

The sexual exploitation of children by groups and gangs: part two

The 'See Me Hear Me' Framework:

The inquiry proposes a new evidence-based framework for protecting children and young people from sexual exploitation which has three main objectives:

- preventing the sexual exploitation of children
- identifying, protecting and supporting the victims
- disrupting and stopping perpetrators, securing justice for victims and obtaining convictions.

The report makes a forceful case for dynamic and consistent leadership in every part of the system and sees this as critical both for success and to give a clear message of the importance of doing this work.

Seven key principles are set out in the 'See Me Hear Me Framework' which are essential to identify, plan and respond to the needs of children at risk of sexual exploitation.

1) The child's best interests must be the top priority:

In so many cases the child is not visible and not heard. The 'Recognition and Telling Framework' (see Cossar et al 2013, p37) can help practitioners to understand both the barriers to recognition and telling for a child and to be mindful that telling is emotionally difficult and may be tentative and delayed.

2) Participation of children and young people:

Children and young people's views should be central to all developments so they can:

- contribute to developing national and local strategies for tackling child sexual exploitation
- have a say in how they are being protected and cared for
- provide feedback on their experience of services,
- take part in programmes which will build their resilience and confidence so that they can put their experiences of abuse behind them.

3) Enduring and consistent support:

No single agency on its own can provide an effective response to child sexual exploitation, support should be delivered through a partnership approach which can be 'co-located' or 'virtual'. Enduring relationships and support clearly make a qualitative difference to children's lives and require:



- consistent, named professionals who will provide on-going support and stick with them through challenging times,
- support for families/carers so they can support a sexually exploited child and keep them safe,
- support, where needed, for the friends of children or young people who have been exploited,
- specialist long term youth and universal services
- and a range of interventions for managing, and where possible rehabilitating, those who have sexually exploited children and young people.

4) Comprehensive 'problem-profiling':

Central government and every local area must be able to construct local profiles that include knowing how many children and young people have been sexually exploited; knowing those children and young people who are suspected of exploiting their peers; intelligence on businesses and schools that are of concern; intelligence on local street gangs and other networks, groups and individuals who present a risk to children and young people.

- The government should produce an annual national overview of CSE covering prevalence, enforcement, convictions and progress on preventative and protection action.
- The profiles of local street gangs that identify gang-associated women and girls need to be collated and routinely linked to the local strategic child sexual exploitation strategy.

5) Effective information-sharing within and between agencies:

LSCB's should develop a joined up and coordinated local child sexual exploitation strategy so that all information comes into a central hub; they should appoint a local child sexual exploitation coordinator and take responsibility for the co-ordination of routine data collection on children and young people who demonstrate indicators of child sexual exploitation.

They should also make sure there are strategic and operational links between child sexual exploitation coordinators, missing person coordinators and women, girls and gangs coordinators (in gang-affected neighbourhoods).

Every area should produce a clear and unambiguous information-sharing protocol in relation to child sexual exploitation, to which chief officers of all agencies on LSCBs are signatories and for which they are all accountable.

6) Supervision, support and training for staff:

Working with child sexual exploitation can have a potentially traumatic impact on the emotions, judgement and resilience of individual professionals who should be offered regular supervision or consultation from an experienced supervisor who can support and advise them. All staff who



work, or who might come into contact with sexually exploited children need regular training which covers:

- preventing child sexual exploitation
- identifying all models of child sexual exploitation
- investigating child sexual exploitation, compiling a case, and supporting children through the process
- the importance of specialist supervision in this work, and how to use it.

7) Evaluation and review:

The statutory services need to consistently evaluate and review the work they undertake with sexually exploited children, both strategically and operationally.

Refs:

“If only someone had listened” Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups Final Report November 2013 http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_743

Further reading:

All the reports are available at www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Cossar, J. et al (2013) *‘It takes a lot to build trust’ – Recognition and Telling: Developing Earlier Routes to Help for Children and Young People*. London, Office of the Children’s Commissioner.

Paskell, C. and LGA (2012) *Tackling child sexual exploitation: Helping local authorities to develop effective responses*. Available at: http://www.barnardos.org.uk/tackling_child_sexual_exploitation.pdf

