Centre of expertise
on child
sexual abuse

Police disruption of child sexual abuse: A scoping review

Nadia Wager,
Alexandra
Myers and Diana
Parkinson

About the authors

Dr Nadia Wager is Director of the None in Three Research Centre for the Global Prevention of Gender-based Violence, and Reader in Forensic Psychology at the University of Huddersfield. She specialises in sexual victimisation, particularly child sexual abuse in terms of prevention, service evaluation and the implications for acquiring justice.

Alexandra Myers is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Psychology, University of Huddersfield. Alexandra's thesis explores the disruption of child sexual abuse and exploitation within a policing context.

Dr Diana Parkinson is a senior research and evaluation officer at the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse.

About the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

The Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse wants children to be able to live free from the threat and harm of sexual abuse. Its aim is to reduce the impact of this abuse through improved prevention and better response.

We are a multi-disciplinary team, funded by the Home Office and hosted by Barnardo's, working closely with key partners from academic institutions, local authorities, health, education, police and the voluntary sector in Wales and England. However, we are independent and will challenge any barriers, assumptions, taboos and ways of working that prevent us from increasing our understanding and improving our approach to child sexual abuse.

To tackle child sexual abuse, we must understand its causes, scope, scale and impact. We know a lot about child sexual abuse and have made progress in dealing with it, but there are still many gaps in our knowledge and understanding which limit how effectively the issue is tackled.

This report is published alongside the linked research study, *Disruption of Child Sexual Abuse: Findings from a National Survey of Frontline Personnel and Strategic Leads for Safeguarding*.

Contents

Executive summary

This report sets out the findings from a scoping review to explore the existing literature on the use of disruption measures by police forces in relation to child sexual abuse, and the effectiveness of those measures. The scoping review laid the groundwork for two national surveys of police, described in the report *Police Disruption of Child Sexual Abuse: Findings from a National Survey of Frontline Personnel and Strategic Leads for Safeguarding*.

Few reports of child sexual abuse result in a conviction, meaning that many suspects remain at liberty to offend against children and young people; efforts to disrupt their circumstances and behaviours are therefore vitally important. The term 'disruption' is used to describe activities which attempt to interfere with suspects' behaviours and circumstances so they are less able to commit crime. There are three fundamental approaches to disruption, with some overlap between them:

- The first approach uses **direct** measures to impose legal sanctions on suspects, making it harder for them to commit or continue to commit child sexual abuse.

- The second approach uses **disruption-supportive** measures which disable or disrupt criminal activity in the community.

- A third approach uses **online** measures to disrupt criminal activity taking place or being facilitated over the internet.

In addition to reviewing empirical research studies, the scoping review included material identified from serious case reviews, policy documents, practice guidelines and other sources. The search produced more than 250 relevant documents.

Key findings

Disruption measures

Most disruption measures have been developed to prevent or interfere with the activities of individuals suspected of extra-familial child sexual exploitation or sharing images of child sexual abuse online, rather than individuals involved in other forms of child sexual abuse.

Direct measures available to police to disrupt child sexual exploitation include:

- sexual risk orders and sexual harm prevention orders (SROs and SHPOs)

- child abduction warning notices (CAWNs)

- the inherent jurisdiction of a High Court

- civil injunctions and restrictions

- restraining orders

- non-molestation orders

- police powers of protection

- emergency protection orders

- recovery orders

- closure notices on commercial premises

- the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

- slavery and trafficking prevention orders and risk orders

- secure accommodation orders (SAOs).

> "Measures to disrupt child sexual abuse are used mostly against extra-familial child sexual exploitation or the sharing of images online."

Initiatives, some of which involve multi-agency partners, to support the disruption of child sexual exploitation include:

- hotel information requests

- use of 'flags' and intelligence markers

- automatic number plate recognition (ANPR)

- taxi and private hire vehicle licensing

- suspect warning letters

- targeting 'hotspot' locations which may be used for child sexual exploitation activities

- financial investigations into suspects involved in serious organised crime.

In relation to online offences involving child sexual abuse images, disruption measures carried out at a national level include:

- identifying and removing child sexual abuse images

- informing people who try to access or share such images of the risks they are taking, and signposting them to sources of support.

Relatively little literature has been published in relation to the use and effectiveness of measures to disrupt child sexual abuse activity. From the literature available, it would seem that:

- CAWNs are the most commonly used disruption measure

- SROs, SHPOs and suspect warning letters are increasingly used, as are referrals to the NRM

- several disruption initiatives have been undertaken in identified child sexual exploitation hotspots and through the use of ANPR

- there has been a huge increase in the sharing of information leading to the removal of online child sexual abuse images

- there is a widespread lack of awareness or use of civil orders to protect children overseas from child sexual abuse perpetrated by UK nationals.

In terms of effectiveness:

- child sexual exploitation flagging has been highlighted as a core feature of effective policing of such exploitation, and considered as good practice

- SAOs can be successful in breaking contact between suspect and victim

- despite the utilisation of CAWNs, there does not appear to be any publicly available analysis of their effectiveness

- for hotel information requests to be effective, hospitality workers need training to recognise signs of child sexual exploitation and record the right information.

Some practitioners and researchers have raised concerns about the use of certain disruption measures, and particularly:

- notification requirements imposed by SROs on individuals who may not have been cautioned or convicted of an offence

- inconsistent compliance monitoring after CAWNs are issued

- the potential for SAOs to indirectly increase the risk of child sexual exploitation

- inconsistent use of flags and assessment of risk levels indicated by flags.

More generally, it has been suggested that targeted disruption efforts may in fact strengthen criminal groups and networks, or create a 'vacuum' in a criminal market which may be filled by more dangerous offenders.

> "Relatively little literature has been published in relation to the use and effectiveness of measures to disrupt child sexual abuse activity."

Policing structures and multi-agency working

At a regional level within policing, child sexual exploitation is tackled through dedicated regional disruption teams (RDTs) within regional organised crime units (ROCUs). RDTs' remit is to identify and carry out disruption activities against all forms of serious organised crime, and it may be that only a small proportion of ROCU activity is related to child sexual exploitation.

The structure of policing child sexual exploitation at force level is varied. Some forces have specialist units undertaking investigation, disruption and victim support around child sexual exploitation, for example, while others separate investigation and disruption from victim support (with a victim-focused child sexual exploitation team liaising between investigative officers and victims) or have no specific child sexual exploitation structure.

It is now commonplace for police officers to work within multi-agency teams or observe multi-agency information-sharing protocols. Evidence suggests that this can generate information to disrupt child sexual exploitation, although research has highlighted a lack of standardised practice and identified failures to share information effectively, recognise what is important, and action appropriate responses. Nonetheless, disruption operations such as Operation Genga in Lancashire and Operation Sanctuary in Northumbria demonstrate that effective multi-agency working can support the disruption of child sexual exploitation.

Reflections

Many professionals who are knowledgeable about child sexual abuse perceive disruption measures as necessary and useful tools for proactively safeguarding children and young people. Increasingly, the focus of safeguarding efforts has broadened to include attention to the context that interacts with the individual. However, the range of disruption measures is vast and difficult to navigate, and in many cases their utility and efficacy remains unassessed.

This scoping review found little published literature on the impact of most disruption measures, and none on the disruption of any forms of child sexual abuse other than child sexual exploitation and online abuse.

It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of some measures because of systemic issues in police data recording practices and systems. Furthermore, there is no standard measure used to assess suspect risk levels; this impedes the assessment of threat that should inform strategic disruption planning.

Published research has identified the value of multi-agency working in disrupting child sexual exploitation, but there has been little recognition of the important roles that other agencies and non-offending parents can play in disrupting other forms of child sexual abuse.

"It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of some measures because of issues in police data recording practices and systems."

1. Introduction

Most child sexual abuse – including child sexual exploitation – remains hidden and is never reported to, or discovered by, the police or other statutory agencies. Prevalence studies in England and Wales suggest that some 15% of girls and 5% of boys experience some form of sexual abuse before the age of 16, but some groups in particular – such as boys, and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds – tend to be under-represented in the records of police, local authorities and other official agencies (Karsna and Kelly, 2021). Among adults responding to the 2019 Crime Survey for England and Wales, fewer than 10% of those who had been sexually abused as children said that their abuse had become known to the police at the time it was taking place (Office for National Statistics, 2020a).

Overall, the number of recorded child sexual abuse offences increased nearly fourfold between 2012/13 and 2019/20 (Karsna and Kelly, 2021); this increase may be attributable to improvements in the police's recording of reported crimes and a greater willingness by victims to report (Office for National Statistics, 2018). In 2019/20, the police recorded 87,992 identifiable[1] child sexual abuse offences (including child sexual abuse images) in England and Wales; following years of substantial increases, there was a small decline across most reported child sexual abuse offence types, excluding child sexual abuse image and sexual grooming offences which continued to increase (Karsna and Kelly, 2021).

Very few reports of child sexual abuse will result in a charge or summons, however: police-published outcome data for 2019/20 indicates that this was the case for only 10% of recorded child sexual abuse offences in England and 14% in Wales (Karsna and Kelly, 2021). Many individuals suspected of perpetrating child sexual abuse therefore remain at liberty to offend against children, making police interventions to disrupt their activities and prevent further abuse all the more important.

The National Crime Agency's latest assessment of child sexual abuse threat estimated that between 550,000 and 850,000 individuals in the UK pose "varying degrees of sexual risk to children", either online or offline (NCA, 2021), with the figure skewed toward online offending. This trend is reflected in data from the Internet Watch Foundation, which in 2020 processed more than 150,000 reports of child sexual abuse images online (IWF, 2021).

> "Very few reports of child sexual abuse will result in a charge or summons, so police interventions to disrupt suspects' activities are vital."

---

1. Not all child sexual abuse offences are identifiable in the publicly available data, because some are recorded under categories of offence that also include adult victims (e.g. rape of a male/female over 16, incest, trafficking, abduction, exposure or voyeurism) and the age of the victim is not published.

1.1 What is child sexual abuse?

This research draws on the UK Government's definitions of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation[2]:

"[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. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children." (Department for Education, 2018:107)

"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." (Department for Education, 2018:107)

In line with the above definitions, this report considers child sexual exploitation to fall within the broader category of child sexual abuse.

1.2 Aims of the scoping review

This report summarises the findings from a scoping review carried out for the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (the CSA Centre) by Dr Nadia Wager and Alexandra Myers at the University of Huddersfield, and Angel Wager at the University of Bath. This laid the groundwork for two national surveys of police, described in a companion report (Wager et al, 2021).

