies.

Child sexual abuse clearly violates a number of children's rights as laid out in the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 34 specifically covers protection from sexual abuse, and article 39 gives the right to support for recovery from abuse. Other relevant rights include protection against being trafficked, rights to be listened to and rights to information. The UN Committee for the Rights of the Child recently completed work on children's rights in digital spheres, a whole new arena for risks of sexual abuse and exploitation that could not have been anticipated when the UNCRC was written in 1989.

My office in Wales works to reduce risks of harm to children through sexual abuse in a number of ways. At an individual level we have a casework service.

“ A regular theme is girls complaining about sexual harassment by peers and also older men in public places ”

We support around 600 children each year who may have experienced rights violations or are just struggling to access the support they need. In recent years, for example, we have supported children who have experienced peer sexual harassment or abuse in school settings and have not felt supported by their schools. One case highlighted a gap in regulations in relation to independent schools in Wales following inappropriate social media contact between a Head teacher and pupils. We highlighted the gap and the Welsh Government has promised to make new regulations on this.

A further important area of work for us is to ensure children know about their rights and are listened to. My participation team support me to listen to thousands of children each year, both face-to-face and through surveys. We make a big effort to hear from children facing barriers in life, for example those in custody, in foster or residential care and in psychiatric units. A regular theme is girls complaining about sexual



harassment by peers and also older men in public places. While these issues have recently had a lot of publicity through the reaction to the shocking Sarah Everard case, I feel girls' everyday experiences of sexual harassment has gone largely unheard and should be taken much more seriously.

We also work hard to inform children about their rights, and have developed specific resources for very young children, those with additional learning needs and through British Sign Language to ensure everyone hears about their rights. We run successful ambassador schemes in around half of schools in Wales where we train children to educate their peers about rights. I have come across several situations where children have learned about their right to be safe for the first time, for example in a school lesson, and have come forward to disclose sexual or other abuse. In one primary school the Head teacher led a workshop on the right to be safe and a group of children approached her after school to say that they were being mistreated in an out-of-school faith setting. This disclosure led to a successful prosecution.

We also work with all of the police forces, health boards and many other public bodies to encourage them to adopt a children's rights approach in their work. This means, for example, that they will ensure young people are involved in informing their work, they let children and young people know how their rights will be upheld when they come into contact with the service, and train staff in children's rights.

Finally, we work with public bodies to share best practice and highlight gaps. We began running a national child sexual exploitation and abuse round table meeting after the issues in Rotherham came to light. It's attended by all four of Wales's police forces plus representatives from government, health, social services, the voluntary sector and youth justice to share new practice developments, ensure regulations and guidance are fit for the job and to share knowledge about developments as they've emerged, including county lines. Through the intelligence I pick up in the round table I've been alerted to issues about gaps in guidance, the funding and governance of Sexual Assault Referral Centres and concerns about missing children and have been able to raise these formally with government ministers and others with responsibilities.

Work on preventing child sexual abuse remains as core to our remit as it did when our office was founded twenty years ago, and we will continue to work tirelessly to promote children's rights to be protected from harm. ■

Professor Sally Holland is a registered social worker with experience in the statutory and voluntary sectors. Before starting her job as Children's Commissioner for Wales, she was a Professor at the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University, where she set up CASCADE Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre.



CASE STUDY 9



Safer schools officer's handling of abuse allegations

A school staff member received a telephone call from the safeguarding lead at another school about some information she had received from pupils. These pupils had disclosed their friend, a 12-year-old girl at the school of the staff member receiving the phone call, had been in a bedroom with an older boy aged 15 or 16. The pupils said the girl and boy were sexually active.

The staff member, her manager, and the Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) who was part of the safer schools team at the school, spoke to the girl. Staff described the girl as evasive during the meeting. One of the staff members noted the PCSO was quiet during the meeting and felt he may have had further questions.

The PCSO told the IOPC that following this meeting he formed the view the allegations about the girl were untrue as she had denied them.

The PCSO said the majority of his work related to low level anti-social behaviour and criminality and that he had minimal experience of child sexual exploitation. The IOPC concluded the PCSO would benefit from some training about safeguarding, in particular around the signs of exploitation and abuse.

