Evidence-based models of policing to protect children from sexual exploitation

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GLOSSARY

The annual data requirement (ADR) is a list of all requests for data made to all police forces in England and Wales under the Home Secretary's statutory powers and is used to report crime and policing related statistics.

Call-handlers or Police Communications Officers answer 999 emergency calls, deploy relevant resources to the location of the incident, liaise with police officers and provide additional information where necessary.

Central Referral Unit (CRU) is a multi-agency information sharing structure, typically comprised of police and social care but other partner agency representatives may also be involved.

Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs) Child Abduction Warning Notices were formerly known as Harbourers' Warnings. They can be issued against individuals who are suspected of grooming children by stating that they have no permission to associate with the named child and that if they do so they can be arrested under the Child Abduction Act 1984 and Children Act 1989.

Child Protection and Abuse Investigation (CPAI) is a specific crime and policing working group within the National Police Chiefs' Council that seeks to assist and coordinate the delivery of operational activity in this area.

Child sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children (DfE, 2015; p. 5).

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology (DfE, 2017; p. 93).

Contact offences are sexual offences involving direct physical contact between the victim and perpetrator.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is the principal prosecuting authority for England and Wales, acting independently in criminal cases investigated by the police and others.

Frontline officers are operational officers who work reactively to crime in the community. These include Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) who work with police officers and share some, but not all, of their powers.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a local, multi-agency victim-focused meeting where information on the highest risk cases of domestic violence and abuse is shared between different statutory and voluntary sector agencies.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) aim to improve the safeguarding response for children and vulnerable adults through better information sharing and high quality and timely safeguarding responses.

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) brings police forces in the UK together to help police coordinate operations, reform, improve and provide value for money.

Non-contact offences are sexual offences that do not involve direct physical contact between the victim and perpetrator. An example of this would include inciting a child to engage in sexual activity over the internet.

Problem profile is a police intelligence product created to provide detail on crime trends or hot spots, provide a focus for analytic assessment, assist in victim and perpetrator identification, assist in prioritising operational work, identify intelligence gaps, highlight opportunities for prevention and enforcement and provide justification for actions.

Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) unit is a specialist unit within the CPS, staffed by specially trained lawyers and paralegal officers. The unit offers specialist legal advice, decision making and support to victims. It works closely with a number of other organisations, including the police, to improve the service that is offered to the victims of rape, child sexual abuse and all other serious sexual offences.

Safer Neighbourhood Teams consist of officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) dedicated to specific neighbourhoods.

Third-party material refers to evidential materials held by third parties that can help to corroborate evidence to support or disprove an allegation. This can include observations by carers relating to changes in the victim's behaviour or evidence of grooming (eg, receiving gifts) but can also come from other sources, eg, 999 tapes, house-to-house enquiries or photographs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

This research, carried out between 2015 and 2017 was undertaken by a team at the *International Centre: Researching child sexual exploitation, trafficking and violence* at the University of Bedfordshire. The International Centre has an established reputation for child-centred research and recently completed an initiative joint funded by the Home Office, Higher Education Funding Council for England and College of Policing to improve and share learning on policing child sexual exploitation (CSE) (see website https://www.uobcsepolicinghub.org.uk/).

The original overarching aim of this research project was "to improve multi-agency work with police to prevent child sexual exploitation". It was funded by KPMG Foundation and Norfolk Constabulary, supported by The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation.

This research is the first study of its kind. It is the first to document examples of current operating models of police responses to CSE in England and Wales; the first to attempt to draw out summaries of how features of policing improve disruption and prosecution of offenders; and the first study to assess the features of CSE policing responses in relation to the outcomes for victims. The research involved interviewing police officers and civilian staff including researchers and analysts from CSE teams across eight selected study forces in England.

The headings below highlight the key findings from this research.

1. There is limited knowledge about 'what works' in policing CSE

1.1 Our searches for literature yielded no studies that have aimed to document models for policing responses to CSE; even inspection reports provide little insight into how CSE responses are structured. Published research about 'what works' in policing to obtain CSE prosecutions is also absent.

1.2 Understanding the relationship between policing responses and prosecutions remains elusive in light of problematic data recording within the police.

1.3 There is a gap between the current policy definition of CSE and the Sexual Offences legislation, which impacts on the nature and extent of data collected on CSE.

2. Data sources and complexities resulting from the lack of uniform, consistent data

2.1 Disruption and prosecution data at individual police force level is not readily available.

2.2 The Home Office annual data requirement (ADR) is, for the first time, requiring forces to submit data on 'CSE flagged' incidents and crimes, which will be available in the 2017/2018 ADR. CSE 'flagging' is now considered to be an important component of an effective response to CSE, although practices remain inconsistent both within and across forces.

2.3 Records from the eight police forces studied in this research show a range from 0.9 CSE-related offences per 100,000 population to 38 per 100,000. The average number of CSE-related offences is 11 per 100,000 population while the median is 8. That data is likely to be unreliable however, and should be treated with caution.

2.4 Qualitative interviews with police in CSE teams reveal that they are unaware of the scale of successful CSE prosecutions because of the problematic nature of the data.

2.5 It is recognised across the field that the problems faced by practitioners in recording data have an adverse impact on the capacity of police and researchers to portray an accurate picture of what is happening on the ground. Information of the kind sought in this research will be largely unachievable until substantial strides are made in data recording practices across the criminal justice system.

3. Models of CSE policing responses

3.1 This research set out to improve multi-agency policing to prevent CSE. To do this, different 'models' of policing were identified and have been represented visually. Further research is required to fill a gap in knowledge about the range of outcomes that can be achieved through police intervention and which outcomes are most critical for young people.

3.2 We identified four different 'Model structures' for policing CSE within the eight forces studied.

3.3 We do not know how representative these models are across England and Wales, but we hope that the models may serve as a useful reference point for forces to assess their own response holistically in light of the findings contained within this report.

Model structure: Four different models for supporting victims of CSE were established

3.4 Model 1 – Integrated specialist CSE teams. In this model, victim support is integrated with investigative functions. The model depicts a CSE response that can best be described as a single, specialised unit that holds force responsibility for CSE investigation, disruption and supporting young people. Five forces complied with this model, with three variations in how it is implemented.

3.5 Model 2 – Victim-focused specialist CSE team. In this model, victim support is separate from investigative and disruption work. One of the eight forces in this study complied with this model. The CSE team in this model provides the link from the police contact with the victim to the investigation teams.

3.6 Model 3 – Intelligence-focused specialist CSE team with dispersed victim support. Investigations and victim support occur across existing policing structures rather than within a specialised CSE structure. To that effect, this model promotes an omni-competent police force with victim support carried out by all police (alongside multi-agency partners) where appropriate. One of the eight forces in this study complied with this model. The CSE team is responsible for analytic capability, awareness-raising, chairing multi-agency CSE meetings and tasking disruption activity.

3.7 Model 4 – No specialist CSE team with dispersed victim support. One of the eight forces in this study complied with this model; this force has no named 'specialist CSE unit' and also promotes an omni-competent police force. The CSE response, including support of victims, is dispersed throughout regional Safeguarding Units.

General themes of effective features of models:

3.8 Inspection results were more positive where there was

- A good understanding of the CSE threat (via problem profiles).
- Strong police leadership of the management of CSE cases.
- An 'omni-competent' police force, with specialist CSE analytical capability.
- Sufficient funding for resource-intensive policing work such as disruption and evidence-gathering.
- A specialist (usually voluntary sector) CSE service to undertake victim-based work in partnership with police.
- Good communication between staff members in different teams within the force and between the force and external partner agencies.
- Active and proactive multi-agency collaboration between police and partner agencies.

Influencing factors on the development of models

3.9 The size of the force, the extent of resourcing for CSE and the broader policing philosophy all impact on the models observed. It was evident that poor communication within forces and fewer resources allocated to CSE had a negative impact on forces' ability to protect children from CSE.

3.10 The stage of development of the CSE service influences the shape of the response. Those established only recently are demonstrating flux, change and instability while the response develops. Those that have been in place for longer appear more stable, with better relationships with partners in place. They may also have a better understanding of the scale of the challenge locally, which may influence resourcing of CSE. This could mean, however, that they are more resistant to change.

3.11 Forces which are at the early stages of developing their CSE response benefit from a police-led CSE specialist team to drive cultural change.

3.12 Officers need time to engage with and support young people, but they also recognise the value of partner agencies and work closely with them

4 Cross-cutting themes in relation to policing activity in responding to CSE

4.1 The findings in this report demonstrate that forces are making extensive efforts to tackle CSE. They are testing out approaches. Our police participants demonstrated commitment and good knowledge of CSE and policing responses continue to change to respond to emerging challenges. However, there are related, systemic challenges to practice that emerged across our interviews. Five cross-cutting themes explaining these efforts and challenges are considered below.

Data

4.2 Data recording problems and the resulting paucity of information was felt keenly by police officers who took part in this study.

4.3 The absence of data and/or the availability of poor data resulted in police officers not being able to assess the effectiveness of their practice.

4.4 Police knowledge about prosecutions was informed largely by impressions or examples rather than robust and clear statistics.

Multi-agency working, communication and information sharing

4.5 There was evidence of good multi-agency working, communicating and information sharing.

4.6 This manifested in some forces in embedded multi-agency partners working alongside the police; excellent relationships and joint working with partners to support young people; close relationships with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and important contributions by partner agencies to disruption activity.

4.7 There was, however, also evidence of limited multi-agency working and poor relationships, communication and information sharing.

4.8 Developing accurate and up-to-date problem profiles is hindered by difficulties in obtaining data from partners.

4.9 Problem relationships, lack of information sharing and poor communication between partners made it difficult to gather evidence, in particular in relation to third-party material.

4.10 The engagement of children and the capacity to offer them support varied depending on the relationship that forces had with local partners.

4.11 Problems and difficulties with multi-agency working, communication and information sharing is certainly not a 'new' finding. It is important to highlight that this research noted these problems to be a continued barrier to effective practice.

Resourcing

4.12 There was evidence in some, but not all, forces that resources for CSE responses were increasing, or set to increase. A number of CSE teams, for example, were expecting an expansion in financial and staff resources imminently.

4.13 Despite this, resourcing remained a problem, especially in relation to resource-intensive activities such as disruption (and monitoring some disruption strategies) and gathering third-party material, which can take a significant amount of time and staff resources.

4.14 It is evident that some forces are increasing investment, expanding their capacity to identify and respond to CSE, which is critical in the context of a rising trajectory in identification of CSE by the police and reporting of wider child sexual abuse (CSA).

4.15 Supporting young people was also recognised as resource-intensive. One force appeared to offset this through significant reliance on third sector agencies. Another force appeared to address this through the creation of a specialist victim support team that was separate from other policing functions like disruption and investigation.

4.16 While resourcing will always be a concern for police forces, good outcomes for children and young people can only be driven by child-centered approaches. These child centered approaches can be resource intensive.

Assessment/ evaluation of police activity

4.17 There is no consensus or common set of indicators that suggest what 'success' looks like. Prosecutions are only one measure, but these do not always align with what success looks like from a victim's perspective.

4.18 Police participants could only provide anecdotal evidence of whether their disruption activities were effective.

4.19 Similarly, knowledge of whether prosecutions were rising was limited, usually based on one or two examples rather than accurate statistics about success.

4.20 Better and more consistent flagging practices will help forces to improve how they evaluate the effectiveness of their work.

Sharing good practice

4.21 Across some areas of policing activity, there was evidence that police were unaware or uninformed about approaches to disruption and prosecution. For example, some participants were unfamiliar with disruption approaches occurring in other forces.

4.22 Some forces were actively seeking victimless prosecutions, while participants in other forces were having little success or felt that these kinds of prosecutions could not be pursued.

4.23 Concurrent to the research, some police regions have established regional prevention forums. Further, the police National CSE Action Plan (2016) includes an objective for forces to share good practice. As part of their role, the CSE regional police coordinators were tasked with facilitating the sharing of good practice across forces and regions. Finally, in 2017, a new regional CSE prevention officer network was established to identify and share good practice, supplementing the work of the CSE regional coordinators and analysts. It is hoped these strategies have begun to address gaps in knowledge as identified within this research.

Recommendations

Taking the findings into consideration, we would recommend that:

1. The findings and summary points from this work are mapped against the police's new Vulnerability Action Plan to protect vulnerable children, including those affected by CSE. This would include the police team, under the National Lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation, working with research project leads to ensure findings are fully mapped against The Vulnerability Action Plan and fed into training initiatives arising from them.

2. The National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation organises an event or open transparent process for CSE police leads to consider the

findings from this report, specifically in relation to models of policing that support:

- information sharing
- appropriate resourcing and structure
- communication between staff within forces and between forces and external partners
- engagement with the CPS and
- supporting children and young people affected by CSE.

3. The CPS improve their recording of CSE cases (perhaps via a flagging system similar to that used by the police) and work towards matching CPS records with police records in order to better track CSE prosecutions.

4. Individual police forces draw on findings from this report to 'map' their response to CSE and to use summary lessons learned to inform their developing practice.

5. The College of Policing meet with the researchers to clarify how findings from this report can be incorporated into training, staff development programmes and refreshing guidance such as the Authorised Professional Practice for child sexual exploitation.

6. The CSA Centre of Expertise, the National Response Unit and the College of Policing work together to support the production of a briefing or guidance paper for police drawing on these findings, specifically to address the absence of guidance on disruption of potential offenders. It is important that this new guidance recognises that there are difficult, entrenched problems and embrace the complexity of the issues involved.

7. A full dissemination strategy is developed by the International Centre and the National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation. This dissemination strategy needs to include:

   - an event with children and young people affected by CSE to comment on and address questions of young people's engagement in police-led activities, representation of the young person's voice, and future dissemination of findings of this research. This could be initiated through the International Centre's Young Researchers Advisory Panel in the first instance but could also make links with the NPCC Lead for Children and Young People.
   - Presentation of findings at the next relevant national police conference(s), other professional agency conferences, and at national and international academic conferences.
   - Joint publications between International Centre researchers, police colleagues who have participated in this research and the Young Researchers Advisory Panel in police and academic journals.

Section 1: Introduction

Key Messages

- CSA was named as a national threat in England and Wales in March 2015.
- CSE, particularly online CSE, is now mentioned in the strategic policing requirement.
- Policing activity to respond to CSE has accelerated in recent years.
- Inspections have found evidence of good practice and improvements to policing of CSE, but have also documented on-going challenges facing the police.
- Inspections show that police forces are not using their disruption powers to full effect and research shows that information sharing between police and local authorities can be a major barrier to safeguarding children from CSE.
- Information on the number of CSE convictions is not readily available: police do not receive intelligence about all CSE-related crimes; many cases are never reported and there are inconsistent approaches to record keeping between and within forces. That said, published offence data for 2015/16 shows an increase in reporting of all sexual offence categories compared to 2014/15.
- Published research about 'what works' in policing to obtain prosecutions is absent.
- This is the first study of its kind to document the ways in which some police forces in England have structured their CSE responses.
- This is also the first study of its kind to assess the features of CSE policing responses in relation to the outcomes for victims.
- Despite this, understanding of the relationship between policing responses and prosecution outcomes remains elusive in light of problematic data recording within police and CPS systems.

1.1 The research presented in this report was carried out by a team at the International Centre: Researching child sexual exploitation, trafficking and violence at the University of Bedfordshire. The work was funded by KPMG Foundation and Norfolk Constabulary, with support from The National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation. The work was funded from November 2015 to October 2017, with the core fieldwork occurring between June and October 2016.

1.2 The original overarching aim of the project was "to improve multi-agency work with police to prevent child sexual exploitation". The following six objectives sat underneath this aim:

1. Create evidence-based models of good practice promoting detection, disruption and prosecution of those who might, or who have, sexually exploited children.
2. Create flow diagrams that examine the links between different models of policing and local problem profiling, local disruption techniques and rates of arrest and prosecution of alleged offenders.
3. Produce an evidence-based 'prosecution outcome gaps analysis' identifying lack

of evidence in knowledge around effective offender identification, disruption and prosecution techniques in the field of CSE, with recommendations to the police service about how these gaps in knowledge may be filled.

4. Engage, where possible and appropriate, with young people who have worked with International Centre research and evaluation projects to gain a young person's perspective on recommended models of police practice in multi-agency initiatives to prevent, disrupt and prosecute abusers.

5. Undertake time limited, outcome driven focus groups with police to consult on findings from objectives 1 to 3 above.

6. Produce summary briefing papers disseminating findings across the 43 police forces, across all Local Safeguarding Children Boards in England and Wales and to children's charities that provide services to sexually exploited children.

1.3 Findings from objective 1, 2, 3 and 5 are addressed within the report. Engagement with children and young people (objective 4) will take place through consultation with representatives from young people's groups in the dissemination process addressing findings and considering next step'. Objective 6 will be undertaken following dissemination of this report and following consultation with lead police about the mapping of findings from this report against key Police Action Plans.

Most of the work relating to 1, 2 and 3 above was planned to arise from desk-based reviews of existing International Centre data (generated through previous research project findings; see https://www.beds.ac.uk/intcent/publications); and from interviews carried out with police during the period August 2015 to March 2016 as part of the International Centre's Alexi Project. The initial plan was to seek consent from police participants in the Alexi Project to undertake a secondary analysis of their existing interview materials. However, it became apparent that this approach would be insufficient to inform our research because of the fast-paced nature of changes to CSE teams in the intervening period before our research commenced. In light of this, we undertook additional primary research in the form of interviews across eight study sites, which have provided us with rich data on the ways in which CSE teams are structured to respond to the issue.

1.4 Given the findings of this early scoping work and, in particular, the challenges of police data (see Section 3) which were unlikely to allow us to make robust links between models of policing and recorded outcome data, we focused on identifying specific strengths and challenges of particular policing approaches to supporting victims of CSE.

Research context

1.5 The scale of CSE is currently unknown. The latest prevalence study on child abuse and neglect in the UK did not specifically measure CSE. Therefore, it is not possible to know how much of the child sexual abuse retrospectively reported in surveys of the general population (24.1% of 18 to 24 year olds; 16.5% of 11 to 17 year olds; and 1.2% of under 11 year olds as reported by a parent/guardian) reflects contexts of sexual exploitation (Radford et al., 2011).

1.6 What we *do* know is that reporting of CSA and CSE to the police has significantly increased since 2012/2013 (Kelly and Karsna, 2017; Bentley et al., 2017). The observed

increase may be due to better police recording standards, but it is also likely to be in response to a series of high profile CSA/E cases that have emerged since 2011 (Gray & Watt, 2013; HMIC, 2013). The increase in reporting of CSE has important implications for the police service, given that sexual offence cases are some of the most complex and lengthy to investigate (McKee, 2014).

1.7 In response to these cases and subsequent increased reporting, CSA, including CSE, a form of CSA (DfE, 2017), was named in 2015 as a national threat[1] in the Home Office's Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) (Home Office, 2015). Threats are defined within the SPR as:

> *Threats to national security, public safety, public order, and public confidence that are of such gravity as to be of national importance or can be countered effectively or efficiently only by national policing capabilities. PCCs and chief constables are expected to plan and prepare, together or in support of national arrangements, to address these threats.* (Home Office, 2015; p. 7)

1.8 CSA is identified in the SPR as a *"threat of national importance…* [of which] *its potential magnitude and impact necessitate a cohesive, consistent, national effort to ensure police and partners can safeguard children from harm"* (Home Office, 2015; p. 7). The CSA threat as defined in the SPR includes all offences that can be defined as CSA, including CSE. Both on- and off-line CSE offences that are linked to serious and organised crime are, in addition, captured under the existing serious and organised crime threat in the SPR.