The review aimed to identify, from the existing literature, the disruption measures that have been developed by police forces in relation to all forms of child sexual abuse (CSA Centre with CATS, 2020); how they have been used; and the evidence of their effectiveness. The term 'disruption' is used to describe activities that attempt to interfere with suspects' behaviours and circumstances so that it is harder for them to commit crime (Tilley, 2009).

> "
> The term 'disruption' covers efforts to interfere with suspects' behaviours and circumstances so it is harder for them to commit crime.
> "

---

2. These definitions are used in England; the definitions used in Wales are different, particularly in relation to child sexual exploitation (Welsh Government, 2019).

1.3 Methods used to carry out the review

A scoping review involves the synthesis and analysis of research and non-research material to provide greater conceptual clarity about a specific topic or field of evidence (Davis et al, 2009). This scoping review was conducted using a framework devised by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) which involved:

‣ identifying the research question

‣ Identifying relevant studies

‣ selecting studies

‣ charting the data

‣ collating, summarising and reporting the results.

The review included both empirical and non-empirical literature and studies, as there were relatively few empirical studies which addressed this issue specifically (Levac et al, 2010). It therefore included material identified from serious case reviews, policy documents, practice guidelines and other sources.

A range of search terms were used to identify relevant literature (e.g. "sexual exploitation", "grooming", "policing", "disruption strategies"), and a number of different bibliographic databases and repositories were searched (see Appendix 1).

The search produced more than 250 relevant documents, reports and empirical studies.

1.4 This report

Following a discussion of how police responses to child sexual abuse can be categorised as enforcement, disruption and prevention (Chapter 2), this report presents the scoping review's findings in relation to measures identified as being used or having the potential to be used to disrupt child sexual abuse. (The literature generally refers to their use in relation to child sexual exploitation and online image-related offences.) These measures can be loosely categorised as:

‣ **direct** measures which impose legal sanctions on suspects, making it more difficult for them to commit or continue to commit child sexual exploitation (see Chapter 3)

‣ **disruption-supportive** measures used to disable or disrupt child sexual exploitation taking place in the community (see Chapter 4)

‣ **online** measures used to disrupt child sexual abuse taking place or being facilitated on the internet (see Chapter 5).

The report also explores:

‣ regional and local police structures in relation to disruption (see Chapter 6)

‣ the multi-agency approach to disruption (see Chapter 7)

‣ engagement with non-offending parents and families (see Chapter 8).

" Besides looking at disruption measures used by police, this report explores regional and local police structures and multi-agency working. "

2. Responding to child sexual abuse

The way in which police and communities respond to criminality and criminal activity can be categorised as **enforcement**, **disruption** and **prevention** (Tilley, 2009). These can be distinguished as follows:

‣ **Prevention** is future-oriented and aims to prevent criminality or the creation of new victims.

‣ **Enforcement** is reactive and focuses on the prosecution of past crimes.

‣ **Disruption** focuses on intervening in the current behaviours and circumstances of suspects in order to make it harder for them to commit their crimes.

In practice, categorisation is less precise, and some policing strategies contain elements that relate to more than one mode of responding. However, these three categories help to situate police disruption within the wider context of the societal response to child sexual abuse.

2.1 Prevention

Prevention strategies aim to stop whole groups of suspects, or protect potential victims (Kirby, 2019). Prevention efforts have been categorised into five different levels (Munro, 2011):

‣ **Universal primary prevention** – interventions delivered to the whole of the group of interest (e.g. all children) or aiming to change the environment so it becomes safer for the whole group; examples include media campaigns to raise public awareness, or educational programmes to develop adaptive attitudes and behaviours. Universal primary prevention has been likened to a public health strategy where the intervention is applied to the whole population with a view to preventing victimisation and diverting people from offending.

‣ **Selective primary prevention** – interventions delivered to those whose circumstances place them at above-average risk of victimisation or perpetration, or place their children at increased risk.

‣ **Secondary prevention** – interventions for people who have begun to experience problems indicative of a trajectory towards offending or victimisation.

‣ **Tertiary prevention** – interventions for those who have already offended or been victimised, with the aim of preventing recidivism or sexual revictimisation (i.e. reducing the potential for additional harm).

‣ **Quaternary prevention** – here the focus is on reducing the impact on the victim that arises as a consequence of child sexual abuse.

Efforts at the first two of these levels take place before any crime has occurred; this means that prevention has the potential to be more effective in terms of overall harm reduction than either the enforcement or the disruption of child sexual abuse. Furthermore, early preventative interventions arguably benefit wider society by reducing expenditure on criminal proceedings and post-conviction offender management. A review of how different jurisdictions prevent and respond to child sexual abuse concluded that there needs to be a wider focus on prevention and response, with:

"… prevention moving beyond teaching children to protect themselves and beyond the regulation of convicted sexual offenders to focus on wider prevention efforts targeting risks and vulnerabilities." (Radford et al, 2017:12)

2.2 Enforcement

Enforcement focuses on the prosecution of suspects for their crimes. Some have argued that enforcement can also be considered a preventative measure, since suspects may be deterred by the likelihood of prosecution (Finkelhor, 2009). However, child sexual abuse can only end in a successful prosecution if:

▸ the abuse is discovered or disclosed to someone

▸ it is reported to the police and/or child protection services

▸ it is recorded and investigated by the police

▸ the police build a case that is strong enough in evidence to submit to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

▸ the CPS decides to commit the case to trial

▸ the trial takes place, or the defendant pleads guilty at the first hearing

▸ the jury finds the defendant guilty and the conviction is not quashed on appeal.

As Figure 1 shows, this means there are numerous points of attrition along the route to a successful prosecution in a case of child sexual abuse.

Figure 1. Points of attrition

Child is sexually abused → Incident is reported to the authorities → Police record the incident, investigate and charge → CPS commits the case for trial → Trial proceeds → Jury verdict → Appeal process
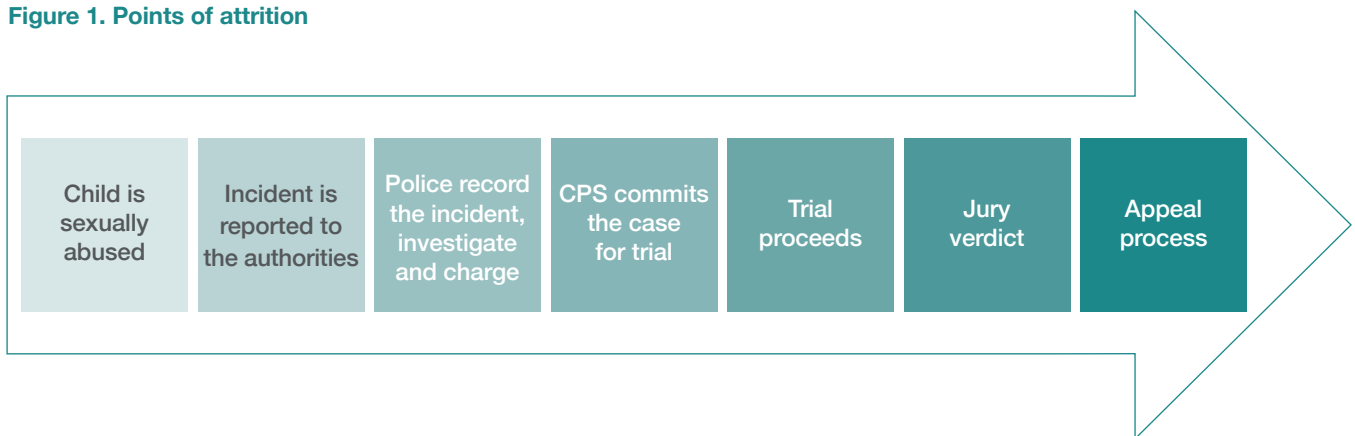
While numerous studies have explored attrition in cases of sexual offences against adult victims, there has been little research into attrition in cases of child sexual abuse. In 2019/20, only 12% of police investigations into child sexual abuse offences in England and Wales ended in a charge, a summons or an out-of-court resolution. The figures varied by offence: investigations into child sexual exploitation, child sexual abuse imagery and grooming offences were more likely to result in a charge than those into rape or sexual activity with a child (Karsna and Kelly, 2021).

In the year ending March 2020, 'evidential difficulties' were the most common reason for not proceeding on child sexual abuse offences (in 65% of cases), and investigation or prosecution was 'not deemed to be in the public interest' in a further 16% of cases (Karsna and Kelly, 2021). Consequently, prosecutions for child sexual abuse offences remain a rarity, and high rates of attrition throughout the criminal justice process persist (Allnock et al, 2017; Ofsted, 2014).

The failure to successfully prosecute child sexual abuse cases means, of course, that the perpetrators do not receive preventative measures – such as sex offender treatment programmes, an obligation to comply with sex offender registration laws, and being prevented through the Disclosure and Barring Service from working in professions and institutions that provide opportunities for offending – which may reduce their risk of reoffending (Parkinson et al, 2002).

When evidential thresholds for prosecution are not met, employing disruption measures as both a tactical and a safeguarding response has apparent utility (Berelowitz et al, 2012; Home Office, 2019a). Disruption should not, however, be regarded as a 'fall-back' plan which is considered only when prosecution seems unlikely (Jago and Pearce, 2008). It should be an integral feature of how safeguarding professionals respond to every case of child sexual abuse (Beckett et al, 2017).

2.3 Disruption

Disruption relies on the use of ethical and legal means to make it harder for a suspect to commit child sexual abuse, while targeting associated offending behaviour which may be considered less serious (Kirby and Snow, 2016). It has been described as:

> "… a flexible, transitory and dynamic tactic, which can be used more generally to make the environment hostile… this approach focuses on disrupting the offender's networks, lifestyles, and routines." (Kirby and Penna, 2010:205)

Whereas enforcement is based on a reactive model of policing, responding to incidents on a case-by-case basis, there has been an increasing growth in proactive models of policing, particularly in relation to serious and/or organised crime (Innes and Sheptycki, 2004; Tilley, 2016).

More recently, disruption in response to child sexual abuse has been conceptualised as a safeguarding tool rather than an operational tactic used in relation to organised crime (Kirby and Snow, 2016). Seen in this light, the task of disruption is "everyone's responsibility" (Department for Education, 2018). Indeed, the orchestration of actions to disrupt child sexual abuse can involve multiple agencies from the private, public and voluntary sectors (Home Office, 2017), and improved sharing of information across agencies is often recommended. However, it has been noted that working partnerships with voluntary-sector organisations can be precarious, particularly in times of austerity when these organisations' sustainability depends on their securing sufficient funding (Jones et al, 2016).