A member of staff at the school said they already had concerns about the girl because of the Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS) - the school safeguarding system logs about open houses and rumours of underage sexual incidents. The member of staff said she relayed these rumours to the PCSO in a meeting in the school wellbeing office.

The PCSO told the IOPC the 12-year-old girl's name was never mentioned to him by the staff member. However, force systems showed the PCSO did carry out a search for the girl's name after attending the wellbeing office. The PCSO did not make any record of the request the staff member made of him, other than the email chain confirming the actions he had taken. These were to contact the safer schools officers at the other relevant schools to ask them to speak to the pupils concerned.

The IOPC found there was no process in place to share the outcome of agreed tasks between the safer schools officers and the school, which meant staff were never aware the PCSO had contacted other schools.

Around two weeks later a member of the school attendance team put a safeguarding concern form into

the wellbeing team. It was about the 12 year old girl who was the subject of the initial call, and another girl. The staff member said she was concerned about their attendance at school, and about rumours they were having sex with older boys and men.

These concerns grew when both girls failed to turn up for school one day. The attendance team member decided to seek the assistance of the safer schools officers.

“ The IOPC found there was no process in place to share the outcome of agreed tasks between the safer schools officers and the school ”

The member of the wellbeing team who took the initial call requested the 12-year-old girl's friend to attend the wellbeing office. They explained the concerns about some girls being abused by older boys. The staff member recorded in CPOMS the girl immediately asked if she was talking about her friend, the subject of the initial call. She went on to say her friend “does that stuff with those boys”. She gave the names of six girls who were potentially being abused by ten boys from another school.

Following this, the staff member spoke to the 12-year-old girl. She confirmed the information her friend had given was true.

The staff member requested the assistance of the police constable (who was also a member of the safer schools team at the school) urgently and he attended the wellbeing office. The staff member told the IOPC she told the police constable the girls had made disclosures about boys in another school and she was concerned one of the girls was having sex with the boys, which the girl had confirmed.

The police constable denied being told the reason he had been called into the meeting. It was cited in the CPOMS log the police constable spoke to the girl about consent, the risks of unprotected sex with boys, what the police could do if she wanted to disclose



information, and that she was under the legal age of consent. He said he spoke with her about this because he deemed it to be the worst-case-scenario as to what the meeting could be about, but was not aware for certain. There was no evidence the police constable recorded any of the information discussed in this meeting.

The police constable commented both girls were laughing throughout the meeting. He felt this meant they were not taking the situation seriously. The staff member said she did not believe the officer saw the girl as a victim in the same way she did.

National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS) Annex B states if there has been a serious incident, an officer should use the flow chart to decide whether an incident should be recorded as a crime or whether to follow school protocols. It was evident the police constable did not follow NCRS standards on this occasion.

A few days later the staff member arranged a meeting between herself, the police constable and the

girl's father. However, the girl's father did not turn up. The police constable formed the view the girl may have told her father not to come to the meeting, so she was called to the office. The girl's father later confirmed he could not attend due to work commitments.

The staff member recorded on CPOMS they spoke to the girl, explained she was a victim, and spoke about exploitation and grooming. She said the girl gave specific names and locations where incidents had occurred.

The police constable disputed the staff member's recollection of the meeting. He said he believed the meeting was short as the girl did not disclose anything of concern. He did not record anything and said this was because there was nothing to write about.

One of the other staff members said she recalled the police constable making a comment about the girl "enjoying it or enjoying the attention."

The following month, a referral was received from the school by a social worker within the CSE hub. This was immediately investigated by the CSE team. As a result, 17 victims and 23 suspects were identified.

Had either the PCSO or the police constable reported these incidents to a supervisor, recorded a crime, or submitted intelligence, it would have flagged one of the suspects was a suspect in three rapes on under 16s in the previous six months, and a suspect in a sexual offence relating to indecent images of a young female engaged in a sex act. ●

“ The police constable disputed the staff member's recollection of the meeting ”



KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS/MANAGERS

- What training does your force give to safer schools officers to help them spot the signs of abuse and child sexual exploitation?
- How does your force prepare safer schools officers for working with young people?
- Does the training your force gives to safer schools officers equip officers to look beyond young people’s behaviour, and avoid making judgements, where the young person’s behaviour might be affected by their vulnerability, age, understanding, or maturity?
- Does your force set out clear expectations of how schools should share safeguarding concerns with safer schools officers?
- Would your force have expected the safer schools officer to record the intelligence identified and bring this to the attention of a supervisor?
- How would you expect safer schools officers to manage any actions arising from contact with school staff, students or parents?
- How does your force work with schools to capture feedback from them on safer schools officers that they work with regularly, to help identify any concerns or development needs for officers?
- How does your force make sure safer schools officers work within wider safeguarding processes to ensure clear decision making and ensure that action is taken within multi-agency plans?