1.9 The UK government issued a number of commitments to tackle CSE in the report *Tackling child sexual exploitation* (HM Government, 2015). One of these was to identify CSA as a national threat. This meant that it was prioritised by every police force in England and Wales. The then Home Secretary (Theresa May MP) wrote to all Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners urging them to respond to the lessons emerging from inquiries into CSE and the rolling Child Protection Inspections being carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC)[2].

1.10 Even prior to these developments, in 2012, the then Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation (CPAI)[3] initiated the development of a CSE Action Plan for the police. This was in response to both the Government's *Tackling CSE Action Plan* (DfE, 2009) and the thematic assessment of

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[1] Threats are assessed and selected from the National Security Strategy and other assessments of threat and risk. Issues become threats when they are deemed to affect multiple police force areas, or may require resources to be brought together from multiple police force areas in order to be countered efficiently and effectively. (Home Office, 2015)
[2] These inspections can be found on the HMIC website here: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/our-work/child-abuse-and-child-protection-issues/national-child-protection-inspection/
[3] The National Police Chiefs' Council replaced the ACPO on April 1, 2015 as the national coordinating body of operational policing (See NPCC website for more detail http://www.npcc.police.uk/About/History.aspx)

CSE by the ACPO and Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command published in *Out of Mind, Out of Sight* (CEOP, 2011). Subsequent developments also reflected learning arising from the Office of the Children's Commissioner's inquiry into CSE in gangs and groups (Berelowitz et al., 2012; 2013). The Action Plan was updated in 2014[4] and, according to the Government's *Tackling child sexual exploitation* report (HM Government, 2015), all police forces committed to its implementation[5]. In 2014, the NPCC) Lead for CPAI strengthened his commitment to supporting the implementation of the Action Plan across forces in England and Wales. This was done through the establishment of a network of 10 CSE regional coordinators and 10 CSE regional analysts (funded through the Police Transformation Fund) and later, in 2017, a network of 10 prevention officers commissioned through the Children's Society. The regional coordinators have been tasked with supporting forces to implement the Action Plan and the regional analysts have been working to draw together data on CSE from individual police forces to build regional intelligence pictures (problem profiles). This has informed a new national picture of CSE across England and Wales police forces and, as a result, for the first time, there is now a national picture of CSE based on the best available police-held data[6]. This shows that, for the period of November 2014 to October 2015, there were 7,373 CSE crimes recorded across police forces in England and Wales (NPCC, 2017)[7]. The data has numerous limitations, which will be described in detail in Section 3 and in Appendix A. It is important to note that the funding for the network of coordinators and funders will come to an end on the 31st of March, 2018.

1.11 This is a significant achievement in improving understanding of the scale of CSE identified by the police. What is unclear, however, is how far this picture, and indeed any of the accelerated policing activity in response to CSE across forces, has impacted on the detection, disruption and prosecution of CSE, and whether or not there are particular models of policing which are better than others at improving outcomes for young people. We believe that this studyis the first of its kind to document examples of current operating models of police responses to CSE and the first to attempt to assess whether there are particular models or features of policing that improve outcomes for young people.

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[4] The CSE Action Plan 2014-2016 can be found on the College of Policing website: https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/child-sexual-exploitation/cse-action-plan/
[5] The CSE Action Plan 2014-2016 remains active but has not been further updated because of a recent move by the NPCC Lead for CPAI (who now also has responsibility as the NPCC Lead for Violence and Public Protection), in conjunction with all NPCC leads, to merge all individual vulnerability portfolio action plans (such as Domestic Abuse, Missing, CSE and others), into one overarching 'Vulnerability Action Plan'. This is currently undergoing internal review within the police.
[6] See overview of these figures on the NPCC website: http://www.npcc.police.uk/documents/CSEProblemProfile.pdf
[7] This national data can be accessed on the National Police Chiefs' Council website at http://www.npcc.police.uk/documents/CSEProblemProfile.pdf

Research methodology

1.12 The original research proposal anticipated that the primary methodology would involve secondary analysis of data collected from police interviews in eight forces undertaken by the research team on another project running simultaneously within the International Centre, the Alexi Project. The Alexi Project is a three-year evaluation of a service provision model for victims of CSE[8]. However, on contacting the police participants who took part in the Alexi Project to gain their consent to use their interview material, it became clear that policing responses in their areas had evolved since the Alexi Project interviews took place. Some police participants shared anxieties about consenting to the use of material that they believed was out of date. Anecdotal evidence from regional CSE police coordinators and analysts (see 1.10 above) supported this, and inspection reports consistently highlight the need for on-going improvements and changes in this area of policing (HMIC, 2016a). This meant that the original plan to use secondary data from the Alexi Project would not be sufficient to understand the dynamic changes occurring within police forces at the present time. As a result, empirical research was undertaken with a sample of eight police forces to gather more up-to-date and accurate data.

1.13 This research engaged a multi-method approach that combined both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. This was broken into three stages as shown in Table 1.

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[8] See the Alexi Project website for further information: https://www.alexiproject.org.uk/

Table 1: Overview of the research stages

Stage	Overview of method
Literature review of academic and professional data pertaining to the identification, disruption and prosecution of CSE offenders	This drew on a recent review of all CSE policy and literature undertaken by members of the International Centre as well as additional targeted searches.
Primary research with police and a small number of voluntary sector stakeholders in eight forces	Telephone interviews were carried out with police representatives in the eight study forces. A small number were also carried out with voluntary sector stakeholders connected with those forces, to obtain external perspectives. Sampling approaches and characteristics of the forces and participants are described in more detail below.
Focus groups with police	In October 2016, a focus group was held with police representatives from our study forces. We invited representatives that had been previously interviewed to join a focus group to sharpen our understanding of the differences and similarities among forces' response to CSE. Of those invited to take part, six police officers from five of the eight study forces agreed to join the focus group.

Sampling

1.14 The research draws upon qualitative and quantitative data on CSE teams within eight police forces across England. A convenience sampling strategy was used to select the eight forces. These were drawn from a larger sample of 16 locales that formed the Alexi Project sample. The Alexi Project team had completed fieldwork in these eight forces at the time of data collection for the present study. A decision was taken *not* to conduct fieldwork in the remaining eight force areas, where Alexi Project data collection was underway, for fear of research fatigue. While not a random sample, the eight study forces that are the subject of this research are variable on a number of characteristics. These include: force size, authority type, population demographics, number of police divisions and collaborative arrangements with nearby forces, and there is variety in terms of level of socio-economic disadvantage and ethnic makeup of communities where they work.

Interviews with police

1.15 The research involved interviewing police staff from CSE teams across the eight selected study forces. In total, 30 police professionals participated in group and individual interviews; they represented a range of ranks including Police and Crime Commissioner, Detective Chief Inspector, Detective Inspector, Detective Sergeant and Police Constable, as well as civilian roles such as researchers and analysts.

1.16 Potential interviewees were identified via police contacts made during the Alexi Project. Using these initial contacts, potential interviewees were contacted by email and subsequent participants were identified using a snowballing method. Semi-structured interviews were carried out and varied between participants as discussions developed around different themes. Interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes producing a broad range of qualitative data.

Interviews with stakeholders

1.17 In addition to interviews with police, interviews were conducted with six stakeholders connected with five of the eight study forces. Our colleagues in the Alexi Project made first contact with them to ask their permission for us to invite them to take part in a further interview for the current study. These six agreed to a further interview.

1.18 These stakeholders were practitioners working with CSE-affected children and young people, and who came into contact with police through their work. They represented a range of specialist voluntary organisations. While six remains a small number of interviews, these interviews offered insights into how the police operate in practice, and provided an opportunity to check findings from the police interviews.

Police data

1.19 After obtaining permission from each of the eight study forces, the NPCC Lead for CPAI granted the research team access to individual force data on contact sexual offences considered to fit the definition of CSE and/or which had a CSE flag, where available (see 1.43 and 3.13 for a description of 'CSE flagging' and Appendix A for further detail on the nature of this data). This data had been collected by the regional CSE analysts (see paragraph 1.10 above) to inform the development of regional CSE problem profiles and covers the period from November 2014 to March 2015. We were also granted access to the regional problem profiles, also collated by the regional CSE analysts, to provide a regional context for individual forces that formed the sample for this study. A data sharing agreement between the NPCC Lead for CPAI and the International Centre team at the University of Bedfordshire was established, setting out the terms and conditions for the use and storage of the data and problem profiles by the research team. The data and problem profiles were securely shared with the research team, and included the following information:

- Home Office main and sub-crime codes for contact sexual offences considered to fit the definition of CSE and/or which had a CSE flag where available

- time and date of incident/offence (requested to contextualise the data in relation to the evolution and development of CSE teams during this period)
- status of investigation codes
- status of crime report codes
- CSE flagging (indicator of whether a CSE crime was flagged against a detected crime)
- dates of crime reporting and recording.

1.20 In the original research proposal, we anticipated that data on disruption and prosecutions could be obtained in order to match our data on CSE teams or structures and modes of delivery. This was to explore the influence of these different teams or structures on disruption and prosecution outcomes. However, disruption and prosecution data at force level is not available (this is further explored in Section 3 of the report). Instead, detection data only (rather than prosecution outcomes) was examined to understand the scale of detection among the study forces. The use of this data in this report is limited in recognition of the considerable problems CSE regional analysts encountered in obtaining it (See Appendix A). Caution must be exercised in the interpretation of the police data presented in this report.

Document analysis

1.21 Interviewees sometimes provided descriptive documents related to their CSE teams and policing protocols and strategies. Where these were made available, they were analysed to provide further context and cross-check information from interviews. In addition, recent HMIC Child Protection Inspection and Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) reports were obtained. These were analysed for contextual information for individual forces, as were unpublished regional problem profiles made available to us via the office of the NPCC Lead for CPAI.

Data Analysis

1.22 Qualitative interview data and documents were managed and analysed in NVivo 11, a qualitative data analysis software. Thematic analysis was undertaken to draw out broad common and divergent themes in addition to documenting personal experiences and reflections on the challenges and achievements offered by individual participants. This information, and the additional documents and inspection reports, helped the team to 'build' visual representations of force teams and CSE structures, which could then be shared with the participants and our project advisory group to check for accuracy.

1.23 The police data was analysed within SPSS (statistical analysis software) by force. The data was converted to CSE crimes per 100,000 population (as per standard crime reporting) to allow comparison across forces.

Ethics and governance

1.24 Ethical approval for this research was granted in May 2016 by the Institute for Applied Social Research Ethics and the University of Bedfordshire Ethics Committees.

1.25 Given the nature and sensitivity of police data, a primary concern for the research team was ensuring confidentiality of the data from the police forces that were the subject of this research. The following actions framed our approach:

- The research team will not disclose, divulge or communicate the data with any third party without the explicit permission of the NPCC Lead for CPAI (as established in the data sharing agreement), unless this data reveals evidence of practice that places children and young people at risk of significant harm. In this case, the concerns would be shared with the Police and University project leads (Chief Constable Simon Bailey and Professor Jenny Pearce) and appropriate channels pursued.
- The results and any public-facing publications and presentations produced using this data will not contain any personal data (including police force identifiers), as established in the data sharing agreement.
- Individual forces that are the subject of this research have been anonymised in this report and will remain anonymised in any future presentations, workshops and academic publications.
- Descriptive data and information about the forces (such as force size, regional location, population, etc.) are reported thematically instead of individually to reduce the possibility that forces will be identified.
- Team structures or models for the forces that are the subject of this research are presented generically, omitting reference to specific detail that would mean a force could be identified.

1.26 In respect of interviews with police and voluntary sector representatives, the interview material (recordings and transcripts) have also been treated with the strictest of confidence and identifying details (including force and agency) have been removed for anonymity. Where quotes are used within this report, a coding identification system has been used rather than names, force or role of participant. The coding scheme used to identify quotes include anonymised force IDs (the eight forces were named A-H) and numbers to refer to order and date of interview (for example F2-3 refers to Force F, second interview and date of the 3rd). The same conditions and process for the need to breach confidentiality were outlined as in 1.25 above.

1.27 All high-sensitivity data relating to this project (any document that would identify forces or participants) and the police data are held on the University of Bedfordshire's secure internal drives within password-protected electronic folders that only the main authors have access to. In addition, all documents and databases used to analyse the data are password protected.

1.28 Project staff were supervised through regular engagement with Professor Jenny Pearce, who herself was accountable to Dr Helen Beckett, the Director of the International Centre. A project advisory group was established at the beginning of the research to provide expert advice and guidance. The group was comprised of experts from policing and academia.

Literature review

1.29 CSE has become an issue of national concern, partly due to the news coverage in recent years of high-profile CSE trials. Subsequent national policy developments have impacted and influenced police responses to CSE (HM Government, 2015). Resources dedicated to tackling CSE have increased across the 43 police forces in England and Wales and many forces are currently implementing changes in working structures and procedures around identifying, disrupting and investigating CSE (HMIC, 2015c). However, evidence about what police interventions 'work' is entirely absent from the literature. No published research or evaluation is available that characterises the links between good practice and better outcomes for children, such as improved prosecution and conviction rates (Allnock, 2015).

1.30 This section of the report draws on the limited available evidence on what we know about police working structures and interventions to detect, disrupt and prosecute CSE.

CSE defined

1.31 The Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004 are the central pieces of legislation guiding child protection. According to the latter piece of legislation, Local Safeguarding Children Boards have a duty to bring agencies together to promote the welfare of children. The statutory guidance *Working together to safeguard children* details the safeguarding responsibilities of various agencies (DfE, 2015). Supplementary guidance supports local agencies in their application of the *Working Together* guidance in the specialist area of CSE (Beckett et al., 2017; DfE, 2017).

1.32 CSE is currently defined in the new Department for Education supplementary guidance in the following way:

> *Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.* (DfE, 2017; p.5)

CSE and policing responses

1.33 Policing responses to CSE detection, disruption and prosecution have changed rapidly in recent years. The events in Rotherham and other areas with high-profile CSE trials have hugely influenced policing agendas (Harris et al., 2015). There is some evidence to suggest that changes in intelligence gathering, information sharing, joint working and disruption activities within areas affected by high-profile CSE trials have led to increased prosecutions (Ofsted, 2014).

1.34 Police are continually learning from other forces that have driven large-scale investigations and are shifting from reactive responses to a focus on active targeting and early disruption of offenders (Harris et al., 2015). While the police are receiving more CSE-related referrals, successful prosecutions are still rare, with high rates of attrition recorded throughout the different stages of the criminal justice system (Allnock, 2015; Ofsted, 2014). This is not surprising given the potentially traumatic nature of victim engagement in the system (Beckett and Warrington, 2015; Beckett et al., 2016) and the evidential difficulties in sexual offences cases.

1.35 The remainder of this section reviews the research evidence on good practice in, and challenges to, police responses to CSE. The research evidence is sparse, however. Much of what we know emerges from practice evidence or inspection reports.

Multi-agency working and information sharing

1.36 Recent research with police officers suggests a desire for better engagement with other agencies around intelligence gathering and information sharing (Dodsworth and Larsson, 2014). However, research, such as that carried out by the Children's Commissioner for England, identified lack of information sharing between police and local authorities as a major barrier to safeguarding children from sexual exploitation (Berelowitz et al., 2013). The most recent triennial review of serious case reviews found that, among 66 serious case reviews analysed, only one did not mention information sharing as problematic, highlighting the continuing contribution of poor information sharing to cases which become the subject of such reviews (Sidebotham et al., 2016). The authors of the review cite on-going deep cultural barriers which are inhibiting information sharing, despite the fact that Data Protection Act 1998 and human rights laws are not justified barriers to data sharing. The CSE regional networks of coordinators and analysts have been tasked to work with forces to improve gateways and intelligence collection and it is hoped that this activity has gone some way towards improving information sharing amongst partners.

1.37 In recent years, local authorities have established, or are working to establish, multi-agency teams to better facilitate information sharing and improve safeguarding outcomes for vulnerable children. While various models of multi-agency working exist, local authorities are increasingly opting to establish co-located hubs of agencies, often referred to as Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASHs) (Home Office, 2014; Centre of Excellence for Information Sharing, undated). Other local authorities manage information sharing through 'single point of entry' teams that gather information from victims or people who want to report a concern. Such teams are not multi-agency, but provide a central mechanism for processing and disseminating information (Home Office, 2014). Local authorities with established MASHs report improved outcomes for children and families, and claim that multi-agency working leads to more accurate assessments of risk and need; more thorough and driven management of cases; better understanding between professionals; and greater efficiencies in processes and resources (Home Office, 2014; Crockett et al., 2013). Although there appears to be consensus around the benefits of MASHs and, more broadly, multi-agency working, no research has been identified that links this way of working to improved outcomes for children (Allnock, 2015; Crockett et al., 2013).

1.38 The recent Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI)[9] have noted some positive multi-agency working where information sharing is robust and working is joined-up (see for example, HMIP et al, 2016 for Oxfordshire). However, on-going problems remain in some areas, including:

- Failure of police and social work to include other agencies in strategy meetings;
- Strategy meetings only being called in complex cases;
- Poor administration of multi-agency sexual exploitation meetings and other multi-agency meetings, which delay interventions; and
- A lack of joint agency decision making 'at the front door'.

1.39 Sidebotham et al.'s (2016) triennial review of serious case reviews found that, despite different models of multi-agency working developing across localities, inter-professional dynamics, systems and processes could inhibit good joint working. For example, the authors of this review found that there were often subtle hierarchies present, whereby practitioners defer safeguarding responsibilities to social workers or do not challenge senior professionals.

Identification of CSE

1.40 Tackling CSE, and protecting, safeguarding and supporting children and young people who are at risk of, or who are experiencing, CSE, requires first an awareness of CSE. Research shows that knowledge and understanding of CSE by police has historically been poor (Berelowitz et al., 2013). Training provided to police officers on CSE has increased via College of Policing programmes, and forces have brought in bespoke training on CSE in an effort to improve police awareness of the issue. HMIC inspections on child protection carried out in the last few years[10] have noted improvements in awareness among police staff, but also highlight continued variability in awareness and understanding of CSE across forces and particular groups of police staff, which suggests more work is required to raise awareness of the issue (see HMIC Child Protection Inspection reports, 2015-2016).

1.41 Effective responses to CSE must not solely focus on young people at risk, but must also include proactive identification and pursuit of perpetrators (Beckett et al., 2014). Problem profiling – the practice of using research and a range of information sources to better understand emerging crime trends, priority locations or other identified high-risk issues – has become an important tool for identifying young people at risk of CSE and people at risk of offending (Harris et al., 2015; Christie, 2014; Allnock, 2015). A pan-London study of CSE responses found that boroughs which had developed problem

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[9] These inspections are carried out jointly by Ofsted, Care Quality Commission, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in local authorities, police, health, probation and youth offending services which are working together to identify, support and protect vulnerable children and young people.
[10] See HMIC website to access HMIC Child Protection Inspection reports published in the last three years: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/our-work/child-abuse-and-child-protection-issues/national-child-protection-inspection/

profiles reported significant benefits, including better commissioning of support services and targeted early interventions (Beckett et al., 2014).