"

Disruption in response to child sexual abuse has recently been conceptualised as a safeguarding tool rather than an operational tactic.

"

Contextual safeguarding is an important new perspective on child sexual abuse in which safeguarding efforts are informed by the interaction between the individual and their social and cultural contexts (Lefevre et al, 2020); it is, therefore, closely linked to disruption work. Its focus expands beyond the individual to take into account the contexts that determine their experience and understanding of abuse and exploitation. A context that normalises abusive behaviours, for example, can constrain the choices available to the individual.

Adolescent development includes a shift in importance from the family environment to the extra-familial environment, such as peer groups and school contexts (Frosh et al, 2002). These extra-familial environments may directly contribute to a young person's exposure to child sexual exploitation, and so should be considered in terms of risk and included in any safeguarding response (Firmin et al, 2016).

The term 'disruption' is firmly established in various strategy documents, serious case review recommendations, and police policies and procedures concerning child sexual exploitation. Actively disrupting suspects' activities is presented by regional police services, the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the Home Office as an essential component of an effective strategic and operational response (Blythe, 2015; Home Office, 2018; Spicer, 2018), and particularly to group-perpetrated, extra-familial exploitation (Department for Education, 2018). This is unsurprising, given that disruption is embedded both strategically and operationally in police responses to serious and organised crime as a whole. In addition, police services have been under increasing scrutiny to develop proactive approaches to tackling child sexual exploitation, and have developed a markedly more robust and dogged approach to investigating, disrupting and prosecuting such exploitation than was seen a decade ago (Gallagher, 2017). There is also currently a focus on disrupting online-facilitated forms of child sexual abuse (Quayle, 2020). In contrast, disruption is seldom referred to in relation to child sexual abuse more broadly, or to different forms of child sexual abuse (e.g. intra-familial abuse, institutional abuse, or harmful sexual behaviour by children and young people).

While some safeguarding responses – such as secure accommodation orders for children and young people who have experienced or are at risk of sexual abuse –are used as mechanisms for preventing and disrupting such abuse (Hart and La Valle, 2016; Wallace and Hopper, 2019), it should be noted that their impact is chiefly on the young person rather than the suspect(s). If an individual's experience of child sexual exploitation is treated in isolation, not considering the context(s) in which it has occurred, this shapes the narrative surrounding the exploitation in terms of individual choice and consent (Jay, 2014). The burden of safeguarding is then placed solely on the young person, who may be removed from the context even as that context remains unchanged (Firmin et al, 2016).

Successfully deployed, disruption measures have the potential to swiftly interrupt contact between a suspect and a child or young person, and to help stop further abuse in the longer term (Jago et al, 2011). However, there is currently little evidence, beyond anecdotal accounts and single case studies, of the outcomes associated with deploying measures to disrupt child sexual abuse – and there is no consensus on a common set of indicators of effectiveness in this area (Allnock et al, 2017). Although prosecution data is informative, it is only one measure of effectiveness, and may not align with a victim's perspective of effectiveness.

It also appears that data relating to prosecutions, disruption activity and any link between the two is not readily available; this is primarily the result of inconsistent and problematic data recording practices within and between police services and in the Crown Prosecution Service (Allnock et al, 2017). However, the UK Government's Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy (Home Office, 2021a) contains a commitment to examine the use of its Child Sexual Exploitation Disruption Toolkit (Home Office, 2019a) and create an evidence base in order to identify potential gaps in utility and understanding.

3. Direct measures used to disrupt child sexual exploitation

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes available a wide range of civil prevention orders, which the Home Office has presented as part of a 'toolkit' of options available to safeguarding professionals to disrupt the activities of individuals who pose a risk of sexual harm (Home Office, 2019a). These are listed in this chapter. It is important to understand that none of these measures would be sufficient on its own to disrupt child sexual abuse: they should be seen as part of a proactive strategy requiring ongoing attention from officers, and usually also the multi-agency team. Although generally discussed in relation to disrupting child sexual exploitation, the measures listed below may also be suitable for use in tackling other forms of child sexual abuse such as institutional or intra-familial abuse.

3.1 Sexual risk orders and sexual harm prevention orders (SROs and SHPOs)

SHPOs can be requested by the police or the court against individuals believed likely to cause sexual harm, or those already convicted of doing so and believed to present an ongoing serious risk of harm. SROs can be sought by the police if an individual has not been convicted or cautioned but is believed likely to cause sexual harm.

Both are civil orders which aim to prevent such individuals from engaging in a particular activity.

Use and effectiveness

The use of SROs and SHPOs has generally increased over recent years (Ministry of Justice, 2018), and feedback from police forces following their introduction in 2014 was largely positive: SROs were described as "a valuable tool where prosecution was not possible" (Home Office, 2016), with cited examples including cases where the threshold of an offence was not reached, despite a display of risky sexual behaviour. Further, an SRO hearing does not require the victim to be present, as the case can be built on other evidence.

Some concerns have been raised, however, particularly because individuals issued with an SRO face notification requirements (obliging them to tell the police if they change their name or home address) even though they may not have been cautioned or convicted of any offence; this, it has been argued, creates a 'pseudo-sex-offender-register' (Kingston and Thomas, 2018).

In addition, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has highlighted a widespread lack of awareness or use of civil orders such as SHOs and SHPOs in the protection of children overseas from child sexual abuse perpetrated by UK nationals: for example, only 11 of the 5,551 SHPOs made in 2017/18 imposed foreign travel restrictions (IICSA, 2020).

> If someone is thought likely to cause sexual harm, police can apply for an SRO or an SHPO to stop them engaging in a particular activity.

3.2 Child abduction warning notices (CAWNs)

A CAWN is an official notice served by police which aims to break contact between a suspect and a child. It identifies the child or young person at risk, and confirms to the suspect that they are not allowed to have any contact with them (Home Office, 2016). CAWNs are considered a useful safeguarding tool to protect children thought at risk of significant harm through association with specific individuals (Safeguarding Hub, 2018). There is, however, no civil or criminal penalty attached to the breach of a CAWN.

Use and effectiveness

CAWNs appear to be one of the most used disruptive measures, particularly in response to child sexual exploitation involving 'localised grooming' (Casey, 2015; HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2016). For example, in the four years between 2014 and 2018, Operation Sanctuary – an overarching police investigation into child sexual exploitation in Newcastle – issued 220 CAWNs (Onwurah, 2018). Among participating police forces involved in an exploratory study involving eight UK police forces, CAWNs were the most frequently cited disruptive measure employed against individuals suspected of child sexual exploitation (Allnock et al, 2017).

However, the issue of follow-up management of CAWNs has been raised by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (2016); this concern was echoed in a study by Allnock et al (2017), where police officers explained that resourcing challenges had resulted in inconsistent compliance monitoring following the issue of CAWNs.

A Home Office assessment reported that police forces found CAWNs to be a useful precursor when there was not enough evidence to pursue an SRO and in providing value evidence to support an application for an SRO (Home Office, 2016). Nevertheless, it noted concerns about the enforcement of CAWNs, and about the way in which they were applied to vulnerable 16–17-year-olds.

It is not known whether issuing CAWNs acts as a deterrent to suspects, or even how many instances there have been in which the use of CAWNs has directly or indirectly supported successful prosecutions (Newiss and Traynor, 2013). However, the Crown Prosecution Service has suggested that CAWNs have provided useful supplementary evidence in several prosecutions relating to large-scale cases of child sexual exploitation (Sharp-Jeffs, 2017).

> "It is not known whether issuing CAWNs acts as a deterrent to suspects, or how often their use has supported successful prosecutions."

3.3 The inherent jurisdiction of a High Court

This can be considered a disruption option, as it encompasses a range of prohibitive injunctions that can be made by the court to restrict a suspect's actions when a child is believed likely to suffer significant harm and cannot be safeguarded by being taken into care or through the use of other statutory powers.

Use and effectiveness

Making use of the inherent jurisdiction of a High Court as a disruptive measure appears to be particularly valuable when a lack of evidence is hindering the potential for prosecution (Spicer, 2018). However, it is not known how many applications for prohibitive injunctions have been made using the inherent jurisdiction of a High Court, because most applications of this sort are conducted in private proceedings (Spicer, 2018). That said, the rhetoric surrounding the few cases which have come to public attention – that inherent jurisdiction is a novel, creative and clever means of disrupting suspects' actions (George, 2015) – suggests that its use is uncommon. The inclusion of inherent jurisdiction in the Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit (Home Office, 2019a) may have resulted in more local authorities and partner agencies beginning to use this disruption measure.

3.4 Civil injunctions and restrictions

These can be used against individuals who are engaged in, threatening to engage in, or able to be prevented from engaging in, antisocial behaviour.

Civil injunctions aim to prevent antisocial behaviour; depending on the circumstances, they can be used to disrupt individuals involved directly or indirectly in perpetrating child sexual abuse (for example, by prohibiting them from entering specific locations such as schools, children's homes, businesses or identified 'hotspots'). Restrictions can also be imposed in relation to hiring vehicles or owning multiple phones.

Use and effectiveness

As with other prohibitive orders, the impact of civil injunctions and restrictions on suspects' behaviour is not clear. There may be unintended consequences, in that issuing behavioural orders may reinforce a perception that child sexual exploitation is difficult to evidence and prosecute, thereby fostering a sense of impunity among perpetrators. While these measures are consistent with contextual safeguarding, by excluding individuals from a given location they may merely displace offending rather than disrupting it (Allnock et al, 2017).

> Civil injunctions/restrictions can prohibit individuals from entering specific locations, hiring vehicles or owning multiple phones.

3.5 The National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

The NRM is a system for identifying victims of trafficking and modern slavery, and ensuring that they receive appropriate support.

A referral to the NRM must be made when there is a reason to believe or suspect that a child has been trafficked. This includes the movement of a child within the UK; even local relocation is included.

Information from referrals to the NRM can provide evidence of child sexual abuse offences, which can assist in disruption efforts.

Use and effectiveness

In 2017, nearly half (41%) of the 2,118 referrals made to the NRM were for children, and the number of UK children referred has seen a year-on-year increase which is attributed to a greater awareness of internal trafficking (ECPAT UK, 2018). Although not a primary function of the NRM, positively identifying a child as a victim of trafficking may support the prosecution of child sexual abuse offenders (Home Office, 2019a). However, The Children's Society (2021) suggests that statutory agencies around the country are not aware of the system, as many professionals do not receive sufficient training or support to identify signs of exploitation, understand the statutory guidance on modern slavery, and make referrals to the NRM and appropriate support services.