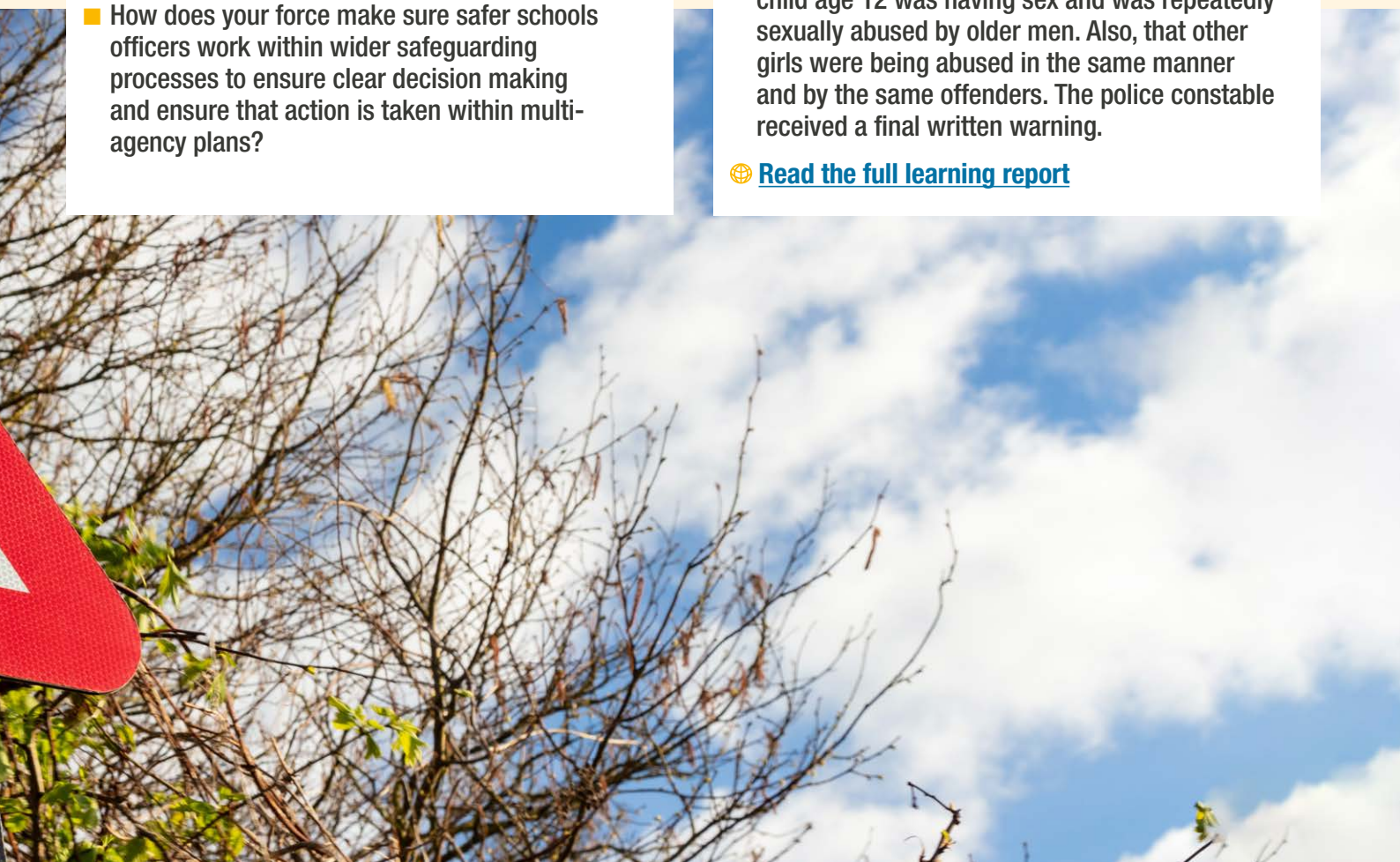
KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICE OFFICERS/STAFF

- What else would you have done to safeguard the girl(s) after you became aware of the concerns raised?
- As a safer schools officer, would you routinely update school staff when actions have been progressed?
- When speaking to children, where do you record their disclosures and why is it important to document and record information shared by children?