1.42 Strong problem profiles incorporate intelligence from numerous sources, including police intelligence and information from partner services and organisations (Harris et al., 2015; Allnock, 2015). Dedicated police analysts can help process the large amounts of data required for an effective problem profile (Christie, 2014; Home Office, 2014; Jago et al., 2011). Information sharing arrangements can also support effective problem profiling, along with ensuring police have established a route through which people can feed soft intelligence (Harris et al., 2015). The JTAI inspection letters note positive outcomes as a result of profiling, such as the targeted training of hotel staff, taxi and bus drivers, operators of CCTV and other professionals to recognise CSE (see HMIP et al, 2016 for Croydon). Sophisticated profiling has been noted to have improved senior leaders' ability to assess the nature and extent of CSE risk across the force area and ensure that multi-agency resources are commissioned and targeted appropriately (see HMIP et al, 2016 for Liverpool). However, the JTAI letters also note that profiling remains underdeveloped in some areas (See HMIP et al, 2016 for Tyneside).

1.43 Establishing good local problem profiles relies on accurate data held on police systems. The Home Office, to date, does not have a crime code for CSE. To address this and improve better detection of CSE, police forces have been increasing their use of 'flagging systems' that allow a CSE-related crime to be identified as such. Barnardo's Scotland produced a resource pack for practitioners and specifically name 'CSE flagging' as one of seven core features of effective local policing of CSE (Barnardo's Scotland, 2014). Further, in recognition of the differences between the legislative and policy definitions of CSE, the government has made it mandatory from April 2016 for police forces to flag all police recorded offences that meet the policy definition (Beckett et al., 2017).

1.44 Data recording and CSE flagging have been identified as problematic in some force areas in England and Wales. The most recent HMIC inspection report on missing children found continued inconsistent use of flags (HMIC, 2016a). Inspectors reported that while over half of forces used flags – and some forces could identify when a child was at risk of CSE – these flags are used inconsistently. Some force IT systems were found to be incapable of allowing any flagging at all. JTAI inspection letters also indicate significant variability in force development of problem profiling; some forces demonstrate sophistication in profiling, which has notably improved senior leaders' knowledge of local CSE patterns, however, in other forces, problem profiles remain weak and underdeveloped. Problem profiling at the regional level has been carried out for the first time under the auspices of the NPCC Lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation, in an attempt to understand regional patterns of CSE (Regional problem profiles, unpublished). These have resulted in a new national picture of CSE.

Disruption of perpetrators

1.45 The ideal approach for tackling CSE is a proactive investigation bringing the greatest evidential opportunity to bring a prosecution for CSE (Jago & Pearce, 2008). However, the complexity of CSE cases means that gathering evidence is not always

straightforward and, as Jago & Pearce note, coercive relationships are often difficult to dislodge without alternative methods to disrupt the abusive contexts. The focus of police on victims, however, has often been at the expense of targeting perpetrators. Recommendations from inspections, guidance and research highlight the importance of focusing on perpetrators (Beckett et al., 2017; DfE, 2017; Jago & Pearce, 2008; Jago et al., 2011) and one way of doing this is through the proactive use of disruption methods to prevent perpetrators from abusing young people via CSE.

1.46 Police forces have a range of measures available for disrupting perpetrator-victim contact, from closing down potential locations of abuse to placing controls on suspect behaviour in the absence of a criminal prosecution. Some areas appear to be using deterrence measures well (see HMIP et al, 2016 for Oxfordshire) whereas other areas have under-developed disruption plans, leading to the removal of the victim from harm without any accompanying measures to address what caused or created harmful environments (see HMIP et al, 2016 for Central Bedfordshire). Disruption measures include the use of civil and/or criminal orders such as Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs), sexual risk orders and closure notices. Disruption also involves activities such as active patrolling in 'hot spot' areas, increasing the safety of risky locations (for example, improving lighting and CCTV) and investigating other forms of criminality associated with CSE (Beckett et al.., 2017; DfE, 2017; Firmin et al., 2016; Jago & Pearce, 2008). Partner agencies also have a role to play in disruption, for example, housing enforcement and licensing agencies have taken active roles in entering properties and providing intelligence to the police (Beckett et al., 2017; DfE, 2017; Jago & Pearce, 2008).

1.47 However many police forces are not using their disruption powers to full effect (HMIC 2015b). In 2014, Ofsted conducted a thematic inspection of eight local authorities and found that only two were making full use of policing powers to disrupt CSE perpetrators (Ofsted, 2014). A study mapping CSE responses in London revealed that disruption measures were being used in only half of London boroughs (Beckett et al., 2014).

1.48 Obtaining accurate and reliable police-recorded data on use of disruption techniques, and their subsequent impact on CSE crimes, is challenging – if at all possible. Informal conversations with police analysts and police officers working with CSE teams indicate that this data, if it is held at all, is likely to be in qualitative format. Certainly, data on some techniques may be more readily available than others, but this is likely to vary from force to force. This is, importantly, an area for future research.

Investigation

1.49 HMIC recently found that over a third (38%) of child protection police investigations were self-assessed (by forces) as inadequate. HMIC also suggests that, in comparison with other policing areas such as preventing crime and reducing offending (where 39 out of 43 forces have been rated as good, one as outstanding and only three as needing improvement), police investigations of child protection appear to be weaker overall. Inspectors recognised that where child protection matters are clear-cut, policing in this area is invariably good. However, if a case was not immediately identified as one of child protection (for example, a domestic violence case, a missing child or a child involved in

offending), responses are weaker and mixed. Some officers understand the risk and vulnerabilities around the child, but others do not (HMIC, 2015b). Investigations are often superficial and simple activities such as taking photographs at the incident scene, analysing mobile phone data, or referring children to medical professionals or forensic examiners were often not undertaken (HMIC, 2015b). Young people – and their parents or carers – are not consistently consulted about special measures designed to support young people through the criminal justice process (HMIC, 2012; Allnock, 2015; Beckett & Warrington, 2015).

1.50 HMIC's findings on CSE-specific investigations were mixed. Persistent problems include insufficient enquiries after missing episodes and the perception that abused girls were making 'lifestyle choices' (HMIC, 2015b). Practice was better in areas where a high-profile CSE case had taken place and police learnt from past mistakes (HMIC, 2015b; HMIP, HMIC, CQC & Ofsted, 2016, Oxfordshire). However, even where practice improved within a force, learning was not always transferred across the whole force area (HMIC, 2015b). Investigations led by specialist teams were generally of higher quality than those led by non-specialist teams (HMIC, 2015b).

1.51 In a report on online CSE, HMIC identified the following as characteristics of a good investigation:

- Promptly securing evidence, while being sensitive to the needs of the child;
- Addressing the safeguarding needs of the child throughout the investigation;
- Appropriate and timely work with partner agencies, including early work with CPS;
- Informing children and families of case progress;
- Decision making in the best interests of the child (HMIC 2015d).

1.52 Policies that prioritise safeguarding and appropriate responses to vulnerabilities can help young people disclose abuse and lead to better evidence collection (Beckett and Warrington, 2015). Safeguarding and investigations are complementary practices, and need not be at odds with each other (Beckett and Warrington, 2015; Beckett et al., 2017; DfE, 2017). In the investigations assessed as 'good' by HMIC, police understood the investigation as a child protection matter from the beginning (HMIC, 2015b).

1.53 Sensitive and empathetic approaches to interviewing victims can also improve young people's experiences (Beckett et al., 2016), potentially giving the young person a better opportunity to disclose information important for the investigation. However, research suggests that police are inconsistently implementing what is known to be good practice around Achieving Best Evidence (ABE)[11] interviews, specifically in the areas of rapport building, reducing anxiety, questioning styles, and allowing young people to have a supporter present during the interview (Beckett and Warrington, 2015). JTAIs identified in one area that multiple police teams become involved in CSE cases, meaning that

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[11] Achieving Best Evidence is good practice guidance in interviewing witnesses, including victims, to enable them to give their best evidence in criminal proceedings See https://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/docs/best_evidence_in_criminal_proceedings.pdf

children are interviewed by multiple officers, multiple times, which has been noted to undermine police engagement with young people and inhibit disclosures (see HMIP, HMIC, CQC & Ofsted, 2016, Croydon).

1.54 Police investigations that focus on gathering evidence beyond victim testimony may also positively affect future prosecutions. In the 2010 criminal trials for CSE cases in Derby, prosecutors relied on intelligence gathered by the police during covert surveillance of suspects (House of Commons, 2013). Leading up to the Oxford CSE trial in 2013, police used alternative investigatory methods such as covert surveillance, telephone monitoring and informants to identify an organised gang of offenders (House of Commons, 2013). From this initial work, police were then able to identify many of the gang's victims by accessing and pooling together health, social care and school records.

CSE prosecutions

1.55 Court records and reports show that perpetrators of CSE have been convicted under a range of offences in the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Perpetrators have also been convicted under the Protection of Children Act 1978 for offences relating to indecent images of children, and under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. However, researchers are unable to determine the number of CSE convictions across England and Wales due to the scarcity of available figures, the challenges of determining whether a child sexual abuse conviction involves CSE and the difficulties of connecting Crown Court convictions to a particular police force.

1.56 Information on the number of CSE convictions is not readily available (HMIC, 2015b). Police do not receive intelligence about the majority of CSE-related crimes, and most cases are never reported (Beckett and Warrington, 2015). Inconsistent approaches to record keeping between and within forces compound this problem (Ofsted, 2014).

1.57 Published offence data for 2015/16 shows an increase in all sexual offence categories compared to 2014/15. According to recent police statistics, there were 37,778 recorded sexual offences against children aged 16 and under in 2015/2016, a rate of 36.3 sexual offences per 10,000 children under 16 and a 23% increase from 2014/2015. Police forces in England provided information on the number of sexual offences against children under 18 in response to a Freedom of Information request. There were 47,045 offences, a rate of 40.3 sexual offences per 10,000 children under 18. The most notable year on year changes include:

- A 30% increase in rape of a male under 13 (from 1,268 to 1,648);
- Sexual activity involving a child under 16 has increased by 32% (from 8,051 to 10,661);
- A 49% increase in sexual grooming (from 652 to 971);
- Abuse of children under 18 years old through sexual exploitation has increased by 56% (from 347 to 541). (Bentley et al., 2017)

1.58 The CPS reported that CSA offence prosecutions completed in 2015-2016 rose from 5,387 to 6,217. This is a rise of 830 (15.4%) and the highest volume ever recorded. Successful outcomes for CSA prosecutions rose from 3,975 to 4,643, also the highest

volume ever recorded (a rise of 16.8%). The conviction rate rose from 73.8% in 2014-2015 to 74.7% in 2015-2016 (CPS, 2016). These figures do not include a breakdown on the number of convictions for specific CSA offences. Even with such a breakdown, researchers would not be able to determine the number of CSE convictions as they are not clearly recorded as such.

1.59 Similar problems arise when trying to connect successful CSE convictions to police forces. Researchers can check sentencing records from Crown Courts that operate within a police force area. However, Crown Courts sometimes hear cases from outside the area where they are located; this is due to court capacity or the suitability of judges to adjudicate CSE cases. It is therefore possible that a Crown Court conviction did not result from the corresponding police force's investigation or that the records from a Crown Court do not capture all the successful investigations by the corresponding police force.

Summary

1.60 This section has introduced the research and the broader context within which it is set, detailed the methodological approach and provided a brief overview of the literature. The literature is sparse in relation to research and/or evaluation of 'what works' in policing responses to CSE. Most of what is known about police responses emerges from inspections, which, while informative, have specific objectives in mind which differ from the questions that our research seeks to ask. Our searches yielded no studies that have aimed to document policing responses to CSE and even inspection reports provide little insight into how CSE responses are structured. This study, therefore, is unique in its efforts to capture these responses visually and descriptively. The findings also offer rich insight into the practice aligned to policing in this area and challenges encountered across policing activity. As this introduction highlights, changes to the original aims and objectives had to be made in light of our findings about limitations to police data on CSE. This has meant that we were unable to make explicit links between different models and prosecution outcomes. Until police data recording practices improve, assessments of effective and ineffective policing models will remain an elusive ambition.

Section 2 Findings: CSE policing response models

Key Messages

- This is the first time that 'models' of how police respond to CSE have been developed.
- Because there is poor data available on disruption and prosecution of CSE cases, it is not possible to map models to outcomes. However, it is possible to highlight specific features that are felt to be essential to sustaining good victim-centred practice.
- Models of police structures developed to respond to CSE differ among forces, and these structures are fluid and evolving.
- Four general models of CSE response were found among the eight study forces.
- Responsibility for victim support within these models varies among forces. This research shows three approaches: separate victim support; integrated victim support and dispersed victim support.
- Size of force, resourcing for CSE and broader policing philosophy all appear to impact on the models observed.
- Forces which are at the early stages of developing their CSE response may need CSE specialist teams to drive cultural change.
- Where there is an 'omni-competent' model with a specialist intelligence team, and good communication between staff members in the force and between the force and external partner agencies, inspection results are likely to be more positive
- The separation of functions raises questions about communication across teams in relation to sharing intelligence and supporting young people. We had examples of officers within the same force not knowing what disruption is going on within the force, or whether and how information is being shared with multi-agency partners. This is more apparent where work with victims of CSE and investigation is separated.
- Successful victim support requires coordination between those responsible for training of officers on CSE; those delivering victim support; and those working on disruption of offenders and investigation of alleged offences. If all this work is the responsibility of one small team, information sharing between staff may be enhanced but workload pressures may exceed staff capacity.

2.1 This section of the report presents four composite models which exemplify key structures and processes for responding to CSE observed in the eight police forces involved in this study. These models were developed using data from interviews with members of the CSE teams or individuals with CSE responsibility in each of the eight forces. It is important to emphasise that the structure and operation of CSE teams are, at the present time, very fluid and these structures represent those that were in place at the time of data collection (July to October 2016).

2.2 Visual representations of the structures and processes used in each of the eight forces were developed. Following this process, the eight models were compared and contrasted and commonalities and differences extracted. Particular focus was placed on the location of victim support work within each policing response. From this process, four composite models were created to illustrate the major approaches evident in the study forces. The composite models have been named to highlight the ways in which victim support is integrated into the overall police response. These are descriptive terms only, created with no *a priori* judgments made about the effectiveness or appropriateness of the model:

1) Model 1 – Integrated specialist CSE teams: Victim support integrated with investigative functions
2) Model 2 – Victim-focused specialist CSE team: Victim support separate from investigative functions
3) Model 3 – Intelligence-focused specialist CSE team: Dispersed victim support
4) Model 4 – No specialist CSE team: Dispersed victim support

2.3 Table 2 presents each of the eight forces (second column) matched to the model that best characterises them.

Table 2: Study forces' models of CSE response

Model	Force characterised by each model
Model 1	Forces A, D, E, F, H
Model 2	Force B
Model 3	Force C
Model 4	Force G

2.4 The remainder of this section is primarily descriptive, detailing the nature and structure of the CSE response with particular focus on where victim support is located in relation to CSE teams. We also integrate recent inspection judgments of the study forces to provide wider context of their effectiveness. HMIC judges all police forces on their overall effectiveness in four areas: crime prevention, crime investigation, protecting vulnerable people, and serious and organised crime. All forces are graded as 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' across these four areas,

which then inform the overall effectiveness grade. These judgments are only one measure to assess the effectiveness of force response, so readers should use caution in interpreting these.

2.5 At the end of this section, we consider some themes that appear to impact on the structure of CSE teams and offer some thoughts on the observed models.

Model 1 Integrated specialist CSE teams: Victim support integrated with investigative functions

2.6 Model 1 (seen in the figure 'Model 1' below) depicts a CSE response that can best be described as a single, specialised unit that holds force responsibility for CSE investigation, disruption and supporting young people.

Model 1: Victim-focused specialist CSE team: Victim support separate from investigative functions
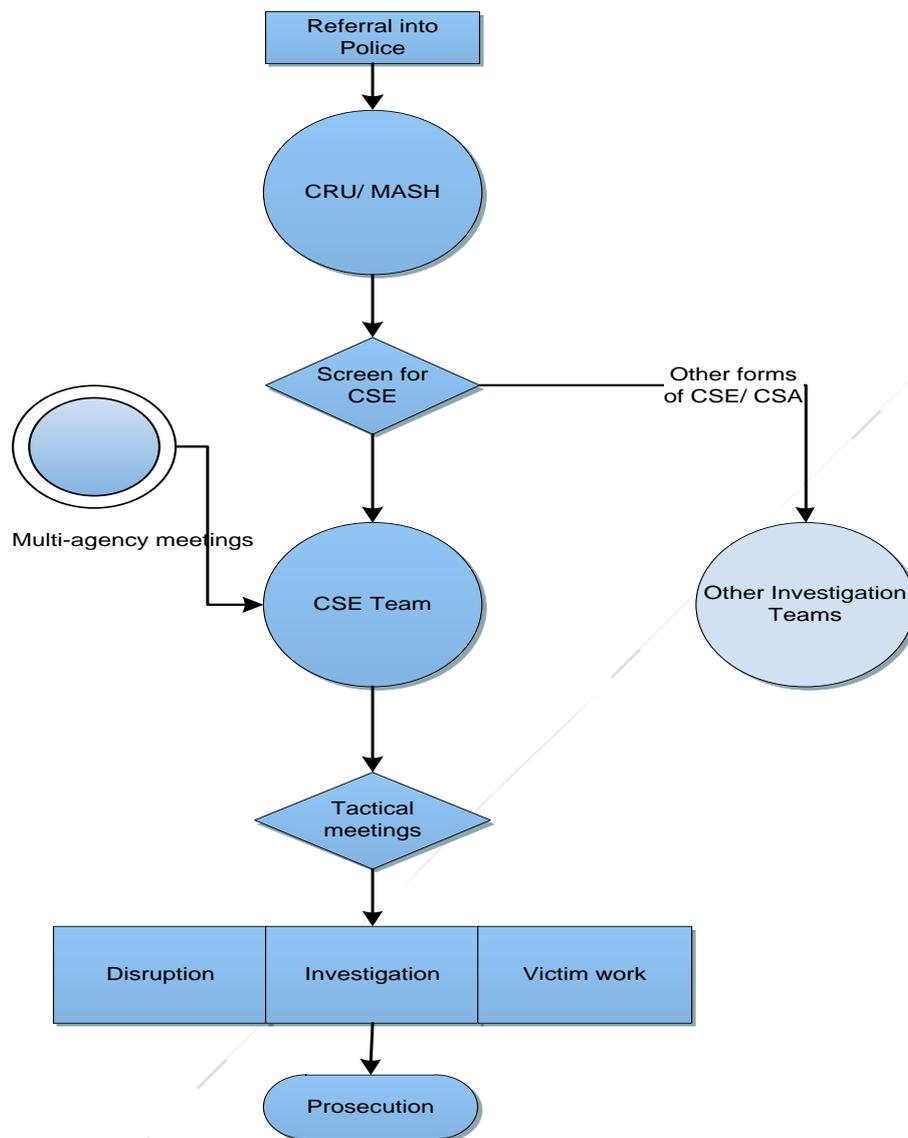
2.7 Forces E and F – two of the smallest forces in the sample, serving populations of under 1 million – are characterised by this model. Both of these forces have recently established CSE teams (since 2014). These will be referred to as 'Single integrated specialist CSE teams'.

2.8 Forces A, D and H – three of the larger forces within the sample, serving populations of over 1 million – are also characterised by this model, but show some variations from Forces E and F. Forces A, D and H, by virtue of their large size, have multiple divisions across the force area, which have implications for the CSE teams. These are described below.