3.6 Secure accommodation orders (SAOs)

These are mainly applicable to looked-after children, but can be used to keep any child in secure accommodation if they are considered at significant risk of harm.

Use and effectiveness

Some research has shown that, while SAOs can be successful in breaking contact between suspect and victim, placing a child or young person in secure accommodation may increase the risk of sexual exploitation (Harper and Scott, 2005; Jago and Pearce, 2008) – particularly as suspects are known to target residential and secure accommodation units (Lillywhite and Skidmore, 2006; Shuker, 2013). Moreover, using an SAO to disrupt contact between a suspect and a child impedes the child's freedoms, so it should be a 'last resort' intervention (Harrill, 2019).

> Referrals to the NRM, a system to identify victims of trafficking and modern slavery, can provide evidence of child sexual abuse offences.

> Using an SAO to disrupt contact with a suspect impedes a child's freedoms, so it should be a 'last resort' intervention.

3.7 Other direct disruption measures

Several other direct disruption measures are described in the Home Office's Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit (Home Office, 2019a), but this review found no information about their use or effectiveness.

Restraining orders

A court can make a restraining order to protect a person from harassment. It is not necessary for a victim of sexual abuse to request a restraining order before police can apply for one. The Home Office (2019a) advises that restraining orders should be applied alongside every prosecution of a child sexual exploitation offence.

Non-molestation orders

A non-molestation order can be applied for when the individual believed to pose a risk is considered an 'associated person' with the potential victim – often a family member. The order restricts contact with and or harassment of the victim.

Police powers of protection

These powers allow police officers to remove a child to suitable and safe accommodation for 72 hours, if they have reasonable cause to believe that the child is likely to suffer significant harm without intervention. ('Suitable accommodation' may include a relative's home or a local authority care placement.) This gives other agencies time to make applications to court or find longer-term suitable and safe accommodation.

Emergency protection orders (EPOs)

Local authorities, police and safeguarding practitioners can apply for EPOs if they have reason to believe that a child is likely to come to significant harm unless they are removed from a place of harm or remain in accommodation provided by the applicant. EPOs should prevent imminent risk of harm and/or disrupt abuse and exploitation.

Recovery orders

These can be made on application to Family Proceeding Courts when a child is in local authority care, the subject of a care order or EPO, or the subject of police powers of protection. A recovery order requires the return (to any court-specified person) of a child who has been taken or is being kept away, and the disclosure (to the police or an officer of the court) of any information held about the child's whereabouts. It further authorises police to enter and search premises to locate a child, using reasonable force if needed.

Closure notices (commercial premises)

These can be issued by police officers to owners or occupiers of commercial premises when there is a reasonable belief that a sexual offence against a child has occurred there or is likely to occur there.

Slavery and trafficking prevention orders (STPOs) and risk orders (STROs)

An STPO can be made against an individual who has a conviction or caution for an offence related to slavery or trafficking. It can be used to place restrictions or notification requirements on the individual – for example, restricting the contact they may have with a child or young person, or requiring them to provide their name and address and update any changes while the STPO is in place.

An STRO can be made against an individual who has not been convicted of a slavery or trafficking offence but is deemed to pose a risk of harm from committing related offences. Like an STPO, it can impose notification requirements (if they move to a different area or plan to travel overseas, for example) on the individual.

> "The Home Office advises that restraining orders should be applied alongside every prosecution of a child sexual exploitation offence."

4. Disruption-supportive measures

Alongside direct measures to disrupt child sexual abuse, a range of responses to such abuse can be considered as initiatives that support its disruption (Home Office, 2019a).

4.1 Hotel information requests

Where hotels are believed to be used for the commission of child sexual exploitation offences, the owners/managers can be issued with a notice requiring them to provide information about their guests (College of Policing, 2017).

Use and effectiveness

A small-scale, exploratory study carried out into the use of hotels for child sexual exploitation suggests that hospitality workers require training in order to recognise such exploitation, have the confidence to intervene, and know what information they should record (Hughes-Jones and Roberts, 2015).

4.2 Flagging and intelligence markers

Intelligence markers, often referred to as 'flags', are used to tag vehicles, suspects, locations, vulnerable people and incidents related to child sexual exploitation in England and Wales, on both the Police National Computer (PNC) and regional intelligence systems.

Use and effectiveness

Child sexual exploitation flagging, which became a formal requirement in police recorded crime data in 2016, has been highlighted as a core feature of effective policing of child sexual exploitation (Barnardo's Scotland, 2014) and considered as good practice (Metropolitan Police, 2017).

In one case, police tracking of a vehicle registration number belonging to a suspect led to their being pulled over and firearms found in the back of their vehicle. The suspect was subsequently convicted for firearms possession and sent to prison (Local Government Association, 2014).

However, a report by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (2016) found a lack of consistency in the use of flags across police forces: some forces' IT systems did not support flagging and, while over half of the forces inspected did use flags, only some were judged to be using them effectively. Inconsistencies within and between police forces are also the result of using multiple internal systems without a standardised protocol (The Children's Society, 2018a).

4.3 Automatic number plate recognition (ANPR)

This technology reads vehicle registration marks (VRMs) when a vehicle passes an ANPR camera. ANPR 'hotlists' can be used to instigate an immediate safeguarding response and trigger a specific action if an ANPR camera is activated.

Use and effectiveness

A pilot initiative, Operation Railcar, was evaluated to assess the use of ANPR and gauge the efficacy of PNC 'flags' as a response to the child sexual exploitation threat in one local authority. Although the full report is unavailable, a brief outline of the operation and outcomes of Operation Railcar revealed that "a number" of disruptions were initiated as a direct result of the initiative, with one child being safeguarded following an ANPR activation (The Children's Society, 2018a).

4.4 Taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing

This initiative has potential to support disruption of child sexual abuse because it requires taxi and PHV licence-holders and applicants to undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Use and effectiveness

The guidelines regulating taxi and PHV drivers were found in 2018 to require strengthening with regard to safeguarding (Abdel-Haq, 2018). A consultation on prospective changes to statutory guidance for licensing authorities was launched (Department for Transport, 2019), which resulted in the standards for taxis and private hire vehicles being updated (Department for Transport, 2020). The revised standards explicitly state that evidence shows taxis and private hire vehicles to be a high-risk environment for the facilitation and, in some instances, the perpetration of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

4.5 Suspect warning letters

Also known as 'C5s' or 'letters of concern', suspect warning letters were developed in partnership with the Lucy Faithfull Foundation for instances where child sexual abuse is suspected in the absence of evidence or an option to develop intelligence about the case. The letters remind recipients of the laws surrounding child sexual abuse, notify them that they are being monitored by police, and encourage them to reach out for support if they are concerned about their behaviour.

Use and effectiveness

In the two years after it was the first police force to introduce suspect warning letters in October 2016, Hampshire Constabulary delivered 54 of them to people suspected of child sexual abuse – and nine of these 54 suspects were later charged with a sexual offence (Mohan-Hickson, 2018).

West Yorkshire Police (2018) describes the C5 as a disruption tool for circumstances where a child sexual exploitation suspect is identified but there is a lack of information (or of the prospect of developing enough information) to launch a criminal investigation, or where a criminal investigation has been unsuccessful. The Metropolitan Police says letters of concern are used to:

> "… reinforce the steps that we take to protect a potential victim of [child sexual exploitation] and disrupt the suspect … who cannot be served an Abduction Notice." (Metropolitan Police, 2017:50)

However, it was impossible to locate any evidence of research conducted prior to or while the C5 was in development, or to obtain data relating to any formal evaluation of initiatives using C5s. Moreover, the issuance of a C5 can be detected during enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks; this could have serious implications, including placing innocent people at risk of persecution, given the low evidential threshold required for issuance (Diebelius, 2018; Mohan-Hickson, 2018).

4.6 Targeting locations and premises of concern (hotspots)

Increasing police visibility, introducing and/ or briefing CCTV operators, and carrying out outreach visits from voluntary agencies can all be used to dissuade illegal activity in identified child sexual exploitation hotspots (College of Policing, 2017).

Use and effectiveness

Several initiatives have been undertaken to respond to identified child sexual exploitation hotspots (The Children's Society, 2018b):

- A campaign involving Derby College, the British Transport Police (BTP), a CSAE prevention officer and the regional organised crime unit (ROCU) was launched after an area near the college became a local child sexual exploitation hotspot. Working with students, the partners delivered an awareness campaign to more than 5,000 students, and the BTP promoted a text contact number to encourage intelligence reports from children and young people. No formal evaluation of the campaign was carried out, but the BTP and the ROCU noted an increase in intelligence following the project.

- Another focused campaign was conducted by a police sexual exploitation team (SET) in Newham, London. Three children under 16 had been raped by adults they had met in a shopping centre, and intelligence revealed that missing and vulnerable children were connected to the location. Through a sustained programme of visible police presence, the SET was able to identify vulnerable girls and young women; additionally, suspects were identified and arrested for any form of criminality, causing maximum disruption to their activities in that location.

- In the summer of 2017, the West Midlands child sexual exploitation coordinator and a central motorway intelligence officer visited the managers of all motorway service stations in the West Midlands, asking them to display posters raising awareness of child sexual exploitation and modern slavery. Nineteen services stations engaged in the campaign, and posters were placed in service station entrances, concourses and toilets; hotels linked to the service stations; and lorry parks. Immediate feedback from service station staff was positive.

Identifying areas of concern offers an opportunity to respond proactively at a neighbourhood level, where underlying issues specific to the locality are likely to be better understood by responding services (Rayment-McHugh et al, 2015).

4.7 Financial investigations into suspects involved in serious organised crime (which may involve child sexual exploitation)

Financial investigations typically operate within the legal framework of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA), which introduced asset recovery powers such as the use of restraint orders and post-conviction confiscation orders, cash seizure and civil forfeiture/recovery (Brown et al, 2012).

> "Identifying hotspots enables a proactive response at a neighbourhood level, where services are likely to better understand underlying issues."

5. Online measures

A number of measures have been developed to counter online child sexual abuse (Quayle and Koukopoulos, 2019), some of which fit within the definition by Kirby and Penna (2010) of disruption as an approach that focuses on disrupting the suspect's "networks, lifestyles, and routines". For the most part, however, many measures used in the context of online child sexual abuse straddle law enforcement, disruption and prevention: for example, it may be that further sharing or sale of images can be disrupted (even though the original abuse cannot be addressed by criminal justice processes), which could reduce ongoing harms to children.

