

Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

Perpetrators of exploitation

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This article considers how we might use data about perpetrators of exploitation to inform strategic decision-making by local partnerships. This is part of a series of articles discussing the content of and rationale for the multi-agency intelligence framework.

[Perpetrators data list \(xlsx file\)](#)

One of the principles informing the design of the intelligence framework is to ensure that we highlight the role of perpetrators as a source of risk to young people, rather than seeing risk as being a result of the young person's characteristics or needs. At the same time, we need to reflect the blurred boundaries between victim and perpetrator when young people become more deeply involved in criminal gangs of CSE networks.

An initial media focus on the ethnicity of perpetrators of child sexual exploitation has perhaps dissuaded us from exploring the characteristics of perpetrators too deeply. But if we are to understand the drives of perpetration, and devise strategies to prevent and disrupt them, it is critical that we take a closer look at what we know about the people who exploit others.

There is a lack of data about the perpetrators of exploitation in published datasets. This is due to the lack of a criminal offence directly relating to exploitation. This is a significant gap where local partnership activity can add real value. Local police may be able to link crime records with cases of exploitation that they have or are working on, either through a system of 'flags' on crime databases, or through the knowledge of individual teams and officers managing the cases.

As with all insights from data, it is important to remember where the data comes from. Data about perpetrators reflects those we know about – and in police data this may be operational intelligence, rather than as a result of formal criminal justice processes. Any patterns we see may not apply more widely, and may be a reflection of professional practice and assumptions.

Conversation starter

- **How does the local police force record and report on perpetrators of different types of exploitation?**
- **Which other services might have insight into perpetrator characteristics and patterns of perpetration, either through data or qualitative intelligence?**

Types of exploitation

Because of the lack of links between crime types and exploitation, it can be difficult to identify how many crimes are related to exploitation.

At a national level, data are available about sexual crimes against children, including crimes flagged as sexual exploitation by police forces. This dataset includes summary data about the age and gender of victims, the subset of crimes associated with sexual exploitation and the time between a

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sexual offence taking place and it being reported to the police. This data is not broken down by police force, but local police forces will have access to the underlying data, though this will require the analytic capability and capacity to access. This provides opportunities to understand other ways of identifying relevant data about perpetrators and to ask much more probing questions about how well the system supports disclosure of abuse and pursuit of perpetrators.

There is limited information about how these crimes were perpetrated, if online or in person, available nationally. Local inquiries might reveal more data on the frequency and types of online harm.

Table 1: Data on offences against children

Type of offence	Extent of recording
Causing or allowing death or serious physical harm of child or vulnerable person – number of offences	All crimes
Child abduction – number of offences	All crimes
Modern Slavery – number of offences	All crimes
Trafficking for sexual exploitation – number of offences	All crimes
Number of offences flagged as child sexual exploitation (CSE), by offence	CSE flagged crimes

System responses to perpetrators

As well as considering what we know about perpetrators, it is also important to reflect on the system's responses to them. Again, the lack of a criminal offence or offences directly related to the different types of exploitation limits what can be seen in national datasets. However, we can create a patchwork of related data that gives us some indication of how the system responds.

Data available from data.police.uk provides a source of detailed information about crimes committed locally, but only in broad categories. From this, local areas can explore both the geographic distribution of violent and sexual offences to street level, and the outcomes of police activity against the perpetrators. This includes whether a suspect has been identified, whether an investigation is complete and whether action is being taken by another organisation. While covering a much broader range of offences and victims than child exploitation, this data might promote a discussion about how the local partnership can support the process of prosecution and conviction.

Table 2: Data on process and outcomes of offences against children

Time between the sexual offence against children occurring and reporting to the police, by type of sexual offence	Sexual offences against children
Crime types and outcomes	Violent and sexual offences

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Conversation starter:

- **What are you doing locally to record and report on action against perpetrators?**
 - **What can the local partnership do to promote a prompt and multi-agency response to disclosure of harm?**
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