2.9 We identified three variations of model 1:

1) A single integrated specialist CSE team (Forces E and F): This describes one single, specialised unit that holds force responsibility for CSE investigation, disruption and supporting young people, found within single division forces.
2) A division-wide integrated specialist CSE team (Force A): This describes one single, specialised unit that holds force responsibility for CSE investigation, disruption and supporting young people, found within multiple-division forces.
3) Divisional specialist CSE teams (Forces D and H): This describes multiple-division forces that have established CSE teams in each division. The teams may mirror each other in staffing and functions, but may develop uniquely in relation to local context (for example. relationships with partners).

Model one, variation 1: Single integrated specialist CSE teams

2.10 Forces E and F each have a single integrated specialist CSE team with force-wide responsibility. The small sizes of these forces mean that they are not split by multiple divisions. The CSE teams in both study forces were (or were soon to be) responsible for managing all elements of the CSE response, including investigation, disruption and supporting young people, with support from other teams where relevant. One of the two forces characterised by Model 1 has been judged as 'good' and the other as either 'requiring improvement' or 'inadequate' in terms of overall effectiveness. In respect of protecting vulnerable people, both forces were judged as either requiring improvement or inadequate.[12]

2.11 At the point of data collection, respondents in Force E described their CSE approach as 'intelligence-led' and 'victim-focused'. They were not investigating CSE because, at the time, they lacked the resources and capacity to do so. The team was staffed by a Detective Sergeant (DS), two Detective Constables (DCs), a third DC (being seconded imminently), an intelligence officer and a researcher, all based in the same location, in which they were also co-located with the Missing Person's Unit. The respondents explained that the team was due to expand in order to enhance their investigative capacity, which illustrates the fast-paced changes occurring within forces in relation to their CSE responses:

> *We don't have an investigative arm, so we are very victim focused and that's just because of the lack of resources, but come the end of September, I'm getting six more DCs and the team is growing quite considerably with the aim that we will deal with victims but we will also have an opportunity to deal with the perpetrators. (E5-2)*[13]

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[12] Exact judgements are withheld to preserve anonymity of the eight study forces.
[13] These codes are identifiers for the anonymised forces – a capital letter to represent the Force ID (see Table 3) and the numbers that follow represent our system for identifying the order of interviews.

2.12 The CSE team in Force F, at the point of data collection, was carrying out investigation, disruption and the support of young people. It was staffed by two DSs and six DCs, with a further two DCs being recruited to expand their capacity in relation to online offences. The team did not have an analyst and respondents agreed that they would benefit from having one embedded in the team. They did have access to an analyst who works across other teams and would assist where possible, but this work needed to fit around the analyst's many other commitments.

Model 1, variation 2: Division-wide integrated specialist CSE team

2.13 While Force A, like Forces E and F, has a single integrated specialist CSE team, it differs because this team sits centrally above the two divisions that divide the force area (Forces E and F are not split by divisions). Force A has a population of over 1 million (though this is not the largest force in the study sample). It has received a HMIC grading of 'good' in terms of both overall effectiveness and protecting vulnerable people. This force was one of the earliest to set up its CSE response (prior to 2008), prompted in reaction to a local case. The CSE team sits within the force headquarters and has two 'arms': one which is dedicated to online CSE and the other to offline CSE. This force does not have a dedicated missing team, but each division has a missing persons coordinator who feeds information into the centralised CSE team. The staff responsible for missing children are 'owned' organisationally by the CSE team but operationally, they sit under divisional command. The perceived benefit of this centralised model is described here by one of the respondents:

> *There are missing person liaison officers and various other roles and so whilst we are at the centre and we cover force-wide responses to CSE, that allows us to escalate cases so that there's that link there, just in terms of how the model works for identifying cases and those teams sit on the CSE tasking process. (A1-2)*

2.14 The 'offline' team includes one DS and eight DCs. These DCs are all accredited at Level 2 by the Specialist Child Abuse Investigation Development Programme. The Paedophile Online Investigation Teamis comprised of two DSs, nine DCs and one intelligence officer. This team recently expanded, and, at the time of interviews, was anticipating a further three investigative support assistants.

Model 1, variation 3: Divisional specialist CSE teams

2.15 Forces D and H are also characterised by Model 1, however, instead of one team they have two or more CSE teams within the force divisions. Both forces have been graded by HMIC as 'good' or better on both overall effectiveness and protecting vulnerable people. These are two of the largest forces in the study sample.

2.16 Force D has two divisions, with two CSE teams: one located in each division. The teams in both divisions mirror each other in terms of staff and response, responsible for CSE, adult exploitation and modern day slavery. Each divisional CSE team is comprised of three further teams with different responsibilities: an investigation team, a victim team and an intelligence team.

2.17 A Detective chief inspector (DCI) who sits under the force's Protecting Vulnerable People Unit oversees both of the CSE teams. Each CSE team is headed up by a DI. The investigation teams are comprised of six DSs (three per team) and 27 DCs (14 and 13 respectively). The victim teams are comprised of two DSs (1 DS per team), eight DCs (four per team) and representatives from children's and adult social care and voluntary agencies are embedded in these teams. The intelligence teams are comprised of two DSs (one per team), two analysts (one per team), two researchers (one per team) and four DCs (two per team).

2.18 Force H is comprised of three regional CSE teams sitting within three force divisions. While the three largely have the same functions, their staffing composition is more mixed than in Force D. A range of partner agency staff is embedded within these teams. One of the three regional teams is comprised of a DI overseeing the team, a DS, seven DCs and one missing coordinator (this force does not have a dedicated missing team). Within the team, there is a second missing coordinator from the Council (who is embedded in the team), as are three social workers, two assistant social workers, an education worker, a sexual health nurse and NGO staff. The second of the three teams is comprised of a DS, seven DCs, a missing coordinator, three social workers, a CSE nurse, NGO staff and a Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation worker. The third team is comprised of a DS, seven DCs and a missing coordinator. One of the respondents in this force feels that having specialised, divisional-based CSE teams is important:

> *I think the idea of having a divisional-based team is a really good idea, because it is a very specialist area of policing. (H8-1)*

Model 2 Victim-focused specialist CSE team: Victim support separate from investigative functions

2.19 Model 2 below characterises Force B. Unlike Model 1, this Model separates investigation, disruption and victim support. This force is one of the largest of the eight, and was graded as 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' in relation to 'protecting vulnerable people' and for overall effectiveness.

The CSE team

2.20 The CSE team in Force B is a specialised team responsible for all victim support work. The team receives intelligence from the centralised MASH/CRU and from community / partner agencies submitted on bespoke community partnership forms. Cases are identified through multi-agency strategy meetings, following which the CSE team takes on the support aspect of the case. Part of this work includes deployment of disruption measures to protect a child or young person and support of young people through the investigation process. The team is also responsible for raising awareness of CSE within the force and delivering in-house CSE training. This team is made up of one DI, one DS, two DCs, five PCs and three Police Staff Investigators (PSIs).

2.21 The unique aspect of the CSE response in this force is the separation of victim work from investigation. Investigators within three regional child abuse units carry out the investigations, with limited contact with victims. The CSE team provides the link from the victim to the investigation teams.

Model 2: Victim-focused specialist CSE team: Victim support separate from investigative functions
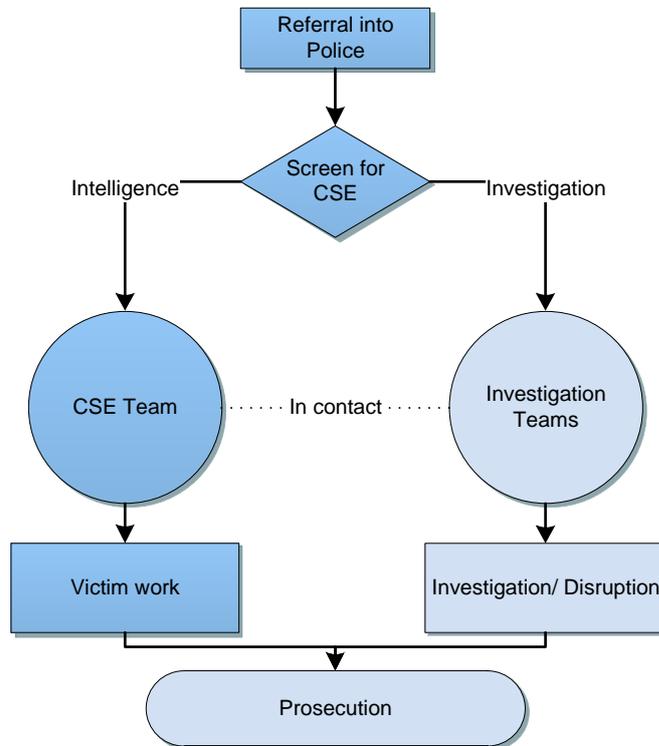
Model 3 Intelligence-focused specialist CSE team: Dispersed victim support

2.22 Force C is characterised by Model 3.Investigations and victim support occur across existing policing structures rather than within a specialised CSE structure. The CSE team is responsible for awareness-raising, chairing multi-agency CSE meetings and tasking disruption activity. It is the smallest of the eight study forces, serving a population of under one million, graded by HMIC as good or better on 'protecting vulnerable people' and good or better on 'overall effectiveness' (HMIC, 2017). It is also one of the forces who more recently (since 2014) developed its response to CSE.
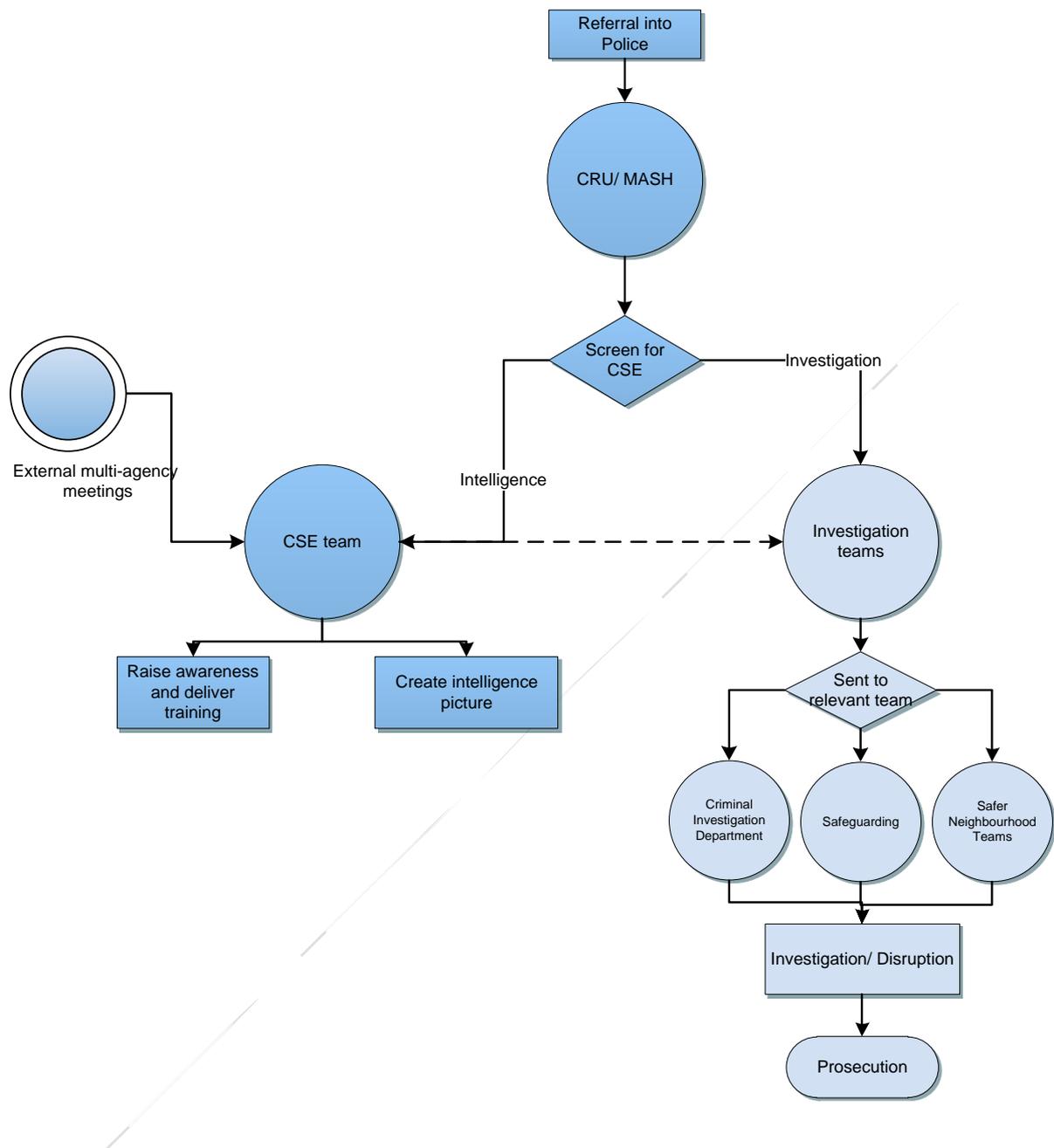
CSE team

2.23 The CSE team in Force C was established within a broader policing strategy of 'omni-competence', referring to an approach that requires all officers to have the skills and knowledge to deal with all matters (including CSE). This model sits in contrast to a model of specialisation and compartmentalisation (Heslop, 2010).[14] The CSE team in this force was established in response to a multi-agency audit that found an imbalanced response to CSE, with these cases spread across a number of different commands.

2.24 The role of the CSE team in this force is to create the problem profile and understand risk, using intelligence that is fed through from the centralised hub. As such it employs a researcher specifically for this role. Intelligence held by the CSE team is deployed to the investigative teams, who remain in close contact with the CSE team. The CSE team also has responsibility for raising awareness and delivering training on CSE across the force. In Force C, the CSE team is small, comprised of only a DS, a researcher, two administrative assistants and two missing coordinators.

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[14] Keynote speech delivered by Chair, Jan Berry, at the 2007 Police Federation Annual Conference. It has been argued that this has led to a 'deskilling' of the police force. (Cited in Heslop, 2010)

Model 3: Intelligence-focused specialist CSE team: Dispersed victim support

Referral into Police

CRU/ MASH

Screen for CSE

Investigation

Intelligence

External multi-agency meetings

CSE team

Investigation teams

Raise awareness and deliver training

Create intelligence picture

Sent to relevant team

Criminal Investigation Department

Safeguarding

Safer Neighbourhood Teams

Investigation/ Disruption

Prosecution

Model 4 No specialist CSE team: Dispersed victim support

2.25 The remaining force can be characterised by Model 4. This force has no named specialist CSE unit. Instead, the CSE response, including support of victims, is dispersed throughout regional Safeguarding Units.

2.26 This force is one of the largest in the study sample, and is graded by HMIC as less than 'good' at overall effectiveness and protecting vulnerable people. Their response to CSE is carried out through Safeguarding Units responsible for child protection, domestic violence and serious sexual offences. This force is also underpinned by a model of 'omni-competence' (as is Force 3 – Model 3) where investigating officers are expected to be able to respond to any kind of safeguarding case. The force has developed a special CSE role, held by an officer that is more experienced in CSE and can be allocated to officers to assist with investigations and supporting victims:
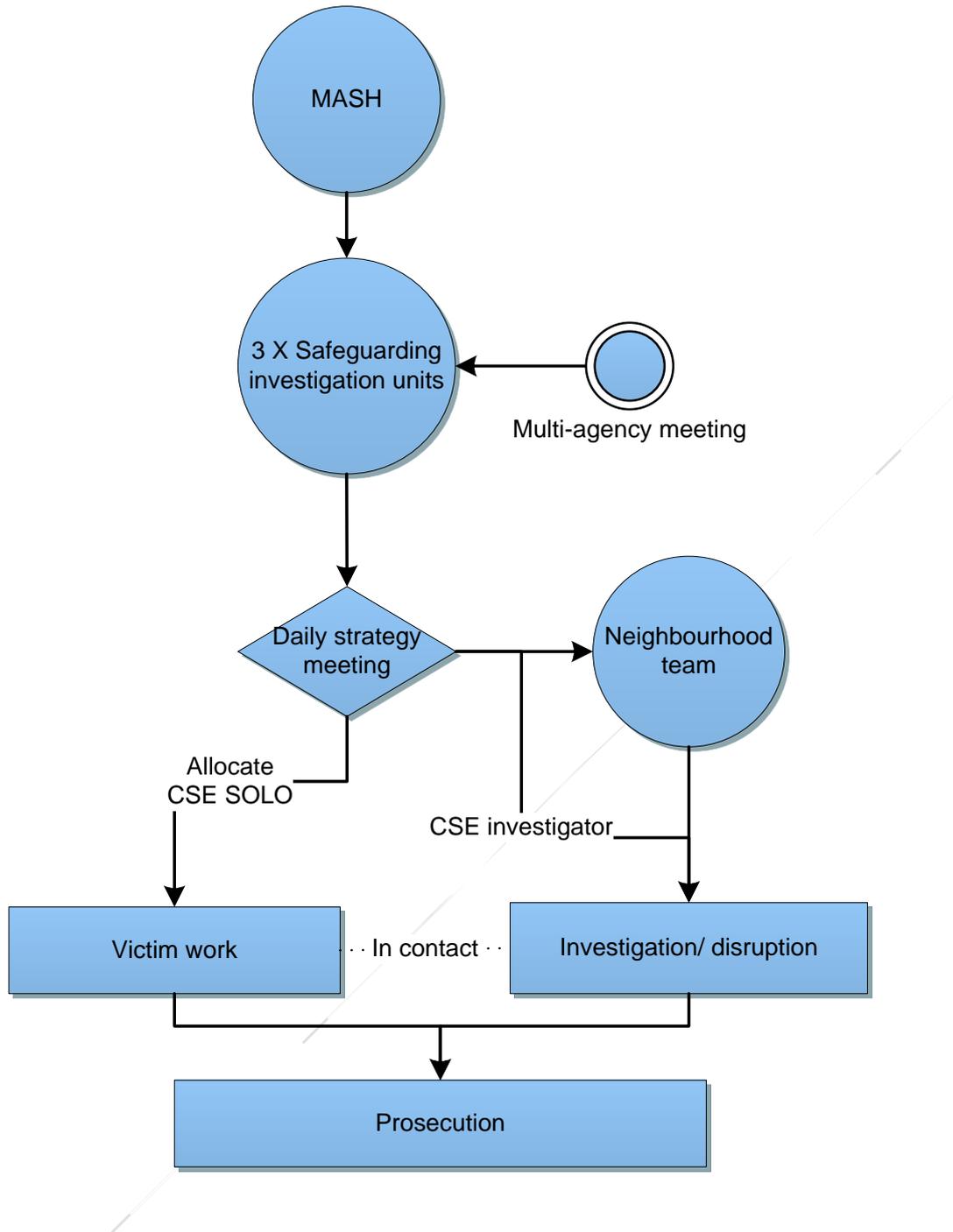
> *The CSE solo will be allocated to build a relationship of trust with that particular victim to enable them, perhaps at a later stage, they will say 'actually yes now I'm happy to talk to you and provide an ABE'.* (G7-1)

2.27 In this force, the broader safeguarding unit is comprised of three divisional teams. Given the force approach of omni-competence, where there is an expectation that all investigating officers are responding to CSE, the staff composition taking on CSE cases is, unsurprisingly, much larger than those forces that have designated CSE teams. There is only one analyst designated to work across these divisions, which some respondents felt was insufficient:

> *The MARACs[15] have got quite a big development team set up behind them and I put to them that they're asking for a lot of stats and a lot of analysis… You've got to invest in it and if you're looking at a comparative, would be the MARACs. I'd try to set up our CSE processes a bit similar to MARACs, so there's a multi-agency risk assessment form that you refer into at essential points that we meet together as multi-agencies to discuss.* (G7-1)

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[15] A MARAC is a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference. These are risk management meetings where professionals share information about high risk cases of domestic violence and abuse.