OUTCOMES FOR THE OFFICERS/STAFF INVOLVED

- The PCSO was dealt with for unsatisfactory performance on the grounds he failed to make sure safeguarding measures were put in place, share information, or respond to potential offences after learning a child aged 12 was sexually active with a named man.
- The police constable was found to have a case to answer for gross misconduct. This was in respect of allegations he failed to make sure safeguarding measures were put in place, share information, or respond to potential offences after learning a child age 12 was having sex and was repeatedly sexually abused by older men. Also, that other girls were being abused in the same manner and by the same offenders. The police constable received a final written warning.

 [Read the full learning report](#)



CASE STUDY 10



Delays in response to potential sexual activity with a child

At around 3.45am a man called the police to report concern for his friend, a 15-year-old girl. The man told the call handler he had visited a friend with his cousin and the 15-year-old girl (who was his cousin's girlfriend). He said the friend the three of them had visited was 28-years-old and was drunk when they arrived. The man made it clear he was concerned for the girl's welfare. He said his 28-year-old friend "had been quite touchy with her to be honest..."

The man said his friend had been buying the girl drinks and had kicked him and his cousin out of his home. He also said the girl had made it clear she did not want to stay. He was concerned especially because his friend had a history with firearms.

The call handler created an incident report but did not include the comments about the man's history with firearms and did not apply the crime classification for "sexual activity with a child." The call handler graded the call as requiring "urgent attendance". She told the IOPC in hindsight, having listened back to the call, she would grade the call as requiring "immediate attendance".

The incident was transferred to a radio operator and a dispatcher, who were responsible for liaising with the relevant local policing areas and resourcing incidents.

Around 15 minutes after the call was graded, a "resource dispatch overdue" auto-prompt was generated and accepted by the radio operator. The radio operator recorded they were "attempting to resource" the incident.

During the course of the investigation it was found the control room was split into "talk groups" covering the local policing areas within the force area. There is usually a radio operator and a dispatcher working on each local policing area. However, between 3.40am and 4am various areas are "patched" together. The force said this is because the talk group capacity in the early hours of the morning is not at a level that requires a radio operator and a dispatcher for each talk group.

Around 15 minutes later an "un-resourced escalation" auto-prompt was accepted by a control room supervisor acting as the Oscar 2. An Oscar 2 is responsible for operational oversight and supervision of the control room, including open incidents and staff. The role included responsibility for applying the escalation process when automatic, un-resourced

escalations were generated. The escalation process requires an Oscar 2 to carry out a Threat, Harm, Opportunity and Risk (THOR) and a National Decision Model (NDM) assessment. There was no evidence to suggest the control room supervisor did this.

Further "resource dispatch overdue" auto-prompts were generated and accepted by the radio operator between 4.20am and approximately 6.50am. The force escalation process required radio operators to inform a local sergeant as soon as possible if they were unable to resource an incident. There was no evidence the radio operator did this.

At around 6.40am, the incident was switched to the Information Records Bureau. Intelligence checks on the man were requested. It was also noted the incident required action.

“ The call handler told the IOPC in hindsight, having listened back to the call, she would grade the call as requiring “immediate attendance” ”

At around 6.50am a contact management centre controller recorded early turn officers should go to the address. At around 7.20am, two officers were assigned to the incident. They arrived at around 8am, discovering the 28-year-old man and the 15-year-old girl asleep in an upstairs room.

One of the officers explained they had received a call to the address and needed to speak to the girl about her safety. He asked how old the girl was. She replied "15, are you going to tell my parents?"

One of the officers recalled the 28 year old man said "we did not have sex". The girl confirmed this.

One of the officers went outside to seek advice from a senior officer. The remaining officer asked the 28-year-old man to get dressed and go into a separate room so he could speak with the girl in private.