In this area, it is common to use different approaches together, and so we discuss evidence on effectiveness at the end of the section rather than looking at each measure in turn. Several of these measures can be characterised as forms of contextual safeguarding, looking at the online context.

5.1 Identification of images

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and the USA's National Center for Missing & Exploited Children use technology such as PhotoDNA, which creates a unique digital signature ('hash') for known images of child sexual abuse; this hash can then be used to find online copies of the images (IWF, 2018a). When images match those in the Child Abuse Image Database (CAID),[3] PhotoDNA can disrupt and report the distribution of images of child sexual abuse. There are several limitations, however: the technology cannot detect new images of child sexual abuse, nor existing images that have been altered in any way (Lee et al, 2020). Additionally, Quayle (2020) warns that its efficacy is compromised by social media providers' increasing use of encryption.

Other visual detection methods can overcome some of these limitations. For example, the NuDetective Forensic Tool can automatically detect nudity in images shared on peer-to-peer networks. While this will include legally produced pornographic material, the exclusion of images portraying adults can increasingly be achieved through automated methods of classifying images based on age (Anda et al, 2020). Automated web-crawlers such as Project Arachnid, developed by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, can combat the proliferation of child sexual abuse material on the internet by detecting known images and videos (based on confirmed digital 'fingerprints' produced by the PhotoDNA technology) and then issuing a notice to the hosting provider requesting the material's removal (Lee et al, 2020).

---

3. CAID is a secure database that stores every image captured by the police and the National Crime Agency. Hosted by West Yorkshire Police, CAID has been in use since 2014 (in seven police forces) and was subsequently made available to all UK police forces in 2015 (Home Office, 2017). Hashes linked to specific images are used in the forensic review of suspects' devices.

5.2 Removal of images

Launched recently by Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), the Report Remove tool can help children and young people who have shared naked or sexualised images of themselves – or whose images have been shared by others – to have these images removed from devices and social media (Childline, 2021).The service helps to reduce the volume of images of child sexual abuse available on the internet, as well as reducing harm to the young person.

5.3 Police2Peer

Police2Peer is a Europol initiative in which the police can detect when someone tries to access or share child sexual abuse images on a peer-to-peer network, inform them of the risks that they are taking, and signpost them to relevant sources of support (Europol, 2017).

5.4 Reporting mechanisms

When hash-matched content (see section 5.1 above) is identified, this can be reported to CyberTipline (an American centralised reporting system) which will enable the offending account to be suspended and the images removed (Lee et al, 2020).

Google has developed a way to help organisations detect and report images of child sexual abuse, using its AI implementation (Todorovic and Chaudhuri, 2018).

Additionally, if members of the public encounter images of child sexual abuse, they can anonymously report the content and location on the Internet Watch Foundation's reporting webpage (https://report.iwf.org.uk/en/).

5.5 Financial restrictions on image purchases

The Mobile Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse Content (2014) reported estimates that, in 2012, between 18% and 27% of websites providing access to images of child sexual abuse were commercial enterprises and thus required remote payments. It therefore proposed regulation of mobile payment service providers in order to disrupt the purchase of online child sexual abuse material, although this review found no evidence that any such regulation had been introduced.

However, the Internet Watch Foundation has more recently estimated that only 8% of websites containing sexual abuse imagery are commercial in nature; it suggests that this decline has resulted from a change in how such content is monetised, with an increase in the use of affiliate schemes (IWF, 2020).

5.6 Detection of suspects (sometimes by covert means)

Undercover ('sting') operations can be used to apprehend the perpetrators of image-related child sexual abuse, and in relation to online grooming offences.

Police in undercover operations may pose as children in online chat rooms or join networks of individuals sharing images of child sexual abuse. While the police cannot incite the commission of a crime, with specific authorisation they are permitted to engage in some criminal activity (such as sharing child sexual abuse images) where this is likely to lead to the apprehension of perpetrators.

Operation Icarus, orchestrated by Europol in 2011, identified 269 suspects and made 112 arrests in relation to the exchange of images of serious child sexual abuse across 22 countries (Europol, 2011).

These undercover operations' value extends beyond helping to detect suspects: knowledge of the operations may also deter some motivated individuals from perpetrating such crimes. This notion is based on the contention that the greatest deterrence effect for potential offenders is afforded by the prospect of being apprehended by the police (Finkelhor, 2009).

5.7 Use and effectiveness

Disrupting online child sexual abuse involves measures which seek to make illegal online activity more difficult, riskier and less rewarding (Leclerc et al, 2015). Indeed, disrupting the online environment rather than the suspect is considered an effective way to destabilise networks and make the criminal online environment hostile to individuals (Joffres et al, 2011), and thus offer the most realistic prospect of effective disruption (Allsup et al, 2015).

Many online disruption initiatives relate to open web use, which is where most child sexual abuse imagery is accessed. However, more than 80% of dark (or deep) web user traffic is estimated to be individuals visiting sites offering access to images of child sexual abuse (Owen and Savage, 2015). In response to suspects on the dark web, the Joint Operations Cell – a collaboration between the NCA and Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) – was launched in 2015 with the aim of tackling the most technologically advanced individuals involved in online child sexual abuse (GCHQ, 2015). In 2019, the UK Government committed £2.2m in extra funding for the Joint Operations Cell to facilitate the expansion of the collaboration (Home Office, 2019b).

The Child Abuse Image Database (CAID) helps police identify victims and suspects, and ensures that the approach to grading the seriousness of images is consistent. CAID's disruptive potential has been demonstrated through a notable increase in the number of identified UK-based victims depicted in images of child sexual abuse. In 2009/10, only 39 victims were identified, but the number increased to 177 children by 2014/15 when CAID was launched and to 552 in 2018/19 (Office for National Statistics, 2020b). Case studies shared by West Yorkshire Police indicate how CAID, in conjunction with the UK Victim Identification Strategy, can disrupt child sexual abuse: in one case, an 18-month-old child was identified and safeguarded while their abuser, a family member, was prosecuted, convicted and given a 10-year custodial sentence (Home Office, 2017).

By October 2016, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) had shared nearly 35,000 CAID-originated hashes (see section 5.1) with six leading internet technology companies, enabling them to swiftly remove matched content from their platforms (Home Office, 2017). In 2018, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) was enabled to grade and upload images to CAID itself (IWF, 2018b).

Similarly, Interpol supports law enforcement agencies globally by giving them access to known images of child sexual abuse held on its International Child Sexual Abuse Image Database, as well as actively working to block wider access to images of child sexual abuse (Broadhurst, 2019).

"Disrupting the online environment rather than individual suspects is considered an effective way to destabilise networks."

6. Disruption and policing

The police service manages and engages in the disruption of child sexual exploitation in a number of ways. Approaches include the creation of specialist roles and teams at both regional and local levels (discussed below), multi-agency working (see Chapter 7), and involving non-abusing parents and families (see Chapter 8).[4]

6.1 Regional specialist roles and teams

Specialist roles and teams have been created to tackle child sexual exploitation at regional level, generally in the form of dedicated regional disruption teams (RDTs) situated within regional organised crime units (ROCUs) (Home Office, 2018; Baker, 2019).

RDTs' remit is to identify and carry out disruption activities against all forms of serious organised crime, groups and individuals (Home Office, 2018). The extent to which child sexual exploitation falls within this remit is unclear. However, examination of the West Midlands ROCU's reported activity for the year to October 2019 shows that 4.7% of all its activities were in response to sexual offences (against both adults and children) (Baker, 2019). If this figure is representative of other police forces, it suggests that only a small proportion of ROCU activity is related to child sexual exploitation.

The Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) is also represented within ROCUs. GAIN provides a multi-agency platform for public-sector enforcement agencies (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2015). GAIN coordinators, situated in each ROCU, enable the compilation and sharing of intelligence that otherwise could not be legally exchanged between agencies such as Trading Standards, Immigration Enforcement, Border Force, HM Revenue & Customs and the police (Spapens et al, 2015). However, the extent to which this relates to child sexual exploitation or other forms of child sexual abuse is not known.

> Data from one force suggests that only a small proportion of regional organised crime units' activity may be related to child sexual exploitation.

---

4.   Most other forms of child sexual abuse are dealt with by Public Protection Unit officers in multi-functional units.

6.2 Local structures

The structure of policing child sexual exploitation at local force level is less clear, although it is reasonable to assume that the sophistication of response structures is likely to be affected by force size, resource allocation and population need. Allnock et al (2017) reviewed the structural make-up of child sexual exploitation responses in eight UK police forces, and the findings – although unlikely to be representative of all forces – highlight the variance between forces in respect of their approaches and the demands of specific localities. Four approach 'models' were identified across the eight forces:

▸ Five forces were said to have 'specialist units' undertaking investigation, disruption and victim support.

▸ One force had a 'victim-focused specialist child sexual exploitation team' where investigation and disruption were separate from victim support, with a child sexual exploitation team liaising between investigative officers and the victim(s).

▸ The third model involved an 'intelligence-focused specialist child sexual exploitation team with dispersed victim support'. This force had no specific child sexual exploitation structure. All officers were expected to be "omnicompetent" in investigating child sexual exploitation and supporting victims. A dedicated child sexual exploitation team was responsible for raising awareness, chairing multi-agency child sexual exploitation meetings and tasking disruption activity.

▸ The final approach was to have 'no specialist child sexual exploitation team with dispersed victim support'.

The research identified that the police were not realising disruption measures' full potential because:

▸ a lack of standardised recording practices prevented forces from assessing the measures' effectiveness

▸ some police personnel were unfamiliar with some disruption measures, and with the scale of successful child sexual exploitation prosecutions or disruption outcomes

▸ policing functions (e.g. disruption and investigation) were separated, and poor relationships with partner agencies adversely affected the sharing of intelligence and knowledge of disruption measures

▸ there was a lack of resourcing for disruption initiatives.

"

A review of forces' responses to child sexual exploitation found wide variance in their approaches to investigation, disruption and victim support.

"

7. Multi-agency working

Although the configuration of multi-agency practice models varies, most adhere to three core principles (Department for Education, 2018; Home Office, 2019a):

- Share information effectively.
- Make decisions jointly.
- Coordinate interventions.