Model 4: No specialist CSE team: Dispersed victim support

MASH

3 X Safeguarding investigation units

Multi-agency meeting

Daily strategy meeting

Neighbourhood team

Allocate CSE SOLO

CSE investigator

Victim work

· · In contact · ·

Investigation/ disruption

Prosecution

Summary and discussion

2.28 This section of the report described four composite 'models' of a CSE response in the eight study forces. These models help to orient the reader to some of the key features of that response, but, as can be seen above, there are subtle variations within models.

2.29 The lack of police data on disruption and prosecutions means, for reasons explained in Section 2, that it is not possible to identify 'good' or 'poor' outcomes that can be linked explicitly to a particular model. The discussion below identifies some of the learning from this study about why different models might have developed and what influences their impact.

Size of force

2.30 The three smallest forces with only single divisions reflect the simplest structures characterised by single CSE teams (Models 1 and 3).

2.31 The largest forces have more complex structures with larger teams in place. There are, however, important differences among these larger forces, with CSE responses reflecting: 1) single, centralised teams working across divisions; 2) divisionally-based, multiple CSE teams; and 3) an omni-competent model with no specialist CSE team.

CSE response stage of development

2.32 Size of force is only one of the influential drivers of CSE response structures. Stage of development may also play a role in the way these responses manifested in the interviews at the time of data collection. The point in time at which CSE teams or responses were established in the eight study forces varies, with two having been set up prior to 2010, three established only in 2014, and the remaining three set up between 2011 and 2013. Where participants told us they were imminently expanding capacity and staff, they were part of CSE teams or responses that were set up within the last five years. It is likely, that as these forces continue to expand, grow their capabilities and learn from other forces, their models will also change shape.

Resourcing

2.33 Resourcing was also cited as a key driver of the current set-up by some participants in the study. In the Model 2 force, characterised by a split in the victim support and investigative functions, respondents across both teams (the CSE specialist victim team and the investigation team) reported that resourcing was currently shaping the response. The CSE victim team is responsible not just for victim support but also for disruption. According to a participant on the victim team, this is because the investigators lack the resources (time, money) to engage in disruption. A participant from the investigation team also considered that combining specialist victim support with investigative functions might result in enhanced investigations, but at the time of interview, these functions were separate because of resourcing issues.

Supporting young people and working with victims

2.34 Approaches to working with victims showed some variation (with more detail to emerge in Section 4 of this report). Force B (Model 2) and Force D (Model 4) showed some separation of victim support and investigative functions, unlike all the other forces in the study. The key difference between these two is that the Force B has complete separation of victim work and investigation. The investigators do not come into contact at all with young people, although participants said that a link is maintained between these two functions. In Force D, each of the two divisional CSE teams has a 'victim team', but these sit within the overarching CSE team alongside the 'investigation' and 'intelligence' teams. This suggests that the victim, intelligence and investigation teams have a closer, more integrated relationship than in Force B.

Policing approach

2.35 Another feature of interest is the broader philosophical approach to policing of 'omni-competence'. Forces C and G subscribe to an omni-competent approach, which significantly impacts on the role of specialist CSE officers. In Force C, the CSE team is small and responsible primarily for intelligence, analysis, problem profiling and awareness raising, with no investigative or victim support functions. In Force G (which has no CSE team), a new 'specialist role' has been developed to work alongside investigators in supporting victims who may be reluctant to engage with the police.

Summary

2.36 This section of the report described the structure and processes of police force responses to CSE in the eight study forces. The models were developed in aggregate to preserve anonymity but retain essential characteristics and features of the response. They demonstrate the variations in structure and process across forces and the qualitative data from interviews highlighted at least some drivers that have likely shaped the models that are manifest in forces. We cannot say how representative these four composite models are of all forces in England and Wales. Local contexts of policing are likely to produce many other variations. These models can be used by those responsible for organisational change to think strategically and carefully about the evolution and direction of their own CSE responses.

Section 3 Findings: Challenges to the alignment of policing models with police data on prosecutions

Key Messages

- There is a lack of police data on disruption and prosecutions, which means that aligning police models with these outcomes is not possible at the present time.
- Additional challenges to understanding CSE prosecutions include a gap between the current policy definition of CSE and the Sexual Offences legislation.
- CSE crimes are recorded according to the Sexual Offences Act (2003) which does not adequately distinguish between CSE and other CSA crimes.
- While forces are now required to flag CSE crimes and report this data annually to the Home Office, challenges to officers' understanding of CSE; complex and fractured IT systems; and the policy-legislation gap call into question the accuracy of this data.
- While we have been able to access detection data on CSE crimes, questions about the accuracy of this data means that caution is needed in interpreting it.

3.1 Objective 3 of this study as set out in the Introduction to this report was to: "Produce an evidence-based 'prosecution outcome gaps analysis' identifying lack of evidence in knowledge around effective offender identification, disruption and prosecution techniques in the field of CSE, with recommendations to the police service about how these gaps in knowledge may be filled". This substantive part of the report, therefore, starts with these gaps in knowledge, given their centrality to our ability to articulate CSE prosecution outcomes, as well as the impact they have had on this research.

3.2 The following topics are considered in this section of the report:

- What are the policy-legislative gaps?
- What are the gaps in relation to:
  - police recorded crime data on identification (detection) of CSE?
  - police recorded crime data on disruption of CSE?
  - police recorded crime data and CPS data on prosecutions of CSE?

3.3 While this research set out with a focus on prosecution outcomes, we acknowledge that prosecution is only one of a number of outcomes of importance for young people. Our focus on prosecution is in no way meant to minimise other outcomes which are equally as important for young people's emotional and physical safety. Other research has highlighted the often traumatic experiences children and young people report following their engagement with the criminal justice system (Beckett & Warrington, 2015; Beckett et al., 2016). These studies also highlight the conflicting processes of investigation and safeguarding. These should always be in balance, but often tip towards the needs of the investigation at the expense of safeguarding the child. Further research is required to fill a gap in knowledge about the range of outcomes and which outcomes are most critical

for young people, and this knowledge should be commonly understood, agreed and used across all safeguarding agencies so that all victims receive the best service.

The legislative and policy context

3.4 The legislative and policy context of CSE presents particular challenges to data recording by the police and other agencies, which has direct implications on the accessibility and quality of police-held data on CSE.

3.5 The definition of CSE as outlined in the DfE (2017) guidance (see paragraph 1.34) officially acknowledges CSE as a form of CSA but identifies exchange for the benefit of the victim, the perpetrator or both as the crucial dynamic differentiating it from other forms of CSA. Exchange, in policy terms, must involve a benefit to the perpetrator over and above that of sexual gratification and benefit may be financial or relate to increased status for a perpetrator or facilitator.

3.6 Benefit to the victim is understood to be broad, not limited to financial or other tangible exchange, but may also include intangible rewards such as love, protection or status. While this broad definition helpfully includes a range of abusive contexts that may otherwise remain hidden, the expansive definition has been acknowledged to present challenges to professionals, including the police, in recognising sexual offences that can be defined as CSE. These challenges include variations in awareness and understanding of the significance of exchange (Melrose, 2013).

3.7 Unhelpfully, there are important differences between what is considered CSE within the policy definition (which is expansive) and the legislation that governs sexual offences (which is narrow). The main set of offences used in criminal prosecutions of CSE is contained within the Sexual Offences Act 2003[16] (SOA) (See extended discussion on the SOA in the latest extended CSE guidance published by Beckett et al. (2017, p. 50, section C.II). Prior to 2015, this legislation had no offences within it named 'sexual exploitation' (instead referring to 'prostitution' – see below). The SOA was, however, amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015[17] to remove references to 'child prostitution' and 'child pornography' and replace them with 'sexual exploitation of a child'. The changes were made to the following offences:

- Section 48: causing or inciting child prostitution or pornography
- Section 49: controlling a child prostitute or a child involved in pornography
- Section 50: arranging or facilitating child prostitution or pornography.

3.8 Changes were made to the phrasing of these offences to clearly reflect that children

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[16] See Sexual Offences Act 2003 at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents
[17] See Serious Crime Act 2015 at
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/9/contents/enacted/data.htm

involved in such activities were victims of abuse. This did not, however, change the behaviours to which these offences apply, which remain the recording of an indecent image of a person or the offer or provision of sexual services to another person in return for payment or a promise of payment. Importantly, the SOA offences do not capture all offences that would fall under the new policy definition of CSE in that:

- The exchange is limited to 'financial advantage', whereas the policy definition includes broader things the victim and offender could receive.
- The offence relating to the recording of an indecent image of a child does not require an exchange; this is outside the policy definition of CSE but would fall under the definition of child sexual abuse more generally (Beckett et al., 2017; p. 52).

3.9 These notable differences between current policy and legislation have important implications for the recording of police data in relation to CSE.

Police recorded data on CSE: Detection

3.10 Assessment of the scale of identified CSE detected by the police is, at present, not possible, precisely for the differences outlined above in the legislative and policy context and as highlighted by the NPCC Lead for CPAI. The reliability and consistency of police recorded crime more generally have been called into question for some time, with concerns about police compliance with the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) cited as a key concern, among other explanations (House of Commons, 2014; Maquire & McVie, 2017). There is, therefore, already a precedent set that raises serious questions about the ways in which police record data, although compliance with the NCRS is said to be improving (Kelly & Karsna, 2017). The challenges in recording CSE add additional layers of complexity to an already problematic process.

3.11 The policy-legislation gaps set out above provide the police with a considerable challenge in recording the detection of CSE. The police record crimes according to Home Office counting rules (Home Office, 2011; Home Office, 2017) which reflect offences defined in legislation and which are liable or subject to judicial or quasi-judicial examination or trial. Where a CSE crime is understood to fit Sections 48, 49 and 50 of the SOA, it will be recorded to these offences accordingly (if it is recognised as CSE, which raises further questions – see below). All other CSE crimes that fit the expanded policy definition of CSE (but do not reflect sections 48, 49 and 50 of the SOA) are instead recorded within other sexual offences in the SOA. Regional CSE analysts reported that, across individual forces, between 16 and 18 Home Office crime codes and between 56 and 91 sub-codes may be used to categorise offences deemed to be CSE-related, illustrating the scale of the problem of easily estimating CSE (unpublished regional problem profiles, 2016). An additional problem is that crimes that fall under Sections 48, 49 and 50 *may not be CSE-related offences* if they relate to the recording of an indecent image of a child that does not involve exchange, therefore it can be challenging to extricate which offences under these Sections are *actually* CSE-related.

3.12 This current practice is problematic in understanding the scale of detection of CSE because crimes falling under Sections 48, 49 and 50 will not all be CSE crimes or CSE (where identified as such) will be recorded under generalised sexual offence crimes. The CSE element of the crime thus becomes easily lost, making it impossible to accurately identify which crimes are CSE and which crimes are other types of CSA.

Remedying the challenges presented by policy and legislation differences

3.13 In recognition of the differences between policy and legislation described above, the Home Office made it mandatory from April 2016 for police forces to flag[18] all police recorded offences that meet the policy definition of CSE (Beckett et al., 2017; Kelly & Karsna, 2017). This includes those that fall under Sections 48, 49 and 50 as well as those falling under other sexual offences that are being perpetrated within the context of CSE (Beckett et al., 2017). The Home Office also require all CSE crimes to be flagged as CSA. In other words, all CSE cases should be flagged as CSE *as well as* CSA. The practice of flagging CSE against generalised sexual offences means that, in theory, those sexual offences involving circumstances of CSE can be easily identified. In turn, this should mean (again, theoretically) an improved ability of the police to effectively and quickly identify victims of CSE, report the scale of detected CSE crimes and track prosecution outcomes. CSE flagging is now considered to be an important component of an effective response to CSE (Beckett et al., 2017).

3.14 Despite this, CSE flagging practices remain inconsistent both within and across forces, resulting in unreliable police data on CSE. Successive HMIC Child Protection Inspections and regional problem profiles produced by regional CSE analysts have found that flagging practices are not consistently adhered to (see, for example: HMIC, 2015d; HMIC, 2016a; HMIC, 2017a; see HMIC website for full complement of HMIC Child Protection Inspection Reports; unpublished regional problem profiles, 2016), as the following quote captures:

> *Markers and flags had recently been introduced for such cases but were not being applied routinely by staff. The force could not be confident, therefore, that relevant cases were visible on IT systems.* (HMIC, 2016)

3.15 It is unclear how far the low compliance with the practice of flagging CSE can be explained by wider crime recording practices as noted above. HMIC inspection reports identify specific CSE-related problems with flagging, including, but not limited to, poor understanding of CSE amongst individual officers and other staff (leading to both under- and over-use of flags); limited time and resources of individual police staff to consistently flag; and complex IT systems that are difficult to use. More generally, the process of applying flags is done manually and it is one of a number of fields which an officer is required to complete. The complexity noted above may, therefore, result in non-compliance and/or application error by the officer. Further complicating this is the recent change in definition (made official in March 2017) which may cause initial confusion and

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[18] Flagging is a way of electronically marking that a case fits the policy definition of CSE.

requires training and time for this learning to be absorbed.

3.16 The Home Office has an annual data requirement (ADR), requiring a list of all requests for data made to all police forces in England and Wales under the Home Secretary's statutory powers. This is used to report crime and policing related statistics. The 2017/18 includes CSE flagged crimes for the first time. It remains to be seen whether this requirement will be a step towards enforcing improved flagging practices in police forces. A report assessing compliance with CSE flagging is due to be published later in 2017 (Kelly & Karsna, 2017).

Implications for this research

3.17 In relation to the current research, we have obtained police recorded crime data on CSE crimes from all eight forces. This data was obtained through the office of the NPCC Lead for CPAI and collated by CSE regional analysts, whose roles have been to obtain individual force CSE-related data to inform regional and national profiles of CSE. Individual forces granted permission for us to use this data. However, given the concerns outlined above, the data in this research is exploratory only, and should be interpreted with strong caution. Appendix A outlines the nature and content of this data as well as limitations to the data drawn from cautions made by regional CSE analysts in a series of unpublished regional problem profiles. Table 3 below presents the number of CSE offences, per 100,000 population, in the eight study forces.

Table 3 Number of CSE crimes per 100,000 population in the eight study forces

A) Study force	B) Model type	C) Number of CSE offences obtained by CSE regional analysts	D) Number of CSE offences obtained by CSE regional analysts per 100,000 population
A	1	80	8
B	2	126	7
C	3	30	5
D	1	40	3
E	1	84	13
F	1	6	.9
G	4	135	8
H	1	572	38
		Total: 1,073	

3.18 The table above shows that recorded offences range from 0.9 per 100,000 population (in Force F) to 38 per 100,000 (in Force H). Force F data was only partial, however, because the CSE regional analyst in that location left their role before this work was complete. The average number of CSE offences (omitting Force F data) is 11 per 100,000 population while the median is 8 (Force H data skews the average upward).

Police recorded data on CSE: Disruption

3.19 'Disruption' refers to activities or measures designed to prevent risky and abusive activity and situations. Whilst it is recognised that disruption activity should not occur at the expense of prosecution and other safeguarding measures, it can be seen as an essential strand of a comprehensive response to CSE, particularly where criminal convictions cannot be secured (Beckett et al., 2017). Disruption measures can be formal and legal. For example, a range of licensing laws or civil orders may be used to close down potential locations of abuse, restrict victim/perpetrator contact or place other controls on suspect behaviour in the absence of a criminal prosecution. Examples of formal disruption measures include Child Abduction Warning Notices, Sexual Harm Prevention Orders, Sexual Risk Orders or Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders (see Beckett et al., 2017 for a fuller list of available measures).

3.20 There are other non-legal strategies that can be, and are, applied by police, often in partnership with partner agencies and professionals. Jago et al.'s (2011) research identified, for example, early prevention measures such as making areas that young people are known to frequent unsupervised safe, addressing specific risk and known 'hot spots' and giving informal warnings to people whom the police have concerns about.

3.21 In the main, disruption data is poorly and inconsistently recorded and tells us little about actual practice (Berelowitz et al., 2013). Data that *is* recorded is most likely to be the formal, legal measures used rather than informal activity, and even then, it is recorded inconsistently. In the early scoping phase of this work, we spoke to CSE regional analysts who confirmed that disruption data was poorly recorded and therefore unreliable and indeed, no disruption data was successfully obtained for regional problem profiles. They added that disruption data was most often found in qualitative note format and would, therefore, not be easy to access within the scope of this research.

Implications for this research

3.22 Unfortunately, we have been unable to obtain any recorded police data on the use of disruption measures within the eight study forces. Although we requested, where possible, disruption data from the CSE teams in the eight study forces, we were informed that either they do not keep this data readily available or it is not in shareable format. The interviews with police officers as part of this study, however, provide some rich information about the ways in which disruption measures are being used and their perceived usefulness.

Police recorded data on CSE: Prosecution

3.23 We have also been unable to obtain any data on prosecutions of CSE. While prosecutions are possible to record on police data systems, this requires the police involved in cases to record the outcomes following a trial. Our early scoping consultations with regional CSE analysts indicated that this is rarely done and little data exists on police systems about prosecutions. The consultations also revealed that data held within the CPS would be of limited use in describing CSE prosecutions (apart from those identified as falling under sections 48, 49 and 50 of the SOA 2003) because they record other forms of CSE under broader SOA offences similarly to the police (as described above). A consultation was held by the newly established CSA Centre of Expertise in 2017 on sources and quality of CSA/E data. The Centre invited an inclusive range of agency representatives, including CPS and the Ministry of Justice which are the key agencies that hold prosecution outcomes data. Reporting on the findings of this consultation, Kelly & Karsna note that:

> *Currently in the nationally available data, CSE can only be seen under two very restricted offence categories – abuse through exploitation and sexual grooming – across all criminal justice systems, and image offences involving a CSE element (making, distributing or publishing) are separated in CPS and MoJ data. As such, only a fraction of CSE is currently visible in justice system data, although it is hoped that this will change when the use of CSE flags is fully implemented. (*Kelly & Karsna, 2017, p. 43)

3.24 An additional challenge to tracking prosecutions relates to the complete separation of justice systems. Victims and perpetrators in police systems can only be identified in CPS systems by name (in other words, there is no common identifier in police and CPS systems that would allow easy identification of individuals) (Kelly & Karsna, 2017). The only way, at present, that it is possible to track prosecutions is to follow named individuals from police records through to CPS records, which has significant resource and ethical implications for researchers.

Implications for this research

3.25 As with disruption data, we were unable to obtain any data on prosecutions of CSE. Moreover, qualitative interviews with police in CSE teams revealed that even these teams are unaware of the scale of successful CSE prosecutions because of the problematic nature of the data. It is recognised across the field that these problems faced by practitioners in recording data have an adverse impact on the capacity for researchers to adequately portray an accurate picture of what is happening on the ground. Information of this kind will be largely unachievable until substantial strides are made in data recording practices across the criminal justice system.

Summary

3.26 As set out at the start of this section and in the introduction to this report, we had originally sought to examine different policing models in light of CSE police data on detection, disruption and prosecutions in the eight study forces to identify whether certain models could be linked with improved policing responses to CSE. As the above

discussion on policy, legislative and data challenges emphasises, however, we have not been able to fully achieve this objective. We have, however, been able to use the data that is available to suggest ways that it might be used and recognise learning that has come from the activity overall.

