

All Missing Children cases are recorded on a central data set; this assists the Social Worker for Missing Children and the Police to identify any on-going Children's Services/Police intervention strategies and information sharing.

The Risk Management Group has been in place since August 2008, and monitors vulnerable children and young people, particularly children and young people who are missing from home and care. The Social Worker for Missing Children and Police have direct links into this Group.

**Multi-agency staff can obtain further information via email:
john.cavener@northumberland.gov.uk or contact direct on:
01670 536800.**

More information can be found under section 5.8 of NSCB Procedures and practice guidance which can be accessed via the purple button on NSCB webpages www.northumberland.gov.uk/SafeguardingChildren

Keeping Children and Young People Safe from Harm, Abuse and Neglect



Review of Multi-agency Responses to the Sexual Exploitation of Children

National

Date of Review: September 2012
Local Authority: Rochdale LSCB
Subject: Child Sexual Exploitation

Keeping Children and Young People Safe from Harm, Abuse and Neglect

What you need to know

A report by the local safeguarding board in Rochdale has revealed that vulnerable young girls were targeted for sexual abuse in the town for several years.

The report findings resulted from a 'Review of Multi-agency Responses to the Sexual Exploitation of Children', which was conducted after nine Asian men were convicted for their part in a child sexual exploitation gang that groomed young vulnerable girls earlier this year.

The men, who were jailed for between 4 and 19 years, targeted white girls as young as 13, picking them up from school and taking them to premises where they were plied with alcohol and drugs before being passed around for sex.

The case prompted the review, which looked at how agencies handled child sexual exploitation in Rochdale from 2007 onwards. The resulting report revealed that a working group, set up by the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board (RSCB) in 2007, had identified in its first year that fifty young people were affected by, or at risk of, exploitation. It further revealed that there were many missed opportunities for agencies to have intervened to protect potential victims over that five year period.

The victims, were raped, physically assaulted and forced to have sex with several men in a day, several times a week. One 13-year-old victim had an abortion after falling pregnant. Another gave evidence of being raped by two men while 'so drunk she was vomiting over the side of the bed'. In a feature on the offences the Guardian newspaper found that social workers and police had been warned on a number of occasions that local girls were at risk of abuse in the relevant years.

Figures obtained by the newspaper, under the Freedom of Information Act, show that NHS sexual services for vulnerable young people made 83 referrals to the council about girls they thought were either being sexually exploited, or were at risk of exploitation, between 2004 and the end of 2010. 44 referrals were made by staff on the crisis intervention team to the Police over the same time period.

What are the implications

The review made fifteen recommendations and identified several 'lessons learned' including:

- An effective local single multi-agency strategy needed to be developed, without which it would be impossible to develop a shared understanding of the problem of sexual exploitation.
- Children and young people are more likely to be protected from child sexual abuse if professionals, young people, parents and the wider community have a better understanding of the problem, can recognise key signs and know how to respond.
- Children are more likely to be protected from sexual exploitation if professionals engage actively with the local community to build trust.
- Single and multi-agency policies and procedures are needed to ensure that those at risk of, or suffering harm through, child sexual exploitation are comprehensively assessed and provided with good services, specific to their needs.
- The police should build a case and prosecute perpetrators once they are identified and work together with other criminal justice organisations locally to ensure that support is provided for sexually exploited young people throughout the whole process.
- Preventative measures and intrusive interventions should be used to disrupt the activity of offenders, reduce the incidence of abuse and send a valuable message to young people, their families and their carers.
- 'Scoping' should take place to target potential offender and victim populations and to identify changing 'hotspot' locations
- The recommendations have resulted in Rochdale Council briefing more than 10,000 staff, in agencies in the borough, in respect of recognition and response to sexual exploitation. More than 1,500 staff had face- to-face training, with plans to reach the whole workforce by the end of this year.

Whilst the points raised relate to Rochdale, the findings provide a timely reminder that this type of grooming and sexual exploitation of the vulnerable does occur and the 'scoping' exercise should be considered in other areas.

This has implications for all professionals working with children, young people and their families. Child sexual exploitation is a priority of the NSCB's Vulnerable Adolescent Sub-Committee. Work is ongoing to address these issues.

What are we doing about this in Northumberland?

Running away or going missing is a key early indicator of child sexual exploitation. Research has found that as many as 70% of children who are sexually exploited go missing. Some young people go missing as a consequence of sexual exploitation. Others are at risk of being targeted by perpetrators who groom them for sexual exploitation.

In 2009, a Joint Protocol was established between Northumberland Children's Services and Northumbria Police, to respond to all children and young people who go missing from home, care and education. The Joint Protocol sets out the roles and responsibilities of Children's Services, the Police and other agencies who have a duty to safeguard children who go missing.

As well as implementing this Joint Protocol, Barnardo's seconded a specialist Social Worker (Social Worker for Missing Children) who is currently situated within Children's Services and is responsible for supporting multi-agency staff and undertaking direct work with children, young people and their families throughout Northumberland.

The Social Worker for Missing Children provides a responsive service to reduce the risk to children and young people who go missing, particularly in relation to child sexual exploitation and repeated incidents. Prompt return interviews and direct work with young people are undertaken with appropriate liaison with other local authorities and police forces.

Northumbria Police provide information of all children who are reported missing on a daily basis to the Social Worker for Missing Children.