This officer said he asked the girl if anything sexual had happened between her and the man. He said she replied with "an adamant no". The officer told the IOPC



he did not think the girl was upset as she seemed fine speaking with him. He did however mention she seemed more anxious about getting told off by her parents.

The officer who had been outside returned into the property and asked where the 28-year-old man was. The other officer replied that he was in a separate room. The man who made the original call to the police entered the property. He said he had just seen the 28-year-old man get into his car and drive off.

The girl disclosed she had had sexual intercourse with the 28-year-old man when her mother arrived at the scene. The man was found and arrested.

The force was operating below their designated minimum staffing levels throughout this incident. ■

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS/MANAGERS

- What processes does your force have in place to make sure there is resilience in control rooms and support for control room staff?
- How does your force make sure control room staff accurately record reports of sexual activity with children, and those incidents are graded according to the relevant policies and guidance?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICE OFFICERS/STAFF

- What would you have done differently if you received several “resource dispatch overdue” auto-prompts in relation to this incident?
- What would you have done to identify, secure, preserve and control evidence at the scene?

ACTION TAKEN BY THIS POLICE FORCE

- The force introduced a new case management system. The force committed to keeping the impact of the new system under review and reflecting on the data produced once the system had become embedded.
- The force ended the practice of patching together local policing area desks and replaced it with a system where officers are ‘transferred’ from one talk group to another.
- A restorative practice exercise took place where family members of the girl were escorted around the control room to demonstrate changes made since the incident took place.

OUTCOMES FOR THE OFFICERS/STAFF INVOLVED

- The control room supervisor was dealt with outside of the formal disciplinary process in respect of allegations he picked up the escalation of the incident but did not complete a THOR or NDM assessment. Nor did he try to identify a suitable unit to attend. He received management action on prioritisation of tasks and risk assessment.
- The call handler was dealt with outside the formal disciplinary process in respect of allegations she did not grade the initial call in line with the force’s grading criteria and deployment guidance. She received management action and learning around asking the right questions to understand what grading is appropriate.
- The radio operator was dealt with outside the formal disciplinary process in respect of allegations she did not contact the local policing area sergeant to seek assistance to resource the incident as per the escalation process.

 [Read the full learning report](#)

YOUR FEEDBACK ON ISSUE 38: ROADS POLICING

(DECEMBER 2020)

> Roads
policing

Thinking about the content of issue 38

100%

of respondents (22) said the structure of the magazine felt about right.

95.4%

of respondents (21) said the mix of cases and feature articles felt about right.

91%

of respondents (20) said the case summaries were clear and easy to understand.

Thinking about the impact of issue 38

90.9%

of respondents (20) said the magazine is a useful tool to help drive change in police policy and practice.

90.9%

of respondents (20) said the magazine provides them with useful knowledge to supplement information they receive from training, briefings or practical experience.

91.66%

of police drivers responding to Q7 (11) said that after reading issue 38 they would reflect on their experience and consider whether they need to do anything differently.

50%

of police drivers responding to Q7 (5) said that reading issue 38 has prompted them to change their behaviour in one or more areas where learning has been identified in the cases featured.

95%

of respondents (19) said that they intend to share issue 38 with colleagues to help share the learning it contains.

Note: Based on 23 responses to the survey. Not all respondents answered all questions.



OUR NEXT ISSUE FOCUSES ON ABUSE OF POSITION FOR A SEXUAL PURPOSE.

Please get in touch if you have a suggestion for content.



Support and information

General

Crimestoppers

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

If you have intelligence that may help the police you can contact Crimestoppers.

Know About CSE

www.knowaboutcse.co.uk

An agency which provides advice on child sexual exploitation to victims, families and professionals

Lucy Faithfull Foundation

www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk

UK-wide charity dedicated to tackling child sexual abuse.

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

www.nspcc.org.uk

Support and information for children and anyone worried about a child, and resources for professionals.

Rape Crisis – National Telephone Helpline

<https://www.rasasc.org.uk/>

The National Helpline is provided by Rape Crisis South London. It offers confidential emotional support, information and referral details.

Rape Crisis – Live Chat Helpline

<https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/live-chat-helpline/about-the-live-chat-helpline/>

The one-to-one Live Chat Helpline is a free, confidential emotional support service for women and girls aged 16 and over who have experienced sexual violence.