It is now commonplace for safeguarding professionals to work in multi-agency teams or observe multi-agency information-sharing protocols. Increasingly, safeguarding professionals will work within a co-located multidisciplinary team, often referred to as a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) (Allnock et al, 2017; Sharp-Jeffs, 2017). These multi-agency teams may include the voluntary sector.

This way of working is consistent with a contextual safeguarding approach, as its focus extends from identifying and targeting unsafe environments to boosting the existence and impacts of safe environments and structures in the child or young person's community context.

Multi-agency working and information-sharing across partners, including with the police, is seen as vital to improving disruption activity (Local Government Association, 2014).

7.1 Problem profiles and safeguarding responsibilities

Multi-agency working can support the production of problem profiles (an analysis of crime trends or hotspots that assists in subject identification and selection of suspects or victims) – which, by providing a more accurate representation of child sexual abuse on the ground, can inform disruption strategies (Harris et al, 2015).

The identification and disruption of suspects is, in most instances, subsequent to the identification of a child who is at risk of or already being sexually abused by the suspect (Berelowitz et al, 2013). Identifying the child at the earliest possible opportunity means that the child can be supported, and any information shared about the suspect (which in the first instance may not be shared with the police) can be recorded (Jago et al, 2011; Sharp-Jeffs et al, 2017). Information relevant to the identification and disruption of suspects includes names, nicknames, locations, vehicle registrations and known associates, all of which can provide supporting evidence for prosecutions, the issuance of civil orders or the instigation of other disruptive approaches (Sharp-Jeffs et al, 2017).

There appears, however, to be a perception among safeguarding professionals that child protection is a matter for social care services while responsibility for disruption is held chiefly by the police (Allnock et al, 2017; Spicer, 2018). This may undermine the vital role that all safeguarding partners can play, not only in regard to information-sharing but also in identifying opportunities for disruption and undertaking active monitoring roles when a disruptive measure is deployed.

7.2 Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

MAPPA is an established multi-agency model, in place across all 42 criminal justice areas in England and Wales, in which the police and HM Prison and Probation Service work collaboratively to manage and respond to the risk posed by 'high-risk' violent and sexual offenders and registered sex offenders (RSOs) living in the community (Home Office, 2019a; Stone, 2012).

MAPPA uses a three-tier risk management system to identify the offenders posing the highest risk of further offending. This allows resources to be channelled accordingly, proportionate prohibitive orders to be issued, and rehabilitative interventions to be facilitated (Hudson and Henley, 2015). Highly skilled professionals carry out intensive and demanding work to monitor known offenders, and MAPPA is considered likely to reduce the opportunity for repeat offending. RSOs account for only a fraction of those who pose a risk to children, however (National MAPPA Team, 2019; Nelson, 2016).

7.3 Effectiveness of multi-agency working

Evidence supports the value of multi-agency working and effective information-sharing in responses to child sexual exploitation (Shuker and Harris, 2018), and suggests that multi-agency and inter-agency approaches generate information which is used to disrupt such exploitation (Hughes and Thomas, 2016; Allnock et al, 2017).

Many early reviews of safeguarding agencies' practice found little evidence of a systematic approach to working collaboratively, however (Jago and Pearce, 2008; Jago et al, 2011) – and several subsequent serious case reviews relating to child sexual exploitation have noted the failure of agencies and practitioners to share information effectively, recognise what is important, and action an appropriate response (Jay, 2014; Myers and Carmi, 2016; Spicer, 2018). Multi-agency working can be challenging, especially when there is a lack of standardised practice in relation to recording information (Baginsky and Holmes, 2015).

Operation Genga

One example of a multi-sector approach to disrupting child sexual abuse and other serious organised crime was Operation Genga, developed by Lancashire Constabulary in 2009 (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2017). It involved the collaboration of almost 40 community partners, which shared intelligence through a designated platform. Statutory partners included in Operation Genga were the Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs, the Environment Agency, the UK Border Force, the Gambling Commission, and the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency.

Such multi-agency models to tackle complex crime holistically have been well received (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2017) and adopted elsewhere in tackling child sexual exploitation (Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership, 2017).

Operation Sanctuary

In 2014, Northumbria police launched Operation Sanctuary, an overarching police investigation into child sexual exploitation in Newcastle which employed a multi-agency framework from the outse. It has been presented as a promising model for disrupting child sexual exploitation, and as such is regarded as a model of excellence (Spicer, 2018).

As well as experienced police officers with expertise in major crime, forensics and covert strategies, senior staff from Newcastle City Council were involved from Operation Sanctuary's conception; community and voluntary organisations were also involved, as were health and education practitioners. Maintaining focus on the victims and investing in victim support practitioners resulted in an improved understanding of the nature of the abuse, which informed action to be taken against the suspects (Spicer, 2018).

By 2018, Operation Sanctuary had identified 278 victims and arrested 461 suspects, with eight organised crime gangs subject to ongoing disruption; more than 550 names had been referred to immigration services for removal under the Home Office's High Harm Scheme; and the licences of 29 taxi drivers suspected of involvement in child sexual exploitation had been suspended (House of Commons Debates, 2018; Johnson, 2018). A total of 220 CAWNs had been issued (House of Commons Debates, 2018), with SHPOs and SROs considered in every applicable case (Spicer, 2018).

Returning home interviews

Research and practice evidence suggest that children and young people going missing is connected with the risk of child sexual exploitation (Smeaton, 2013; Sharp-Jeffs, 2017). Where exploitation involves instances of going missing, 'returning home' interviews carried out by trained professionals are now recommended as good practice (Hughes and Thomas, 2016; Sharp-Jeffs, 2017). This has two benefits: the interview helps to identify and action the most appropriate support for the child, and can provide a wealth of potentially actionable intelligence about the suspect(s).

A multi-agency approach in respect to returning home interviews offers the best opportunity for important information to be shared, evaluated and recorded – and, where appropriate, can trigger a disruption response (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2013; Sharp-Jeffs, 2017).

> Serious case reviews relating to child sexual exploitation have noted the failure of agencies and practitioners to share information effectively.

8. Working with non-offending parents and families

A num In the Home Office's toolkit of measures to disrupt child exploitation, the role of non-offending parents is positioned as "vitally important in disrupting exploitation" (Home Office, 2019a:35). When children experience extra-familial abuse, parents working in partnership with other agencies are essential "front-line agents" in the endeavour to disrupt and prosecute suspects (Parents Against Child Exploitation, 2016:6).

To support parents as partners in disruption, the toolkit (Home Office, 2019a) advises professionals to consider:

▸ liaising with parents to ensure missing episodes are reported and recorded

▸ providing them with a designated police officer as a point of contact to discuss concerns and potential evidence

▸ ensuring that they are made aware of involved agencies' action plans, so they understand their and others' responsibilities

▸ supporting them to gather and share information and intelligence about incidents.

Pivotal to the success of parents as partners is the quality and consistency of the support they are given (Thomas and D'Arcy, 2017). However, findings from comprehensive reports following large-scale cases of child sexual exploitation (Jay, 2014; Ofsted, 2014) have noted failings within the child protection system, and particularly an absence of early help for children and their families (Parents Against Child Exploitation, 2016).

8.1 Effectiveness of engagement with parents

In a review of a Barnardo's child sexual exploitation intervention project called 'Families and Communities Against Sexual Exploitation' (FCASE), Thomas and D'Arcy (2017) found that the project aimed, among other things, to identify and respond to early signs of child sexual exploitation – a point at which disruption measures can be employed – and develop processes around intelligence-sharing to support such endeavours. Between 2013 and 2015, FCASE was evaluated by the University of Bedfordshire; the evaluation highlighted how direct work with parents could re-establish or open lines of communication between police services and parents when the latter's trust in statutory services had corroded (D'Arcy et al, 2015).

This shows that support (when available and effective) for parents of sexually exploited children and young people can be a vital component of a holistic disruption strategy, strengthening relationships and information-sharing between parents and safeguarding professionals (Scott and McNeish, 2017). This extends beyond child sexual exploitation: parents/caregivers can also play a central role in protecting their children in situations of intra-familial abuse by implementing safety plans and managing risks, potentially disrupting the abuse (Glinski, 2020).

" When children experience extra-familial abuse, parents are essential 'front-line agents' in the effort to disrupt and prosecute suspects. "

9. Reflections

This scoping review shows that most disruption measures in relation to child sexual abuse have been developed to prevent or interfere with the activities of people suspected of committing child sexual exploitation or sharing images of child sexual abuse online. Moreover, it suggests that the range of disruption measures is vast and may be overwhelming to navigate for those tasked with their deployment.

Relatively little literature has been published on the use and effectiveness of measures to disrupt child sexual abuse. While many professionals perceive disruption measures as necessary and useful tools for proactively safeguarding children and young people, such perceptions are often based on anecdotal accounts of successful outcomes, reported second-hand.

No literature was identified that gives victims' views on the use of disruption measures, or the impact of those measures on their lives. Equally, we found no evidence that suspects' perceptions of disruption measures had been explored.

From the literature available, child abduction warning notices (CAWNs) seem to be the most used disruption measure, but their deterrent effect on suspects remains unknown. Direct measures such as sexual risk orders (SROs), sexual harm prevention orders (SHPOs) and suspect warning letters are increasingly used, as are referrals to the National Referral Mechanism. Meanwhile, there appears to have been a huge increase in the sharing of information and the development of technology leading to the removal of online child sexual abuse images. In the community, a number of disruption-supportive initiatives have been reported which have tackled child sexual exploitation hotspots or made use of automatic number plate recognition.

In terms of effectiveness, the use of child sexual exploitation flags has been highlighted as a core feature in the effective policing of this form of offending, and is considered good practice, while secure accommodation orders can be successful in breaking contact between suspects and their victims. Some practitioners and researchers have raised concerns about the use of certain disruption measures, and particularly the inconsistent monitoring of compliance after CAWNs are issued; the inconsistent use of flags and assessment of risk levels indicated by flags; and the potential for secure accommodation orders to increase the risk of child sexual exploitation. More generally, it has been suggested that targeted disruption efforts may in fact strengthen criminal groups and networks, or create a 'vacuum' in a criminal market which more dangerous suspects may fill.

The value of multi-agency working for the identification of disruption opportunities, and the planning, deployment and monitoring of disruption activities, is evident in the literature reviewed. However, the notion that disruption is a matter for the police, while child protection is social services' responsibility, was also apparent. Among other things, this fails to acknowledge the important role that agencies other than the police and non-offending parents can play in disruption endeavours – and highlights the importance of sharing information between agencies.