Section 4 Findings: Areas of policing responsibility

4.1 Section two of this report introduced four composite models and described the 'shape' of the CSE response, with specific reference to where support for young people sits in this response. This section considers our police participants' experiences and perspectives in relation to key areas of responsibility in policing in the area of CSE to identify good practice and challenges in this work:

- referrals
- disruption
- investigation
- prosecution
- supporting young people.

Referrals

Key Messages

- All forces in this study have a centralised system for prioritising and assigning referrals to appropriate teams.
- Most forces have Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs or a Central Referral Unit through which referrals are screened.
- Most police participants felt that having a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub or Central Referral Unit streamlines referrals and reduces duplication of work.

4.3 All eight forces have some form of centralised system in place for prioritising and assigning referrals to the appropriate teams. All forces receive referrals from the community (including parents, professionals, businesses) into a main call-handling desk. Referrals coming in this way will be triaged and, in all but one force, referred into a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Central Referral Unit (CRU) or a similar structure. Although bearing different names, these are examples of multi-agency information sharing structures, which have been developing since 2011. Their aim is to improve the safeguarding response for children and vulnerable adults through better information sharing and timely safeguarding responses.[19] While a range of partner agencies may be a part of these structures, the core group tends to include Police and Children's Services

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[19] See Home Office report *Multi-agency working and information sharing project*. London: Home Office. Available at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/338875/MASH.pdf

safeguarding leads (Centre of Excellence for Information Sharing, undated). The MASH/CRU will assess and then distribute referrals to the appropriate teams, as described in the previous section.

> *We have a PVP [protecting vulnerable people] system, so any officer that gets telephoned, any telephone calls that come into the constabulary from members of the public, or from anywhere to be fair, come in via our communications department. That gets filtered out to a Response Officer who will go and respond in whatever way he sees fit, come back and he'll write that down onto a PVP form. Which gets shared to a MASH, and then because we don't wait for the MASH to do anything, we read each of those PVPs in the morning and pick up any that we think are anything to do with CSE from a policing perspective and discuss them as a team in the morning. But, we can only do work once it's 'mashed', and that's a verb now I believe [laughing].* (H8-1)

4.4 There are some variations evident between forces however. In Force C (Model 3), referrals will be made into a centralised MASH/CRU, although some are also made to a centralised social care team who will undertake a first screening and refer on, where appropriate, to the MASH/CRU. Police participants in Force C expressed concern that the centralised social care team may not be screening in similar ways to the force screening process. Force E (Model 1) does not have a multi-agency structure, therefore referrals from partner agencies or the community come through to a centralised 'vulnerability' desk within the Public Protection Unit, operated by civilian staff who disseminate referrals out to relevant teams. The vulnerability desk operates during office hours and, outside of these times, referrals are made via 999.

4.5 Referrals are made by community agencies and professionals at these primary access points on referral forms, which may be referred to variously as partnership information forms, child concern notification forms or other bespoke forms and toolkits. Once received, cases are screened and relevant checks are carried out with Children's Services if appropriate. These structures and the accompanying processes in place for prioritising and allocating referrals were viewed positively by police respondents, who noted that they streamline referrals and reduce duplication of work:

> *Any referral from professional agencies in the community will go through to a central referral unit, where they're looked at and distributed accordingly. We've had issues in the past where the information is coming through lots of directions and we can find… duplicate work and research. By doing it through a central referral unit and filing it through a team we can deal with the information more appropriately and put interventions in place.* (A1-3)

Disruption

Key Messages

- Disruption methods can be used by the police to prevent CSE and protect young people in the absence of evidence or disclosures. This should not be done at the expense of prosecution, but can be considered an important component of an effective CSE response.
- Participants described a range of disruption strategies they are using in relation to perpetrators and locations.
- Multi-agency partners are involved in disruption in a number of ways. They provide important information that can be analysed for intelligence to direct disruption activity. They are also involved in disruption, but most often in relation to victims.
- Important intelligence is also generated from missing coordinators/missing teams, neighbourhood policing teams, parents and via covert surveillance.
- Decision making in disruption strategies is usually bespoke, made on a case-by-case basis.
- Disruption must be supported by sufficient resources. Some strategies require monitoring and follow-up to be effective and participants identified resourcing as the most important challenge to disruption work.

4.6 Disruption, in a policing context, refers to the interruption of risky and abusive activity and situations (Jago et al., 2011). The police can often find it difficult to gather sufficient evidence of CSE, even if they suspect that it is occurring. This can occur for a number of complex reasons. Victims do not frequently report the abuse, because they may be afraid to or they may not recognise they are a victim. Even when victims do come to the attention of the police, they are frequently only able to provide aliases, nicknames or physical descriptions of offenders (Berelowitz et al., 2012). These difficulties do not absolve the police of responsibility in tackling perpetration. The police are able to use disruption techniques or strategies to protect children and young people in the absence of clear evidence on CSE.

> *Because the nature of CSE is such, it is quite a hidden harm, it's not something that is overt to the public, I think that we've looked at it tactically and thought, okay we are accessible as a police service but actually by the very nature of the victims of CSE they don't identify themselves, or often don't identify themselves as victims, so let's look at it from the intelligence point of view where we can then gather that intelligence and look to disrupt the activity, whilst still continuing to try and engage with those victims. So that's working well.* (E5-3)

4.7 We asked police participants to tell us about disruption techniques being used in their forces. The question was an 'open' format, which means that participants likely told us about the techniques most familiar to them or most frequently applied in their force

areas. While they told us about a range of approaches targeting perpetrators and locations, there are many more possible approaches that can be used that were not mentioned. This may be because there is no national comprehensive guidance on disruption approaches that can, and should, be used and practice is not easily shared across forces.

4.8 Participants in our study forces described a range of techniques or approaches being used to disrupt suspects or adults of concern:

- Participants in all eight forces reported the use of Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs) to disrupt suspects. CAWNs are an established police tactic for the disruption of grooming and exploitative offending behaviour (CEOP, 2011; Jago et al., 2011; Berelowitz et al., 2013). These are used to disrupt an adult's association with a child or young person, served as a warning to an adult that they have no permission to associate, contact or communicate with a child, and that if they continue to do so, they will be arrested and prosecuted. There is no reliable data or research that clarifies the effectiveness of CAWNs (Newiss & Traynor, 2013).

- Participants in four forces told us that they arrest as swiftly as possible in order to obtain bail conditions, as the following quote demonstrates:

    With a known suspect, we generally get them in at the earliest option which is going to disrupt them, but that's on the back of what we think is a criminal offence occurred, so we tend to be quite proactive in that if we get an out of force enquiry, if we've got reasonable suspicion, we'll bring them in, because therefore we can get their computers, we can get their phones at the earliest opportunity and get them on bail conditions. (F6-3)

- Sexual Risk Orders and Sexual Harm Prevention Orders were mentioned specifically by participants in four forces. In 2013, Berelowitz et al.'s (2013) research found little evidence that forces were using these.

- Restraining and non-molestation orders under Section 42 of the Family Law Act 1996 and Section 12 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 were mentioned by participants in two forces.

- Asylum and Immigration enquiries were mentioned by participants in two forces.

- Participants in two forces mentioned Automatic number plate recognition, which allows police to 'flag' vehicles believed to be involved in transporting children for CSE, collecting victims from children's homes, acting as locations for sexual abuse or cruising streets looking for children to approach.

- Civil Injunctions under the Civil Injunctions Section 1 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 were mentioned by one participant.

4.9 In addition, police participants told us about disruption practices that target locations of concern:

- Participants in three forces mentioned that drugs warrants (under the Misuse of Drugs Act) have been useful in disrupting activity at particular locations. These can be helpful when police find it difficult to obtain evidence of CSE offences.

- Participants in three forces mentioned the use of Closure Notices under the Anti-Social, Crime and Policing Act of 2014. These can be used when there are reasonable grounds to believe premises have been used unlawfully, in relation to Class A drug use, or where the premise is associated with the occurrence of disorder or serious nuisance to members of the public.

- Participants in two forces reported the use of active patrols in hot spot locations to disrupt activity (usually the 'beat' cops or neighbourhood teams). The increased visibility of police is thought to deter risky or abusive activity in hot spot locations.

- Participants in two forces mentioned that they work with local authority taxi licensing authorities to revoke licenses or implement temporary closure on taxi firms while investigations are under way.

- Participants in two forces described disruption activity in relation to the night time economy; one in relation to licensing and one force providing training and awareness to business owners as well as patrolling city centres at night.

- Participants in two forces noted that they often engage in multi-agency disruption with the Fire Department under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The Fire Department may enter a premise first to do a safety check, then gather information on who is there. They then feed this information back to the police who can then intervene. One of these forces mentioned similar strategies with Environmental Health and Trading Standards.

- A participant in one force mentioned the use of Community Protection Notices under the Anti-Social, Crime and Policing Act of 2014. [20] These can be used to disrupt behaviour that is having a negative impact on members of the public.

- A participant in one force described the use of exclusion orders, particularly in relation to suspects frequenting local children's homes.

- Finally, a participant noted their force makes general improvements to the safety of locations, such as improved lighting and CCTV:

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[20] See http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/notes/division/5/4

You also might need to get some lighting because this particular location is quite dark. So lighting might assist because they won't hang around if it's brightly lit. There's numerous things we can do so solve that sort of issue, if that makes sense? (C3-3)

4.10 Not all disruption techniques were known to police participants. One, for example, was unaware of the community protection notices under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 although he was interested in learning more about them. Other disruption strategies were not perceived to be relevant in the local context:

I'm aware there's Hotel Orders that can be used, and this came out on the regional profile. One of the things that was… questioned [was] why haven't [our force] got the issues in budget hotels like other places. We haven't got that many of that kind of hotel, you know the [hotel – anonymised] etc. Certainly at [town] where it's bed and breakfast family-run premises I can't imagine they'd use that as a base for CSE because you've got to answer to the landlady and if you turn up as a 45-year-old man with a young girl in tow, you're more likely to get reported. So we haven't had any hotels where we do the Hotel Order type thing, but I'm aware it exists. Equally the taxi situation hasn't been one of our main issues. (F6-2)

Intelligence and disruption

4.11 Good intelligence is central to developing and directing effective disruption strategies (College of Policing, 2017). In fact, when most participants discussed disruption it went hand in hand with acknowledgement of the intelligence picture that drives it. Disruption is often determined by information developed within intelligence units or by specialist intelligence officers:

Our intelligence officer that we've got within CSE has a very strong background in intelligence work and he's developed a specific form for our partners to fill in which is really prescriptive. There is free text but it's very prescriptive in terms of guiding them through what it is that we're looking for, that can help us build that picture and what's going with these young people and how can we disrupt this behaviour. So yes, there is definitely a flow back into the system. (E5-2)

4.12 Neighbourhood policing teams, with their knowledge of the local people and local context, were recognised by participants to be good sources of intelligence for disruption strategies:

Operation [X] was a CSE investigation… the neighbourhood team were crucial to that intelligence gathering and flagging up the actual issue in the first place, which resulted in a number of males being arrested and dealt with for sexual offences and rape of young girls… so I think without the neighbourhood teams, we wouldn't have known that was going on unless they'd flagged the referral through a third party agency or they'd gone missing. But none of these girls had gone missing, they were just hanging around the off licence. (A1-3)

4.13 Covert surveillance is being used to good effect in some forces to gather intelligence on hot spots:

We've seen some brilliant results there. The ability to use covert policing tactics in terms of undercover deployment, surveillance, deployments have seen some brilliant results as well. I mean all of this is evidence based, you know we've got conviction after conviction from covert operations. (D4-2)

4.14 Intelligence may be generated from missing episodes and the missing from home interviews that take place following such episodes. In one force, missing from home coordinators are specifically tasked with generating intelligence:

What we've been piloting since the 1st September within [force] is we have our missing from home coordinators if it's appropriate will do a joint visit with the allocated social worker for that particular young person. The focus of the missing from home coordinator is to look at problem solving, but also to gather intelligence around where that young person's been and who they've been with. To look at any potential avenue for disruption. For example, whether that be harbouring notices for a particular adult who's having contact. (C3-4)

4.15 Parents were recognised by some participants as important sources of intelligence:

Yes, I would say that parents are involved in disruptions I know previously from young people that I've worked with, parents have been quite pro in terms of feeding intelligence into our system. (E5-3)

4.16 Decision making around the use of disruption techniques was described by some participants as dynamic and bespoke to the particular situation presenting itself:

It's on a case by case level focused around problem solving. (C3-2)

I think it's on a case by case basis, I think you're looking at the investigation and then also what disruption opportunity we've got but it is driven very much by the tasking process as well... that's the whole ethos around it, about how we can disrupt it and think about alternative ways of tackling the issue, as opposed to solely from a CSE perspective. (A1-2)

4.17 Both police and voluntary sector agency respondents have a role to play in disruption. There was a general sense, however, of a division of labour among participants whereby police focus disruption activity on perpetrators and locations, while their partner agencies focus on prevention activities with victims, children and young people at risk and the community, as acknowledged by this voluntary sector participant:

The other thing for me, where I sit, is in terms of tackling CSE is I think a lot of emphasis at… [multi-agency] level is placed on disruption and on prosecution, which obviously is very important but we need to remember that's just part of the jigsaw. Again, it's variable, but I think police need to understand they've got a role but other people have got a role as well, social care, CSE workers like myself, and it's just as important as part of the jigsaw that all of those things slot into place and sometimes

actually their response to CSE is sometimes just police led and it needs to be understood that sometimes an approach like that doesn't always work. It might drive it underground is my point. (D4-1 stakeholder)

4.18 Such prevention activity was specifically understood to be 'disruption work'. This is significant because it underscores the important types of 'soft intelligence' that partner agencies are likely to be holding on perpetrators that can inform police disruption activity with perpetrators and at locations. The CSE regional networks have been developing gateways to facilitate more and better sharing of this kind of intelligence with the police.

4.19 One way partner agencies contribute to disruption is through provision of intelligence through multi-agency forums. Intelligence can inform policing and/or multi-agency decisions about disruption, as this police participant describes:

Every two to three weeks, [colleague] chairs a CSE tasking meeting which fits in with the general national intelligence model way of working, around tasking and coordinating. Partner agencies are invited to that and the purpose of that meeting is to look at intelligence and information that we've got around offenders and locations primarily, as opposed to victims because we pick up the victim stuff through the referrals… So what's the intelligence telling us about the offenders and locations, so that we can take action against them, whether that's disruption or enforcement? (A1-1)

4.20 The following voluntary sector participant describes a more direct role in disruption, reflecting their focus on community awareness of CSE:

So we will go out on joint visits with licensing staff, and we're doing some training for licensed taxi drivers, those kinds of things... but… in terms of direct disruption intervention with perpetrators, that's still with the police. There's disruption around awareness raising and that kind of thing, but in actual direct disruption… it's the police. (A1-1 stakeholder)

4.21 Police participants confirmed the value of intervention work undertaken by partners with children and young people as part of important early disruption activity:

Health plays a key role around linking with schools, making sure we have different approach to children around getting them at the best time, to try to put that intervention in and disruption in with them. Within each strategy meeting around the child on the CSE plan, there will be disruption work within there which is overseen and directed by the child protection manager as well. (A1-2)

4.22 Certain partnerships provide the police with additional leverage in accessing premises, as described by this police participant:

They do take quite a heavy role (partners)… Especially licensing because that gives us that opportunity to go in and think about it from a different perspective. So licensing plays a key role. (A1-3)

4.23 Resources appeared to be the most significant challenge to carrying out disruption activity. Some disruption activity is resource-intensive, requiring follow up and monitoring for it to be useful (for example, monitoring whether CAWNs are breached). A participant in one CSE team said they struggled to monitor the activity themselves and found it hard to draft in additional help:

> *So if we go out and we serve half a dozen Section 2s say a month, or whatever we would serve, just if we just looked at it from ourselves, how do we then go about testing the compliance of that? So that's where we would bring in the Neighbourhood Police Team, we bring in Social Services, we bring in everybody else to try and do it, but you don't get the same level of buy in, because they're all busy doing their own thing, so testing compliance… that's difficult. (H8-4)*

4.24 In the context of rising reports of CSA/E and increasing identification, it is likely that forces will be prioritising limited resources to respond to reactive investigations. This means that this kind of proactive disruption activity may receive less focus and attention.

4.25 Disruption was also said to be difficult because identifying suspects is challenging. Many of them use nicknames and aliases which can make them hard to locate. Police participants also said that disruption work could be hampered by the complex nature of CSE and their inability to always engage young people. This reduces their ability to gather the needed intelligence to direct disruption work. Finally, police participants shared anxieties that their disruption work simply moves the risky or abusive activity elsewhere. For example, patrolling hotspots caused this participant anxiety:

> *The only difficulty with that and one of my bugbears with this is by putting uniform in to, say, a park, and because we've got some intelligence to say we may have children congregating there. Say early adult males coming in cars, that kind of obvious approach to CSE. My only concern is we then disrupt it… it moves on then you have to disrupt that too. It's a really difficult one when it's say 'do we target a CSE hot spot?' because you have the risk of number one sending it underground and number two you have the difficulty where you may then force those children to a completely different area that we're not aware of. (A8-2)*

Investigation

Key Messages

Problem profiles

- Problem profiles on CSE exist in all eight study forces, although not all key personnel working on CSE were aware of them. Consideration should be given to raising the profile of these documents to all relevant policing staff working within the CSE response.
- The process of compiling profiles is complex and challenging, and not all participants felt that they were useful in their present state.
- Participants made particular reference to the need for profiles to help them understand what is driving the patterns of CSE observed; that a description of patterns is not enough (and is often what they know already).
- Most commonly, sharing and receiving data from partner agencies to populate the problem profiles is hampered by structural issues and organisational culture.
- Not all of the CSE teams had dedicated analytical support for developing problem profiles. Forces should consider dedicating resources to an analyst who is trained and knowledgeable in CSE, can effectively capture multi-agency data and intelligence, and who understands partnership contexts and landscapes.
- Participants provided some examples of what they are doing to overcome some of the challenges. Given the centrality of problem profiles for understanding CSE, forces would benefit from an evaluation of some of these practices and a channel for sharing this activity across forces.

Material and information

- Gathering third-party material is an essential part of a CSE investigation, as emphasised in the Authorised Professional Practice. Best practice guidance also highlights the important role of partner agencies in providing this material to police (Beckett et al., 2017).
- Police describe the process of gathering third-party material as hugely time and resource intensive. Forces should ensure appropriate levels of resources are supporting this aspect of investigations.
- Police recognise that gathering third-party material is invasive and can be distressing to young people in the investigation and court process. Appropriate levels of support and information need to be made available to young people in relation to the use of third-party material.

4.26 The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (CoP, 2013) recommends that CSE investigations should:

- be proactive to explore the nature and patterns of sexual exploitation locally.
- involve sharing of information about those at risk and potential offenders with partners.
- involve early liaison with the Crown Prosecution Service at the earliest opportunity to seek appropriate advice in order to help outline an effective investigation strategy.

Problem profiling

4.27 Understanding the nature and patterns of sexual exploitation locally is essential to proactive policing (CoP, 2017). One way of achieving this is through an activity referred to as 'problem profiling'. The College of Policing code of practice intelligence management processes detail the purposes of a problem profile, which are to:

- "provide detail on crime trends or hot spots that require greater analysis than can be provided in the tactical assessment.[21]

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[21] The tactical assessment is used to identify the short-term issues for consideration by the tactical tasking and coordination group. It should be used to draw inferences and make recommendations for prevention, intelligence, enforcement and reassurance priorities, and future policing activity. See College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice on Intelligence Management for more detail:

- provide a vehicle for the application of one or more analytical techniques to a problem.
- assist in subject identification and selection (suspects or victims).
- assist in prioritisation.
- identify intelligence gaps.
- highlight prevention, intelligence, enforcement and reassurance opportunities.
- provide justification for actions." (CoP, 2013).