Respond

www.respond.org.uk

Services for people with a learning disability, autism or both, who have experienced abuse or trauma.

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org

Samaritans are open 24/7 for anyone who needs to talk.

Stop It Now!

www.stopitnow.org.uk

A confidential helpline available to anyone with concerns about child sexual abuse including adults worried about the behaviour of other adults or children and young people, those worried about their own sexual thoughts or behaviours towards children, friends and relatives of people arrested for sexual offending, and any other adult with a concern about child sexual abuse including survivors and professionals.

Survivors UK

<https://www.survivorsuk.org/>

Survivors UK provides an online helpline and a searchable database of specialist support services for men and boys.

Victim Support

www.victimsupport.org.uk

Provides emotional and practical support for people affected by crime and traumatic events.

Children and young people**Children's Society**

www.childrensociety.org.uk

Runs services for children and young people across the UK.

Childline

www.childline.org.uk

Support for children and young people in the UK, including a free helpline and 1-2-1 online chats with counsellors.

FACE (Fighting Against Child Exploitation) up 2 it

www.faceup2it.org

An organisation set up by young people with an awareness of the dangers of grooming and sexual exploitation with the aim of helping other vulnerable young people.

Fearless

www.fearless.org

Young people can access non-judgemental information and advice about crime and criminality, and provide information about crime anonymously.

Adult survivors**Help for Adult Victims of Child Abuse (HAVOCA)**

www.havoca.org

Information and support for adults who have experienced any type of childhood abuse, run by survivors.

National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)

www.napac.org.uk

Supports adult survivors of any form of childhood abuse. Offers a helpline, email support and local services.

Support for Survivors

www.supportforsurvivors.org

Support for adult survivors of child abuse.

Parents and families**Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE)**

<https://paceuk.info>

Supports parents and carers whose children are being exploited by offenders outside of the family.

Resources for professionals**CSE Toolbox**

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/information/professionals/resources/cse-toolkit-supporting-parents-carers>

A toolbox intended to help professionals explore the vulnerabilities and indicators of risk present in the case of a child or young person that may be experiencing or at risk of sexual exploitation.

Mind – Blue Light Programme

<https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/campaigns/blue-light-programme/>

Support and information for staff, volunteers and employers in the emergency services to help you and your colleagues to cope during the pandemic and beyond.

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/recognising-and-responding-to-abuse>

Guidance for professionals on recognising and responding to abuse.

NWG Exploitation Response Unit

www.nwgnetwork.org/

Provides support and advice to those working with children and young people under eighteen who are affected by abuse through exploitation.

Oscar Kilo

<https://oscarkilo.org.uk/>

Oscar Kilo is the home of the National Police Wellbeing Service and brings assessment, learning and conversation about emergency services wellbeing into one place.

Other resources**NHS – Help after rape and sexual assault**

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/help-after-rape-and-sexual-assault/>

Provides details of information, advice and support available to people affected by rape and sexual assault.

The Survivor's Trust

<https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/find-support>

Provides a list of national and regional services

gov.uk - Safeguarding children

<https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/safeguarding-children>