Overall, there is much still to be learnt about the use, impact and effectiveness of disruption measures in response to child sexual abuse. However, new data emerging through the Home Office's monitoring of "diversionary, educational or intervention activity" (Home Office, 2021b) may provide a way of evaluating the use and effectiveness of disruption measures in the future. In addition, the CSA Centre's research into police perceptions of disruption (Wager et al 2021) provides further insight into the ways in which police forces across England and Wales seek to disrupt child sexual abuse.

References

Abdel-Haq, M. (2018) *Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Recommendations for a Safer and More Robust System*. London: Department for Transport.

Allnock, D., Lloyd, J. and Pearce, J. (2017) *Evidence-based Models of Policing to Protect Children from Sexual Exploitation*. Luton: University of Bedfordshire.

Allsup, R., Thomas, E., Monk, B., Frank, R. and Bouchard, M. (2015) Networking in child exploitation – Assessing disruption strategies using registrant information. In Pei, J., Silvestri, F. and Tang, J. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2015 IEEE/ACM International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining*. New York: Association for Computing Machinery. https://doi.org/10.1145/2808797.2809297

Anda, F., Le-Khac, N. and Scanlon, M. (2020) DeepUAge: Improving underage estimation accuracy to aid CSEM investigation. *Forensic Science International: Digital Investigation*, 32(Supplement):300921. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsidi.2020.300921

Arksey, H. and O'Malley, L. (2005) Scoping studies: Towards a methodological framework. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(1):19–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/1364557032000119616

Baginsky, M. and Holmes, D. (2015) *A Review of Current Arrangements for the Operation of Local Safeguarding Children Boards*. London: Local Government Association.

Baker, R. (2019) *Regional Organised Crime Unit (Strategic Policing and Crime Board Agenda Item 9b, 19 November)*. Birmingham: West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner.

Barnardo's Scotland (2014) *Guidance on Child Sexual Exploitation: A Practitioners' Resource Pack*. Barkingside: Barnardo's.

Beckett, H., Holmes, D. and Walker, J. (2017) *Child Sexual Exploitation: Definition and Guide for Professionals – Extended Text*. Luton: University of Bedfordshire.

Berelowitz, S., Clifton, J., Firmin, C., Gulyurtlu, S. and Edwards, G. (2013) *"If Only Someone Had Listened." The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups. Final Report*. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Berelowitz, S., Firmin, C., Edwards, G. and Gulyurtlu, S. (2012) *"I Thought I Was the Only One. The Only One in the World." The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups. Interim Report*. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Blythe, M. (2015) *Child Sexual Exploitation: 'Making a Difference'. The Impact of the Multi-agency Approach to Tackling CSE in Oxfordshire*. Oxford: Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board.

Broadhurst, R. (2019) Child sex abuse images and exploitation materials. In Leukfeldt, R. and Holt, T. (eds.) *The Human Factor of Cybercrime*. Abingdon: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429460593

Brown, R., Evans, E., Webb, S., Holdaway, S., Berry, G., Chenery, S., Gresty, B. and Jones, M. (2012) *The Contribution of Financial Investigation to Tackling Organised Crime: A Qualitative Study*. London: Home Office.

Casey, L. (2015) *Report of Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council*. London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse in collaboration with the Centre for Abuse and Trauma Studies (2020) *A New Typology of Child Sexual Abuse Offending*. Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse.

Childline (2021) Remove a nude image shared online. [Webpage.] Available at: www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/remove-nude-image-shared-online/ [Accessed 25 October 2021.]

Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (2017) *Child Sexual Exploitation – Pan Lancashire Standard Operating Protocol*. Preston: CSAP.

College of Policing (2017) Major investigation and public protection: Responding to child sexual exploitation. [Webpage.] Available at: **www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/ major-investigation-and-public-protection/ child-sexual-exploitation/** [Accessed 25 October 2021.]

D'Arcy, K., Dhaliwal, S., Thomas, R., Brodie, I. and Pearce, J. (2015) *Families and Communities Against Child Sexual Exploitation (FCASE): Final Evaluation Report*. Luton: University of Bedfordshire.

Davis, K., Drey, N. and Gould, D. (2009) What are scoping studies? A review of the nursing literature. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 46(10):1386–1400. **https://doi. org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2009.02.010**

Department for Education (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children. A Guide to Inter-agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children*. London: DfE.

Department for Transport (2020) *Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards*. London: DfT.

Department for Transport (2019) *Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Protecting Users. Consultation on Statutory Guidance for Licensing Authorities*. London: DfT.

Diebelius, G. (2018) Police send 10 children letters warning them they are suspected sex offenders. *Metro*, 15 October. Available at: **https://metro.co.uk/2018/10/15/police-send-10-children-letters-warning-them-they-are-suspected-sex-offenders-8039540/**

ECPAT UK (2018) Thousands of children put at risk of trafficking by the UK Government's lack of plan to prevent it, says new Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group report. [Webpage.] Available at: **www.ecpat.org.uk/News/new-atmg-report** [Accessed 25 October 2021.]

Europol (2017) Unique Police2Peer initiative combats child sexual exploitation and abuse online. [Press release, 3 March.] Available at: **www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/ unique-police2peer-initiative-combats-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-online**

Europol (2011) Joint action in 22 European countries against online child sexual abuse material in the internet. [Press release, 16 December.] Available at: **www.europol.europa. eu/newsroom/news/joint-action-in-22-european-countries-against-online-child-sexual-abuse-material-in-internet**

Finkelhor, D. (2009) The prevention of childhood sexual abuse. *The Future of Children*, 19(2):169–194.

Firmin, C., Curtis, G., Fritz, D., Olaitan, P., Latchford, L., Lloyd, J. and Larasi, I. (2016) *Towards a Contextual Response to Peer-on-peer Abuse: Research and Resources from MsUnderstood Local Site Work 2013–2016*. Luton: University of Bedfordshire.

Frosh, S., Phoenix, A. and Pattman, R. (2002) *Young Masculinities: Understanding Boys in Contemporary Society*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Gallagher, B. (2017) Child sexual exploitation – A national threat? *NOTA News*, 82:22–26.

George, R. (2015) The inherent jurisdiction and child protection. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 37(2):250–252. **https://doi.org/10. 1080/09649069.2015.1028160**

Glinski, A. (2020) "But they must have known!" Effectively working with non-abusing parents. [Blog post.] Available at: **www.csacentre. org.uk/resources/blog/but-they-must-have-known-effectively-working-with-non-abusing-parents/**

Government Communications Headquarters (2015) GCHQ and NCA join forces to ensure no hiding place online for criminals. [Press release, 6 November.] Available at: **www.gchq.gov.uk/ news/gchq-and-nca-join-forces-ensure-no-hiding-place-online-criminals**

Harper, Z. and Scott, S. (2005) *Meeting the Needs of Sexually Exploited Young People in London*. Barkingside: Barnardo's.

Harrill, T. (2019) The Court of Appeal on 'secure accommodation'. *Public Law Today*, 13 December. Available at: **www.publiclawtoday.co.uk/litigation-and-enforcement/311-litigation-features/42145-the-court-of-appeal-on-secure-accommodation**

Harris, J., Roker, D., D'Arcy, K. and Shuker, L. with Brodie, I. and Pearce, J. (2015) *CSEFA Hub and Spoke Evaluation: Year Two Progress Report and Interim Findings, 2014–15*. Luton: University of Bedfordshire.

Hart, D. and La Valle, I. (2016) *Local Authority Use of Secure Placements*. London: Department for Education.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (2017) PEEL: *Police Effectiveness 2016. An Inspection of Lancashire Constabulary*. London: HMIC.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (2016) *Missing Children: Who Cares? The Police Response to Missing and Absent Children*. London: HMIC.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (2015) *Regional Organised Crime Units. A Review of Capability and Effectiveness*. London: HMIC.

Home Office (2021a) *Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy*. London: Home Office.

Home Office (2021b) *Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime (With Effect from April 2021)*. London: Home Office.

Home Office (2019a) *Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit: Disruption Tactics*. London: Home Office.

Home Office (2019b) *Policing for the Future: The Government Response to the Tenth Report from the Home Affairs Select Committee Session 2017–19*. London: Home Office.

Home Office (2018) *Serious and Organised Crime Strategy*. London: Home Office.

Home Office (2017) *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation: Progress Report*. London: Home Office.

Home Office (2016) *Sex Offender Civil Orders: Monitoring Update* (HOM002998). London: Home Office.

House of Commons Debate (2018) Sexual exploitation: Newcastle. (12 June.) *Parliamenary Debates (Hansard)*, 642:863–869.

House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2013) *Child Sexual Exploitation and the Response to Localised Grooming: Second Report of Session 2013–14. Volume I*. London: The Stationery Office.

Hudson, K. and Henley, A. (2015) Disparities in public protection measures against sexual offending in England and Wales: An example of preventative injustice? *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 15(5):561–577. **https://doi. org/10.1177/1748895815577219**

Hughes, C. and Thomas, M. (2016) *'You Can Trust Me…' Young People Going Missing and at Risk of, or Abused through, Child Sexual Exploitation in North Wales*. Barkingside: Barnardo's.

Hughes-Jones, L. and Roberts, S. (2015) Closing the gap: Confronting the problem of hotels as venues for child sexual exploitation. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 54(4):336–351. **https://doi.org/10.1111/ hojo.12130**

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (2020) *Children outside the United Kingdom: Phase 2 Investigation Report*. London: IICSA.

Innes, M. and Sheptycki, J. (2004) From detection to disruption. *International Criminal Justice Review*, 14(1):1–24. **https://doi. org/10.1177/105756770401400101**

Internet Watch Foundation (2021) *Face the Facts: Annual Report 2020*. Cambridge: IWF.

Internet Watch Foundation (2020) *The Why. The How. The Who. And the Results. Annual Report 2019*. Cambridge: IWF.

Internet Watch Foundation (2018a) *Trends in Online Child Sexual Exploitation: Examining the Distribution of Captures of Live-streamed Child Sexual Abuse*. Cambridge: IWF.

Internet Watch Foundation (2018b) IWF connects to the Child Abuse Image Database (CAID). [Press release, 21 March.] Available at: **www.iwf.org.uk/news/iwf-connects-to-child-abuse-image-database-caid**

Jago, S., Arocha, L., Brodie, I., Melrose, M., Pearce, J. and Warrington, C. (2011) *What's Going On to Safeguard Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation? How Local Partnerships Respond to Child Sexual Exploitation*. Luton: University of Bedfordshire.