4.28 The College of Policing code of practice on intelligence management advises that the problem profile must be current and relevant. It should be added to and updated until the problem is dealt with, then stored for retrieval if necessary. Best practice guidance recommendations and research on CSE also highlight the importance of a good, up-to-date local problem profile (Beckett et al., 2017; Berelowitz et al., 2013; DfE, 2017, Beckett & Pearce 2018 forthcoming).

4.29 Appendix 5 of the Office of the Children's Commissioner's report on CSE in gangs and groups offers specific guidance on problem profiling CSE, including: establishing terms of reference; outlining a data collection plan; formulating an information requirement; collating data; monitoring progress; reporting issues and challenges to the Local Children Safeguarding Board ; analysing the data; and writing a problem profile to be disseminated across partner agencies. Importantly, a dedicated, knowledgeable analyst (knowledgeable in CSE, partnership contexts and collating complex data from multiple agencies) is required to produce high-quality problem profiles (Berelowitz et al., 2013).

4.30 The evidence from this research suggests that forces may be struggling to create quality CSE problem profiles, highlighting the complex and challenging nature of this work. As a result, some police participants in this research did not always perceive them to be useful.

4.31 At least one participant in each of the eight study forces was aware of the existence of a problem profile for CSE within their forces. Not all participants were aware of them, however, raising questions about how far these profiles are actively used and disseminated to key officers working within the police CSE response.

4.31 Participants explained that, in theory, problem profiles are useful, but their usefulness depends on their quality. They acknowledged particular benefits of problem profiles, which include that:

- They identify gaps in knowledge about patterns of CSE.
- They highlight hot spots and other locations of concern.

https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/intelligence-management/intelligence-products/#tactical-assessment

- They inform tactical planning.
- They inform information gathering from partners.

4.32 Our police participants noted, however, that creating problem profiles is difficult and the quality can be hampered by particular data challenges.

4.33 Most commonly, participants said that gathering data across different partner agencies is complex. There are different systems in place within and across agencies and partners are located across different geographic locations. For this reason, it is important to have a highly skilled analyst, as noted above. For participants in this study, and in the absence of dedicated analytical support, these structural problems mean that problem profiles take a considerable time to develop, have gaps in information and quickly go out of date.

> *We can provide a police picture to our partners, but I think there is room for improvement there where our multi-agencies can add to that profile picture. They're giving me a more accurate profile, but because of different sorts of data systems, different people in different local authorities with different drives, different responsibilities, collating that information does prove difficult. For example our missing from home coordinators have local authority analysts come in and use our systems to extract data for their purposes, just to try to get the most accurate picture. But that has proved problematic. We commissioned six monthly profiles for each local authority quite recently actually, and I had a look at them, I had concerns that* they didn't reflect the specific issues. *(D4-1)*

4.34 The gap between the policy definition of CSE and how offences are categorised appeared problematic for developing an up-to-date and accurate problem profile at both local and regional levels:

> *…we have got the LSCB a problem profile created… We've [also] got a regional strategic governance group and the regional police produced a profile. How helpful do I think it is? I don't think it's particularly helpful if I'm honest. There's a myriad of different types of offences that could be and can be construed as child sexual exploitation. It's really difficult to pull off which offences are child sexual exploitation and which aren't child sexual exploitation. (D4-2)*

4.35 Poor data accuracy within forces, poor recording practices and inconsistent flagging of CSE cases meant that many forces were unable to retrieve accurate data or complete information needed to develop a problem profile.

> *For example, an incident could be opened, a concern for a female could be opened with a sexual exploitation flag, we could then crime whatever happened with a sexual exploitation flag and then we'd put a child concern notification if they were a child or an adult concern notification if they were an adult, with a flag. So you'd end up getting three flags for just one incident so our data wasn't very accurate either. (D4-1)*

4.36 As a result of these challenges, some forces stated that problem profiles were incomplete, inaccurate or out of date and therefore not useful. Some suggested that problem profiles only showed them what information they already knew or provided limited support in tackling CSE.

4.37 However, several interviewees offered solutions to these challenges, including:

- Quarterly analysis of victims and hotspots – Instead of developing a yearly problem profile, quarterly profiles were thought to ensure that information is current, easier to digest and more accurate.
- One problem profile per local authority – Some forces fall across several different local authority areas and as such have multiple agencies and partners that feed information in. It was thought that developing one problem profile per local authority would minimise some of the difficulties of developing profiles from multiple sources and would ensure the profiles are more accessible and relevant.
- Simplifying questionnaires to partners – Streamlining the information sourced by multi-agency partners and simplifying the information requested could ensure that more information is shared.

Summary

4.38 The 2016 Joint Targeted Area Inspections recognise the importance of problem profiling but that its success may be determined by the amount of investment the police can make into this area of business (for example, a dedicated analyst) and the quality of contributions made by multi-agency partners to the profile building process. In most of the force areas, there was no dedicated, skilled analytical support readily available and interviews with police highlighted the significant challenges they face in collating information from their partner agencies. It is essential to build a picture of what is going on across forces to improve the quality, accuracy and usefulness of problem profiling, given that they are considered such an essential component of a good CSE response.

Material and information

4.38 Child sexual exploitation Authorised Professional Practice advises investigators of CSE to obtain relevant material from partner agencies and third parties as soon as possible in the investigation. The guidance notes that third-party material can help to find corroborative evidence to support or disprove allegations. This can include observations by carers relating to changes in the victim's behaviour or evidence of grooming (eg, receiving gifts) but can also come from other sources, eg, 999 tapes, house-to-house enquiries or photographs.

4.39 Gathering third-party materials was acknowledged by police participants to be a laborious and resource-intensive part of investigations that can take a very long time to complete:

> *That relates to investigations before the court were required to explore the history of victims... So that will involve looking at the other agencies that they've been engaged with, for example local authority if they're looked-after care, health records and to see if there's any undermining material within that material. We've got to do that now, which is a significant and massive resource asked of the police. For example, I had a dedicated team of a DS and six DCs of my involvement team dedicated to third party*

disclosure alone. That is a clearly significant issue that's reflected across the country. (D4-3)

Third-party material, that can take a long time to get. (F6-2)

Third-party material can be a minefield and it's generally a really big job. So yes, it can play quite a great part in a case. If you've got a young person who's been involved with a lot of services over a long period of time, we go through that third-party material with a fine tooth comb looking for anything that can support or undermine our case. It's a significant job to undertake when you have a CSE case… it's definitely something that can play quite a large part in an investigation in terms of manpower hours. (E5-3)

4.40 One participant was particularly frustrated at a general perception that obtaining third-party material is straightforward:

I don't mean to be disrespectful, but when I read the protocol I think the first couple of paragraphs, the author… specifically says it's not supposed to be an onerous process. It just dominates our enquiries. (D4-3)

4.41 There was a real sense of frustration about the use of third-party material among some of the police participants, highlighting a lack of equality between victims and perpetrators. This frustration is clearly evident in the following quote:

It's frustrating because we have to get the third-party material for the victim, but the offender obviously [it] doesn't matter what they've done also in the past. The girls that are most vulnerable and the most susceptible to CSE are likely to have had things happen in the past that might muddy the waters... I think it's the Youth and Criminal Justice Act of 1999 or whatever said that a victim of rape couldn't be questioned about their previous sexual conduct. Yet for children who come to us as victims of CSE, we trawl over whether once when they were at primary school, they were 8, they told a lie about having a pencil case stolen. You know it seems a bit like that. It seems a bit unfair. I understand that they have a right to a fair trial and they have issues with perpetrators. For instance, one of the cases we had, the offender admitted having sexual intercourse with the girl, who was 12 at the time. But he said he thought she was 16… So the issue in that case is her age and whether he knew she was that age. So why do we need to look at whether she tells lies or not and her third-party material, why is that relevant? It's not relevant, she had had a complex life and she'd been in and out of care and had difficulties with her family etc., etc., etc. Is that relevant? I don't think it is and I don't think it's fair. (F6-2)

4.42 The above quote also alludes to the problematic nature of third-party material and the impact this can have on a case. However, our participants painted a general picture of good understanding among CPS Rape and Serious Sexual Offences unit (RASSO) lawyers of CSE victims' contexts which, at least for some, meant that the lawyers were more comfortable engaging with third-party material:

[Third party material is] not a blocker, I think CPS are happier to run it, because they see the problems that the girls have got… we've got all this other undermining stuff in her history, but I'm pretty sure CPS would be happy to run that, because they can explain away this undermining stuff. You know she was in a bad place, she was doing this, she was very vulnerable. However… we've got good supporting evidence and it's corroborated and it's credible, so let's give it a run. (B2-4)

4.43 There was insightful recognition of 1) issues of credibility that come with use of third-party material and b) the additional trauma and distress young people can be faced with during a trial as a result. Police participants in one force described an explicit strategy for investigating that they believe a) addresses the concern that a young person's credibility may be in jeopardy and b) recognises the invasiveness of obtaining third-party material and the impact this has on young people. They attempt, where possible, to investigate and prosecute cases involving more than one victim so that a) the vulnerability of all victims is emphasised rather than an individual young person's situation and b) the young person is not on their own.

Actually the underlying material that comes out of that can be extremely difficult for young people to deal with within a court environment. So victim accounts, in the main supported by what we get from mobile devices, what we can show in terms of association. And our prosecution strategy, which tends to try and group victims together and charge people with conspiracy offences or join indictments, so what we don't end up with is one victim in court standing alone with underlying material against her. We try to build a picture of multiple victims and use their underlying material to show a picture of vulnerability. Rather than face the heavy attrition rate of sexual offence investigation, especially if you've got a young person who has disclosed underlying material. So… we were on board from day one with our Complex Case Unit at the CPS designing our prosecution strategy and appointing a disclosure barrister who's been with us from day one. (D4-2)

Summary

4.44 Gathering material and information, including third-party material, is an essential component of a CSE investigation. Our police participants saw this as one of the most time- and resource-intensive processes in investigations. They recognised the sensitivity of third-party material and the impact this can have on young people. Some participants noted positive outcomes in the use of third-party material by the CPS, where RASSO lawyers were knowledgeable and skilled in understanding and prosecuting CSE cases.

Relationship with CPS

4.45 The CPS, in their guidelines on prosecuting CSA cases, recommends early consultation between the police and CPS so that early advice can be provided to the police:

The decision to involve the CPS at an early stage is a matter for the police but experience has shown that early CPS involvement can help address some of the evidential or presentational issues that may arise at a later stage of the case (CPS, 2013)

4.46 The relationship between the police and the CPS varied significantly across the study forces. Police participants in two forces described broadly positive relationships established with the CPS. In three other forces, participants described their relationship with the CPS in broadly negative terms. In the remaining three forces, police relationships with CPS appeared to be mixed.

4.47 The following account of these relationships isolates those things that characterise good and difficult relationships between the CPS and police, as portrayed by our police participants.

4.48 Two key characteristics appeared to positively influence the perceived nature of relationships between the police and CPS: the RASSO lawyers' knowledge of CSE and established, regular police contact with CPS/RASSO lawyers.

4.49 Our police participants highlighted the importance of working with knowledgeable RASSO lawyers who understand the complexities of CSE and the impact it has on victims. This knowledge has not always come immediately, but was described as 'evolving' in similar ways that it has for the police. Importantly, police participants recognised that a culture change is occurring in the CPS in relation to CSE:

I recently had a prosecutor… he couldn't have put it better, it was like I'd written it myself, he clearly understood that yes, although the female victim had… gone and got in this car and she had done X, Y and Z, the prosecutor in black and white clearly said, "these victims won't always act like we expect people to act, and it is by that very nature that makes them so vulnerable". So that was a really welcome response and it was really nice to see that maybe there is a culture change coming with the CPS as much as with the police. (E5-3)

4.50 Another police participant in a different force described a similar example:

We've evolved together with third-party material. At one point, we always had that battle that the victim was so badly undermined with third-party material that we could not get the case off the ground. We've evolved around that, CPS have evolved and that's a journey we've been on together and should be celebrated in that CPS no longer look at the third-party material as so problematic that they won't consider. They understand now that they [CSE victims] are life's most vulnerable people [and] will have attracted a whole load of third-party material because of their involvement with social care and being looked after and all that kind of thing, that there's almost evidence if you like of sexual exploitation, so they don't look at it too harshly now and that's far better. We've got a far better relationship with them in the sexual exploitation arena than we've ever had. (D4-1)

4.51 Regular communication and contact with the CPS was also cited by our police participants as important for developing good relationships, and was evidenced in a number of interviews. This aligns with the CPS guidance on prosecuting CSA cases where it is recommended that, particularly for complex cases, regular case review meetings are held between the police and the CPS:

> *Our DCI meets with the head of that RASSO team on a monthly basis just to talk through issues and things. We deal with the RASSO team all the time, so we know the lawyers by name and we meet them quite regularly and we kind of know which way they're thinking and whether they think the case is a runner or not. So I would say that because of that, we obviously have a lot better rapport.* (B2-4)

4.52 Where good relationships with CPS were described by our police participants, they highlighted the mutually beneficial nature of early engagement. Police benefit by receiving early input on what approach to take and the CPS benefit from having early knowledge of what cases would be taken to them, allowing them to develop their prosecutions strategies early on.

4.53 Not all relationships between the CPS and the police worked so well. The most common issue that confounded this relationship was a perceived lack of engagement by the CPS with the police. Our police participants recognised the structural and resource issues faced by the CPS however:

> *The CPS aren't engaging strategically and organisationally in terms of developing the theme because they're struggling to do so because they're a regional unit and there's two authorities in [our force area]. Times that at least by five, they'd have to go to 10 different sets of meetings to satisfy every local authority and we struggle as well. The problem is there's too many cooks spoiling the broth a bit.* (A1-2)

4.54 Our police participants also recognised the impact of financial and resource cuts within the CPS, which they believed have had an impact on the availability of CPS lawyers. Structural changes to the CPS – the introduction of a national CPS direct line, for example – have negatively impacted on the development of local relationships between the police and the CPS and on police obtaining consistent advice:

> *I think the CPS have suffered a lot of cuts, as everyone else has as well. It's not as easy to get hold of them, especially now when it's a national CPS direct line, you don't always get consistent advice. It was obviously a lot better when you have local bonds... But I think the CPS are going through, like every other agency, a challenging time with significant reductions in resources.* (C3-2)

4.55 Changes to the ways in which the CPS work and their accessibility also appear to be hampering the development of good relationships with the police:

> *The problem with personal relationships with CPS, they are as low as I can recall in my career because they're not here. They used to be in a police station, but they're now satellite off at [city]. Sometimes if we're dealing with a RASSO lawyer and they aren't available, they could be anywhere and it's all done by phone and email and*

new systems have been put in place to share that paperwork in a different way. (H8-4)

4.56 The resourcing issue is also perceived to have an impact on the length of time it takes to obtain advice, raising anxieties that victims may withdraw their support for investigations:

They just say "our target is 28 days" and just consistently fail to deliver on that. So we're looking at four months plus for final turnaround, which is really not good victim service, is it? (G7-1)

Summary

4.57 The relationship between the police and the CPS is critical for preparing an early investigation strategy that is capable of building robust evidence with the best chances for a successful prosecution. We did not, in this research, have the opportunity to interview the CPS to better understand their perspectives on the way in which the police engage with them and so we only have a partial picture of the challenges that exist. However, the police participants said that it is primarily structural changes to the CPS that have hindered the ability of the police to develop good relationships and obtain consistent and early advice. Where this works, there are good local relationships and frequent meetings between the police and the CPS.

Prosecution

Key Messages

- Forces should urgently improve their flagging practices around CSE in order to identify and track how many cases detected go on to be prosecuted.
- The police and the CPS should be considering ways to join up data recording systems. At present the systems are fractured and it is very challenging to track CSE cases in police systems through the court outcomes. A solution could be an additional field on the CPS system which details the crime unique reference number from the originating crime report. This would allow records across both systems to be easily matched and prosecution outcomes tracked.
- Victimless prosecutions are not seen as a viable strategy in all forces. Forces would benefit from guidance that includes practice examples.

4.58 One of the initial objectives in this research was to assess how far particular 'models' of CSE responses in police forces might be linked to prosecution outcomes. Our findings related to policing data and recording revealed that the data is currently not good enough to inform an understanding of how police responses relate to the scale and success of prosecutions. Our interviews with police participants revealed a broad lack of understanding of prosecution success or otherwise. However, interviews provided some rich data on the perspectives of police staff on CSE prosecution.

4.59 Most of our police participants were unaware of how many CSE cases had been prosecuted, what proportion were successful and if prosecutions for CSE were increasing. Anecdotally, our participants felt that prosecutions were increasing but were unable to offer definitive statistics to support their perceptions. The difficulty with crime recording systems, variations in recording offences and the range of offences used to prosecute mean that it is difficult to know with certainty. Despite this, there is some evidence that systems may be improving in the future in some forces:

> *I can't run the programme on our crime recording system to say how many CSE cases were successful at court and convicted prior to 2010 and how many now, because that's not how any of its recorded, which is a frustration. We do now flag instances on [system] where we say there's a CSE element. So going forward you'd be able to pull those instances off by running a search on our crime recording system.* (F6-2)

> *Because it would say for example rape is rape, it isn't CSE rape. So because we don't have those actual markers within how we record and how we go through the court process, it's very difficult to quantify how many go through the process. (H8-2)*

> *Again, anecdotally, there has been increased activity over the last two years, so yes there is a feeling that there's an increase in CSE prosecution and again, with… the work in the community, there's several strategies in place like there was just a closure of a premises today… I know it's a bit of a woolly answer but in short, I think it's increasing but I couldn't give you the statistic.* (A1-3)

> *I don't know is the honest answer to that. I know that the ones that we've had in here and had involvement in we've had some good results. But overall I don't know if it's increased or decreased.* (E5-1)

4.60 While our police participants acknowledged that CSE prosecutions are difficult to secure because of problems in gathering robust evidence for trial, particularly in non-recent cases, they were still seen as important in helping victims:

> *The more historical they are the less likely you can get a conviction just because of the evidence. But that I think still does not stop us from investigating those because that process of investigation and hearing the story of those victims who may now be adults, they're coming forward as adults because they feel confident or they feel they can report it now. Their being heard does have a positive impact on them, that at least their story's been heard even though there may not be a conviction at the end of it. In balance that still is a very worthwhile thing to do.* (A1-1)

4.61 We explored, with police participants, their perceptions on and use of 'evidence-based prosecutions' that go forward in the absence of victim cooperation with the investigations. These have been typically used in cases of domestic violence, and there has been some evidence emerging through the International Centre's wider work with police that these are being increasingly considered in cases of CSE. Our interview with police participants evidenced variation among forces in their use and perceptions of these types of prosecutions.

4.62 Participants in three forces told us there had been successful victimless prosecutions, as described in this quote:

Yes… we had one child who was 15, the chap I believe was about 47 and she'd become friends with his daughter and that was the link in relation to that. We worked on securing underwear covertly with the consent of the girl's parents. In the meantime, we served an abduction notice, he was arrested and charged with a child abduction, released from court following remand and then we went covert with it, then he got further arrested on abduction and he was seen kissing so was sexual activity and that's when the semen came back on the underwear and he was later charged with an additional sexual activity. (A1-2)

4.63 A participant in one of the forces that has seen success in this area told us they proceed with victimless prosecutions even if victims are engaged with the investigation. They recognise that the court process can be very traumatic and harmful for young people and if the evidence is robust enough, a victimless prosecution can protect the young people from having to go through this process.