Useful information and resources for schools, colleges and children's services

gov.uk – Report child abuse

<https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse>

Find out more about how to report child abuse. ■



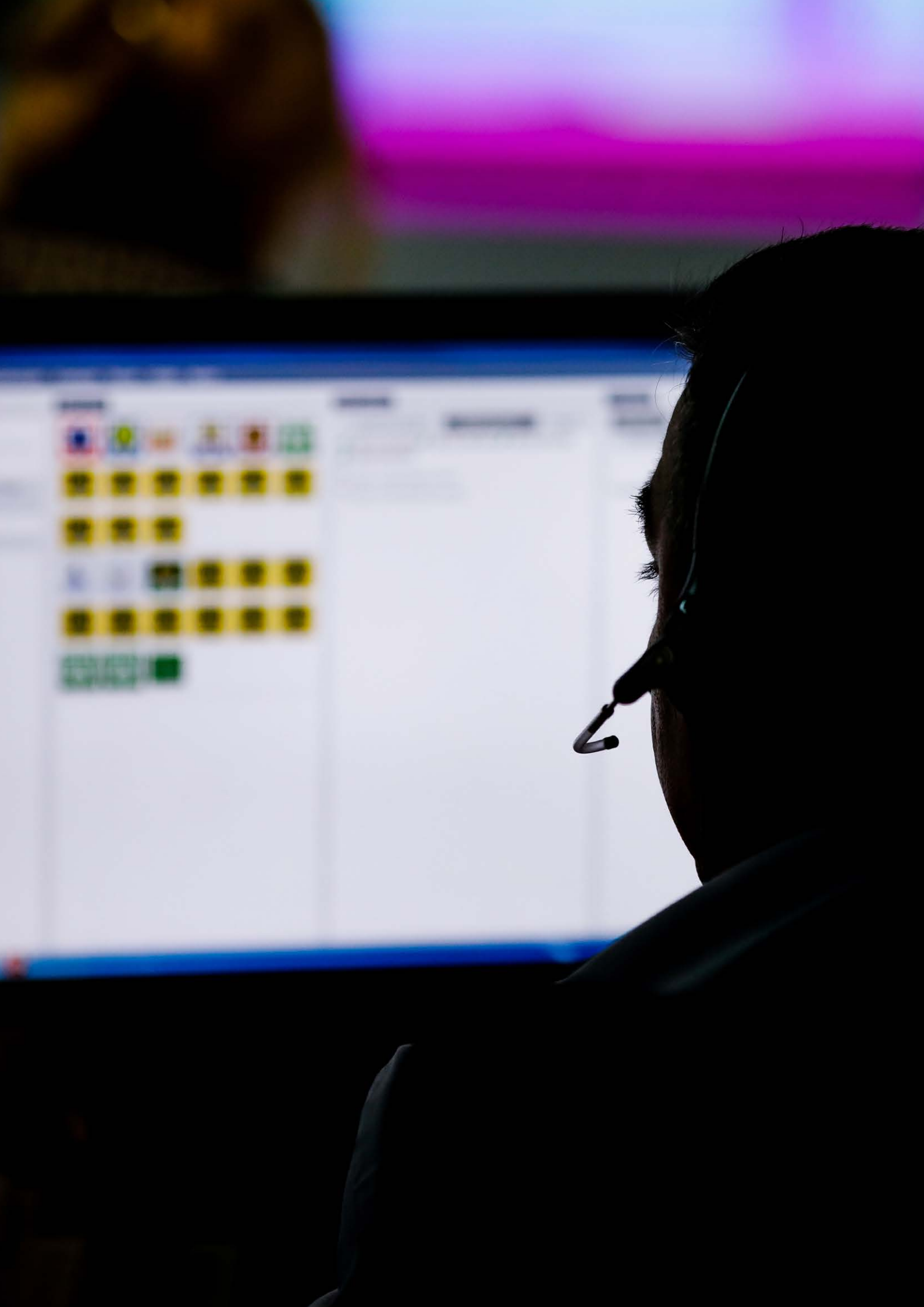
Want to get **involved** in the **development** of Learning the Lessons?

We have created a new virtual panel, bringing together a range of stakeholders from the police, the community and voluntary sector, and academia, to support the development of future issues of Learning the Lessons.

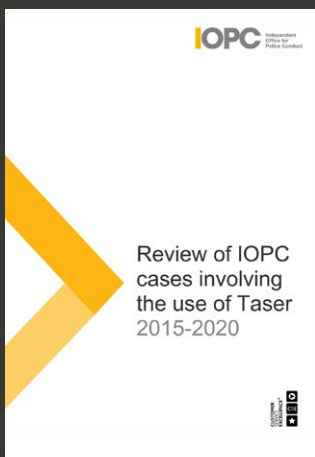
If you are interested in joining the panel, please [complete our online registration form](#) to register your interest.

Panel members will be invited to review and provide feedback on drafts six to eight weeks before publication.

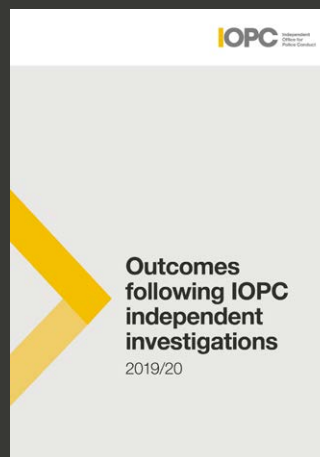
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