4.64 Developing a victimless prosecution strategy could, in the long run, lead to engagement of the victim:

We ran it as a victimless prosecution because the evidence was so overwhelming and she didn't want to give evidence but she did realise at the end and that chap got about four to five years. She came on board and given a statement so it's probably not a true representation but I suppose the key message is they often start out as victimless prosecutions and you put the work in with them, until such a time as they're prepared to talk. (A1-2)

4.65 The success of victimless prosecutions was said to hinge on the strength of the evidence. Having strong evidence, particularly genetic evidence, could support a victimless prosecution. Particularly strong evidence was said to be underwear with semen in it, which is seen as irrefutable evidence but requires parental consent to gather and use in this way. Mobile phone evidence also appeared to be particularly useful.

4.66 Participants in the remaining study forces reported not having used the approach or that they had been unsuccessful in obtaining them. The quote from the following participant highlights that some police do not consider that victimless prosecutions are even possible:

No victimless prosecutions for sexual offences, because they just can't happen. We have obviously looked to target the offender's additional criminality, so where we have not been able to successfully prosecute somebody for sexual exploitation, I've prosecuted them for drugs supply or the possession of firearms. We've got notable successes there, lots of good successes where we've targeted additional criminality. But no victimless and as far as I'm aware you won't get a victimless prosecution for a sexual offence, just because you have to have somebody who said they didn't consent to that. (D4-2)

4.67 Participants in another force were more amenable to trying victimless prosecutions although they had not yet been successful:

No, tried a couple, got a couple in the pipeline where the girl won't give an ABE but she's 12. We've got DNA, so we're having a go at that. (G7-4)

Summary

4.68 The interviews demonstrated a significant amount of activity in relation to disrupting and investigating CSE cases. Yet, unfortunately, forces are struggling to evidence the outcomes of all of this work. Substantive improvement in data recording and data systems are necessary if forces are to evidence the outcomes of their CSE responses. The Home Office requirement for force data to be returned on CSE-flagged cases will, hopefully, assist in focusing improvements to data recording. The next step in improving data recording is, however, down to forces to implement and achieve. This section also presented some information on victimless prosecution approaches, which have shown success in some forces, while other forces are either less aware of how they can successfully be obtained or have struggled to achieve them. Forces would benefit from sharing successes and failures with other forces through a forum such as the College of Policing's POLKA (Police OnLine Knowledge Area) platform or through the production of national guidance that details strategies and offers case studies as examples.

Supporting young people

Key Messages

- As the models presented in Section 2 show, approaches to supporting young people vary across forces.
- One force described handing all of the responsibility for supporting young people to partner agencies ('partner-led approach'). Police recognised the skill and expertise of partner agencies and felt this approach gave them (police) more time to investigate. While the recognised value of partner agencies is welcome, it raises questions about resourcing for the third sector and about how police can develop their skills in working with young people.
- Another approach to supporting young people can be described as 'multi-agency', which appeared to represent a more equal balance of responsibility in supporting young people across sectors and services.
- A third approach observed was a 'police-led approach' where police took on responsibility for this work, drawing on the input of partner agencies in ad hoc ways. Forces that take this approach should consider formalising a strategic, carefully thought-through approach to this work, given the importance of supporting victims through what can be a re-traumatising process.

4.69 The latest national guidance on responding to CSE states that:

When specific concerns are identified about child sexual exploitation, it is critical that children and young people receive the services they need, delivered in a way that recognises the complexity of their situation and maximises the likelihood of

engagement. All such practice should be underpinned by a commitment to upholding children's rights in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes a child/young person's Article 12 right to have a say on matters that affect them in accordance with their evolving capacity. (Beckett et al., 2017; p. 30)

4.70 There is, at present, no robust evidence base that would recommend a particular model of police support for young people over another. There are however, general principles for working with and supporting young people identified in the latest Department for Education (2017) guidance that should be evident in practice, whatever the model. Below, three general models of supporting young people are presented that capture broad approaches across the eight forces. Following this, both the challenges to supporting young people and good practice – as measured against the general principles in the guidance – will be considered.

Supporting young people thorough a partner-led approach

4.71 The evidence emerging from this study suggests that one model of supporting young people through investigations is via what we have termed a 'partner-led approach'. In this approach, the police rely almost exclusively on partner agencies to deliver the necessary support to young people throughout their journey through the criminal justice system. This approach was observed in only one of the eight study forces – Force H – where there are multiple CSE teams serving the force population. The model recognises that partner agency professionals are best placed to support young people, allowing the investigators to get on with the business of detection and prosecution:

> *Most of it* [supporting young people] *is done not by the police… so we use our social workers, our child support workers, our parent workers to do all the stuff that the police ought to be doing, but it leaves us completely free to concentrate on prosecution, especially at court. So, they'll* [young people] *be prepared and keep going all the way through the court, which can take months as you know, and then once they get to court they will be accompanied to court.* (H8-1)

4.72 This same respondent was confident that their success in court cases entirely rested on the work that the partner agencies do with young people:

> *If we have prosecuted, every single one [young person] has gone to court and turned up at court and if necessary given evidence at court… every one.* (F8-1)

4.73 In response to a question on what was behind this success, this participant said:

> *Because we don't do it, our partners do it.* (F8-1)

Supporting young people through a multi-agency approach

4.74 Another approach evidenced in interviews with police participants is a 'multi-agency' approach, in which police support young people alongside partner agencies.

4.75 In Force B (Model 2) whose CSE team is characterised as a specialist victim support unit, specialist CSE officers provide support for young people:

That's our job so we work with them [young people] *all the time. This unit is set up predominantly to work with and support high risk victims of CSE so I'd say we do that, it's our day-to-day job. We have people in this team who are chosen because that's what they're good at, they've worked on child abuse investigation teams, they're experienced child interviewers so I would say we are good at that because that's the skill of the team.* (B2-3)

4.76 Officers in this team have the time to engage with and support young people, but they also recognise the value of partner agencies and work closely with them:

We have the time to engage with them (the young people)*, the other teams* (the investigative teams) *don't… We have an opportunity to go back, build a rapport, either us or it's done through Social Services, (a charity), whoever they engage best with and over time gain their trust and that's what leads to them eventually making disclosures.* (B2-3)

4.77 Similarly, in Force C (Model 3) (whose CSE team is responsible only for prevention and analysis, not investigation or victim support), there appears to be a more integrated and joint approach to supporting young people. Child abuse teams with responsibility for a case will work with an embedded specialist child iIndependent sexual violence advisor (ISVA) or with a local charity with whom there is a strategic relationship:

We also have [charity] *workers, so they won't work with either/or… The* [charity] *worker may well hand them over to the ISVA or the* [charity] *worker may keep hold of them and support them instead if they have formed that relationship.* (C2-1)

4.78 Force D (with multiple, regionally-based CSE teams) has embedded 'victim teams' *within* the CSE teams but works flexibly and takes advice from trusted professionals as to the level and length of support they provide to young people:

We've given a commitment that we will support victims throughout the process and beyond, until there is a professional opinion that says we shouldn't engage with them any longer… We have a dedicated victim team officer… who will have the responsibility for engagement with that person in terms of establishing rapport once we've been introduced by the trusted person… Thereafter we remain in contact with that person until they are happy that we no longer need to or until we've got a professional opinion that says, 'Actually the best strategy now post trial is to withdraw police support and leave that to the mental health professionals, social workers, whatever that might be'. (D4-2)

4.79 This respondent explained that they may remain involved after the court process if it is appropriate and beneficial for the young person.

There's no one size fits all and it was driven by what the young person wants, but also what professionals who are responsible for their care think is the best thing (D4-2).

Supporting young people through a police-led approach

4.80 This approach refers to a model where responsibility for supporting young people is firmly located with the police. This does not preclude their engagement with relevant partner agencies or specialist services in the force area which may be best placed to support young people, but the strategy of involving partner agencies appeared to be more ad hoc than consistently or strategically applied. Four forces reflected this approach.

4.81 In response to a question about whether or not the force works with community groups to support young people, one respondent said:

> *We have done but it's not a case of us working with them… they have supported young people. I'm thinking there's some church youth clubs in* [city] *and some of the youth workers have helped with young people's disclosures and stuff. So they've worked with us in that way, but that seems to be very much on an individual young person basis rather than us working with them independently I guess.* (E5-1)

4.82 In relation to local voluntary specialist agencies, the respondent continued:

> *Sometimes… I've done visits with the lady from the [charity] and things like that. If they've got a good relationship with them then yeah.* (E5-1)

4.83 One participant similarly described a focus on police-led responsibility for working with young people through an investigation:

> *I think we're pretty good at it to be honest. They build up a rapport with the OIC* [Officer in Charge] *generally, and that OIC would keep them updated throughout the whole process, they wouldn't just charge and then forget them, and then leave it for victim support. And quite often, they* [the young person] *would ask for the same officer to deal with them when they come back. So it is really good.* (F6-1)

4.84 In Force G (Model 4, which has no specialist CSE team), the overarching 'omni-competent' policing approach means that at the outset, it is expected that officers will work as needed with young people. However, the force is piloting a new role: a specialist CSE-trained officer who can work alongside investigating officers to develop a relationship with young people:

> *We've developed a* [CSE specialist role] *so that we can allocate that officer – perhaps if he's got a victim that's not engaging, which is often the way with CSE. So that* [CSE specialist] *will be allocated to building a relationship of trust with that particular victim to enable them, perhaps at a later stage, they will say 'actually yes, now I'm happy to talk to you and provide an ABE'.* (G7-1)

4.85 Similarly to other forces, this force will draw on the support of partner agencies where relevant, but unlike the partner-led or multi-agency approaches, this appears to be done on a more ad hoc, as needed basis.

4.86 Finally, a force characterising Model 1 is currently in the process of changing its approach to supporting young people through the commissioning of a new victim support service. Up to the point of interview, however, the police's role in supporting young people was strategically developed to ensure the police were taking responsibility for supporting victims and only using specialist partner agencies to 'fill the gaps', as the following two quotations (by the same participant) illustrate:

> *We had an initial plan when we set this strategy up that we would have direct input with young people. It's proven difficult to actually do that because there's so many care packages around them and some of the work that social care are doing, they didn't want us really dealing directly with young people so we're kind of one step away in those terms. That has proved to be difficult and not something that social care want. I'd say* [the other] *division, that is a lot different… there is a lot more direct work with young people.* (A1-2)

> *What I would say is that they do use those specialists and other agencies that are available to them to cover some of the gaps in support… we are in the beginning... a completely newly commissioned service around victim support so, that's yet to be seen how that changes and improves.* (A1-2)

4.87 This quotation underlines how approaches to supporting young people may be different even within the same force, perhaps belying a tension between police and partner agencies in different locales. It also demonstrates the changing nature of these approaches and shows that, despite the challenges in supporting young people within the context of a complex crime, officers are grappling with an acknowledged need to work with and support young people.

4.88 There was clear acknowledgement amongst participants that supporting young people through investigations is complex, time consuming and resource intensive:

> *We could always do better. More time and resources to be able to look after them* [young people] *better… that means even when they're not returning our phone calls, don't want to talk to us, we have to go to them… They don't want us to have their phone, they want their phone back... we could probably do with more time and resources to perhaps fast track their phones, give them their phone so we're not upsetting them… because that's what we're struggling with at the moment. A lot of the time, they're not wanting to come to us, they're not wanting to keep appointments, they don't want to talk to us when we get there, they don't want to stay in when we want them to be in, you know, it's time, energy and effort to try and meet them on their own terms, when they want us to go there, not when we want to be there and that's kind of the struggle.* (G2-1)

Good practice principles in supporting young people

4.89 Despite the challenges noted above in this complex area of work, participants talked about a range of things they were doing to improve the support of children and young people through this process. The table below lists, in the first column, the) Department for Education practice guidance principles for working with CSE victims. The second column highlights some of the things that participants told us they were doing to support

young people, and these are mapped against the principles. We did not specifically ask participants about each of these principles and how they manifest in their work, therefore this table may only provide a partial picture. (DfE, 2017)

Table 4: Positive practice examples of supporting young people emerging from interviews with police

Guidance principles	Positive practice examples
Working in the absence of disclosure	Allowing the young person to talk at their own pace Using a range of disruption measures to safeguard
Inclusive and accessible non-discriminatory practice	Being well equipped with aids to assist in interviews
Empathetic and non-judgmental practice	Being unassuming
Unconditional support	Use of a specialist child ISVA Use of a specialist CSE engagement officer
A consistent approach to building relationships	Building up rapport over time Maintaining contact and keeping young people informed Ensuring that a consistent officer works with the young person, where possible A CSE contract created which provides details of the officer, what the police said they would do, how often they will update the young person/family and signposting to supportive agencies Joint visits with partner agencies Most specialist CSE officers working with young people said they do not wear uniforms when meeting the young person
Holistic response	Drawing on all available partner information to understand the range of vulnerabilities present for a young person Good links with early help workers Knowing what specialist and supportive services are in the local area, and signposting to these
A resilience and strength-based approach	No evidence in the interviews in relation to this principle
Understanding the perspective of the child	No evidence in the interviews in relation to this principle

Engaging young people in decision making	No evidence in the interviews in relation to this principle
Engaging parents/carers as protective partners	Working with local services to provide support to parents/ carers
Understanding the impact of trauma	Recognising that the investigative process mirrors the grooming process Providing a separate, anonymous, comfortable location for victim interviews and appointments
Recognition of the long term, non-linear nature of recovery	No evidence in the interviews in relation to this principle
Working with risk	No evidence in the interviews in relation to this principle
Recognising the impact of engagement with the criminal justice system and supporting young people around this	Use of child advocates for court Adhering to the Victim's Code Use of specialist officers to provide advocacy and support to young people through the process
Understanding the importance of endings	Maintaining contact following the court outcome (where appropriate and with careful consideration and advice from supportive professionals) Carefully considering an exit strategy

4.90 It is notable that some of the discourse used by police participants, without any prompting, reflected good practice principles for working with young people, as the table above demonstrates. Not all of the principles were reflected but these findings suggest that, at the very least, officers working with CSE are demonstrating an awareness of good principles of working with young people and these are being translated into direct practice as they have described.

Summary

4.91 Participants across all eight forces recognised the complexity of working with victims of CSE. There was clear acknowledgement that victims do not always disclose, that they require support and attention and that the process of supporting young people takes time. While respondents in all eight forces described slightly different models or approaches to supporting young people, it was evident that forces are grappling with the issue and testing out different approaches.

4.92 Those forces demonstrating a police-led approach to working with young people would benefit from developing a robust strategy to formalise the involvement of partner agencies. Ad hoc approaches are likely to result in unequal support for young people and may not result in the best experience for them. Principles of working with young people tell us that consistency is important. Lacking a systematic approach to partnership with other local agencies may mean that young people fail to experience a continuity in support.

Section 5: Recommendations

Taking the findings into consideration, we recommend that:

5.1 The findings and summary points from this work are mapped against the new police Vulnerability Action Plan to protect vulnerable children, including those affected by CSE. This would include the police team, under the National Lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation, working with research project leads to ensure findings are fully mapped against the Vulnerability Action Plan and fed into training initiatives arising from it.

5.2 The National Lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation organises an event or open transparent process for CSE police leads to consider the findings from this report, specifically in relation to models of policing that support:

- information sharing
- appropriate resourcing and structure
- communication between staff within forces and between forces and external partners
- engagement with the Crown Prosecution Service, and
- supporting children and young people affected by CSE.

5.3 The CPS improve their recording of CSE cases (perhaps via a similar flagging system to that used by the police) and work towards matching CPS records with police records in order to better track CSE prosecutions.

5.4 Individual police forces draw on findings from this report to 'map' their response to CSE and to use summary lessons learned to inform their developing practice.

5.5 The College of Policing meet with the researchers to clarify how findings from this report can be incorporated into training, staff development programmes and refreshing guidance such as the Authorised Professional Practice for CSE.

5.6 The CSA Centre of Expertise, the National Response Unit and the College of Policing work together to support the production of a briefing or guidance paper for police, drawing on these findings, specifically to address the absence of guidance on 'disruption' of potential offenders. It is important that this new guidance recognises that these are difficult, entrenched problems and embraces the complexity of the issues involved.

5.7 A full dissemination strategy is developed by the International Centre and the National Lead for Child Abuse and Investigation. This dissemination strategy needs to include

5.7.1 an event with children and young people affected by CSE to enable them to comment on and address questions of young people's engagement in police-led activities, representation of the young person's voice, and future dissemination of findings of this research. This could be initiated through the International Centre's Young Researchers Advisory Panel in the first instance

but could also make links with the NPCC Lead for Children and Young People.

5. 7.2 Presentation of findings at the next relevant national police conference(s), other professional agency conferences, and at national and international academic conferences. Presentations to include those by representatives from the Young Researchers Advisory Panel who have worked on this research project.

5. 7.3 Joint publications between International Centre researchers, police colleagues who have participated in this research and the Young Researchers Advisory Panel in police and academic journals

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APPENDIX: CSE Police Recorded Crime data obtained from CSE Regional Analysts

The police recorded crime data for the eight study forces used in this report was obtained from the office of Chief Constable Simon Bailey (the NPCC Lead for CPAI). The data was compiled by the regional CSE analysts who extracted CSE crimes from individual force data systems to produce regional problem profiles. These profiles have allowed the production of a new national picture of CSE in England and Wales. A senior analyst in Chief Constable Bailey's team sought permission from the study forces to share the data with our research team and all granted consent on condition of anonymity. This Appendix document describes the nature and limitations of the data. The descriptions and associated limitations were drawn from unpublished regional problem profiles.

Description of data	Associated limitations and implications for this research
Regional CSE analysts requested all crimes considered to be CSE related from individual forces in their regions. Given the wide variation in local forces' IT systems, flagging practices and stage of flagging implementation, forces were asked to provide their 'best data'. In some cases this was through crimes flagged as CSE where forces were regularly using this method. In other cases, where flagging was not yet being used or there were concerns about the consistent application of flagging, forces consulted spreadsheets which provided further information on CSE crimes or they carried out manual checks of their systems.	The variation in local forces' IT systems, flagging practices and stage of flagging implementation imposes significant limitations on our ability to directly compare data across the eight study forces. There is still no national standard for CSE flagging application, and thus there is likely to be both over- and under-use of flags in the data sets. The datasets are also highly likely to include duplication in figures as a result of victims engaging with multiple agencies (and therefore duplication of reporting may have occurred).
The data used in this report relates to 'offline' CSE crimes. In other words, CSE regional analysts obtained data from individual forces on CSE crimes where there was an element of contact between victim and perpetrator. CSE crimes which remained online only were omitted	Given the focus of the data on contact offences, the data does not show the full picture of CSE police recorded data.

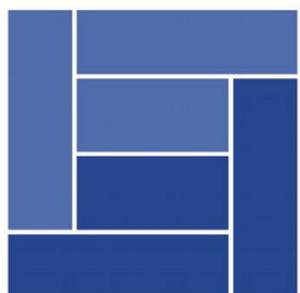|	
from the data sets.	
The dataset only includes CSE crimes recorded or flagged, omitting CSE incidents (reported incidents not yet classified as a crime).	The data does not allow an analysis of the broader picture of reporting in relation to CSE given the omission of CSE incidents.

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