Jago, S. and Pearce, J. (2008) *Gathering Evidence of the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Young People: A Scoping Exercise*. Luton: University of Bedfordshire.

Jay, A. (2014) *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997–2013)*. Rotherham: Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

Joffres, K., Bouchard, M., Frank, R. and Westlake, B. (2011) Strategies to disrupt online child pornography networks. In Memon, N. and Zeng, D. (eds.) *Proceedings of the 2011 European Intelligence and Security Informatics Conference*. New York: The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. **https://doi.org/10.1109/EISIC.2011.32**

Johnson, I. (2018) Operation Sanctuary: 550 face deportation as gangs and child abusers are targeted. *Chronicle Live*, 8 May. Available at: **www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/operation-sanctuary-550-face-deportation-14625320**

Jones, G., Meegan, R., Kennett, P. and Croft, J. (2016) The uneven impact of austerity on the voluntary and community sector: A tale of two cities. *Urban Studies*, 53(10):2064–2080. **https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0042098015587240**

Karsna, K. and Kelly, L. (2021) *The Scale and Nature of Child Sexual Abuse: Review of Evidence*. Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse.

Kingston, S. and Thomas, T. (2018) The sexual risk order and the sexual harm prevention order: The first two years. *Probation Journal*, 65(1):77–88. **https://doi.org/10.1177/0264550517748359**

Kirby, S. (2019) A problem-oriented account of organised crime in the United Kingdom. In Farrell, G. and Sidebottom, A. (eds.) *Realist Evaluation for Crime Science: Essays in Honour of Nick Tilley*. Oxford: Routledge. **https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315627144**

Kirby, S. and Penna, S. (2010) Policing mobile criminality: Towards a situational crime prevention approach to organised crime. In Bullock, K., Clarke, R. and Tilley, N. (eds.) *Situational Prevention of Organised Crimes*. Cullompton: Willan. **https://doi.org/10.4324/9781843929727**

Kirby, S. and Snow, N. (2016) Praxis and the disruption of organized crime groups. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 19(2):111–124. **https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-016-9269-0**

Leclerc, B., Smallbone, S. and Wortley, R. (2015) Prevention nearby: The influence of the presence of a potential guardian on the severity of child sexual abuse. *Sexual Abuse*, 27(2):189–204. **https://doi.org/10.1177/1079063213504594**

Lee, H., Ermakova, T., Ververis, V. and Fabian, B. (2020) Detecting child sexual abuse material: A comprehensive survey. *Forensic Science International: Digital Investigation*, 34:301022. **https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsidi.2020.301022**

Lefevre, M., Preston, O., Hickle, K., Horan, R., Drew, H., Banerjee, R., Cane, T., Barrow, M. and Bowyer, S.(2020) *Evaluation of the Implementation of a Contextual Safeguarding System in the London Borough of Hackney*. London: Department for Education.

Levac, D., Colquhoun, H. and O'Brien, K. (2010) Scoping studies: Advancing the methodology. *Implementation Science*, 5:69. **https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-5-69**

Lillywhite, R. and Skidmore, P. (2006) Boys are not sexually exploited? A challenge to practitioners. *Child Abuse Review*, 15(5):351–361. **https://doi.org/10.1002/car.952**

Local Government Association (2014) *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation – A Resource Pack for Councils*. London: LGA.

Metropolitan Police (2017) *The London Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol*. London: Metropolitan Police.

Ministry of Justice (2018) *Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements – Annual Report 2017/18*. London: MoJ.

Mobile Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse Content (2014) *Preventing Mobile Payment Services from Being Misused to Monetise Child Sexual Abuse Content*. London: GSM Association.

Mohan-Hickson, M. (2018) Police issue 54 notices warning potential child sex offenders to change their ways in two years. *The News*, 15 October. Available at: **www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/crime/police-issue-54-notices-warning-potential-child-sex-offenders-change-their-ways-two-years-560363**

Munro, E. (2011) *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report. A Child-centred System*. London: Department for Education.

Myers, J. and Carmi, E. (2016) *The Brooke Serious Case Review into Child Sexual Exploitation: Final Report*. Bristol: Bristol Safeguarding Children Board.

National Crime Agency (2021) *National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2021*. London: NCA.

National MAPPA Team (2019) *Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements: MAPPA Guidance*. London: HM Prison & Probation Service.

Nelson, S. (2016) *Tackling Child Sexual Abuse: Radical Approaches to Prevention, Protection and Support*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Newiss, G. and Traynor, M. (2013) *Taken: A Study of Child Abduction in the UK*. London: Parents and Abducted Children Together.

Office for National Statistics (2020a) *Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales: Year Ending March 2019*. Titchfield: ONS.

Office for National Statistics (2020b) *Child Abuse in England and Wales: January 2020*. Titchfield: ONS.

Office for National Statistics (2019) *Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales: Year Ending March 2019*. Titchfield: ONS.

Office for National Statistics (2018) *Sexual Offending: Victimisation and the Path through the Criminal Justice System*. Titchfield: ONS

Ofsted (2014) *The Sexual Exploitation of Children: It Couldn't Happen Here, Could It?* Manchester: Ofsted.

Owen, G. and Savage, N. (2015) *The Tor Dark Net*. Ontario: Centre for International Governanace Innovation.

Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (2016) *Parents Speak Out: Crucial Partners in Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation*. Leeds: PACE.

Parkinson, P., Shrimpton, S., Swanston, H., O'Toole, B. and Oates, K. (2002) The process of attrition in child sexual assault cases: A case flow analysis of criminal investigations and prosecutions. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 35(3):347–362. **https://doi.org/10.1375/acri.35.3.347**

Quayle, E. (2020) Prevention, disruption and deterrence of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. *ERA Forum*, 21(3):429–447. **https://doi.org/10.1007/s12027-020-00625-7**

Quayle, E. and Koukopoulos, N. (2019) Deterrence of online child sexual abuse and exploitation. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 13(3):345–362. **https://doi.org/10.1093/police/pay028**

Radford, L., Richardson Foster, H., Barter, C. and Stanley, N. (2017) *Rapid Evidence Assessment: What Can Be Learnt from Other Jurisdictions about Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse*. Preston: University of Central Lancashire.

Rayment-McHugh, S., Adams, D., Wortley, R. and Tilley, N. (2015) 'Think Global Act Local': A place-based approach to sexual abuse prevention. *Crime Science*, 4:22. **https://doi.org/10.1186/s40163-015-0035-4**

Safeguarding Hub (2018) Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs). [Webpage.] Available at: **https://safeguardinghub.co.uk/child-abduction-warning-notices-cawns/** [Accessed 25 October 2021.]

Scott, S. and McNeish, D. (2017) *Supporting Parents of Sexually Exploited Young People. An Evidence Review*. Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse.

Sharp-Jeffs, N. (2017) Hidden links? Going missing as an indicator of child sexual exploitation. In Shalev Greene, K. and Alys, L. (eds.) *Missing Persons: A Handbook of Research*. Abingdon: Routledge. **https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315595603**

Sharp-Jeffs, N., Coy, M. and Kelly, L. (2017) *Key Messages from Research on Child Sexual Exploitation: Police*. Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse.

Shuker, L. (2013) *Evaluation of Barnardo's Safe Accommodation Project for Sexually Exploited and Trafficked Young People*. Luton: University of Bedfordshire.

Shuker, L. and Harris, J. (2018) *The Role of the Voluntary Sector in Protecting Children from Sexual Exploitation*. Luton: University of Bedfordshire.

Smeaton, E. (2013) *Running from Hate to What You Think Is Love: The Relationship between Running Away and Child Sexual Exploitation*. Barkingside: Barnardo's.

Spapens, A., Peters, M. and Van Daele, D. (eds.) (2015) *Administrative Measures to Prevent and Tackle Crime: Legal Possibilities and Practical Application in EU Member States*. The Hague: Eleven International Publishing.

Spicer, D. (2018) *Joint Serious Case Review Concerning Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adults with Needs for Care and Support in Newcastle upon Tyne*. Newcastle: Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board and Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board.

Stone, N. (2012) Legislation and sex offending. In Brayford, J., Cowe, F. and Deering, J. (eds.) *Sex Offenders: Punish, Help, Change or Control? Theory, Policy and Practice Explored*. Abingdon: Routledge. **https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203114735**

The Children's Society (2021) *Disrupting Child Exploitation: A Proposal for Legislative Change*. London: The Children's Society.

The Children's Society (2018a) CSE Police and Prevention: Pursue. [Webpage.] Available at: **www.csepoliceandprevention.org.uk/pursue** [Accessed 25 October 2021.]

The Children's Society (2018b) CSE Police and Prevention: Protect. [Webpage.] Available at: **www.csepoliceandprevention.org.uk/protect** [Accessed 25 October 2021.]

Thomas, R. and D'Arcy, K. (2017) Combatting child sexual exploitation with young people and parents: Contributions to a twenty-first-century family support agenda. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 47(6):1686–1703. **https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx093**

Tilley, N. (2016) Intelligence-led policing and the disruption of organised crime: Motifs, methods and morals. In Delpeuch, T. and Ross, J. (eds.) *Comparing the Democratic Governance of Police Intelligence: New Models of Participation and Expertise in the United States and Europe*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Tilley, N. (2009) *Crime Prevention*. Cullompton: Willan.

Todorovic, N. and Chaudhuri, A. (2018) Using AI to help organisations detect and report child sexual abuse material online. [Blog post.] Available at: **www.blog.google/around-the-globe/google-europe/using-ai-help-organizations-detect-and-report-child-sexual-abuse-material-online/**

Wager, N., Myers, A. and Parkinson, D. (2021) *Police Disruption of Child Sexual Abuse: Findings from a National Survey of Frontline Personnel and Strategic Leads for Safeguarding*. Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse.

Wallace, K. and Hopper, R. (2019) *Criminal, Civil and Partnership Disruption Options for Perpetrators of Child and Adult Victims of Exploitation*. Derby: NWG Network.

Welsh Government (2019) *National Action Plan: Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

West Yorkshire Police (2018) *Force Policy: Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)*. Wakefield: WYP.

Appendix 1: Search terms used and databases/repositories searched

Search terms used in the scoping review

The crime	The perpetrators	The victims	The medium used for offending	Disruption
Sexual exploitation	Offender	Children	Online	Policing
Commercial sexual exploitation	Perpetrator	Minors	On street	Investigation
Prostitution	Facilitator	Youth	Localised	Warning
Grooming with the intent to sexually abuse	Suspect	Young people	Contact	Disruption tools and strategies
Trafficking for sexual purposes	Defendant	Adolescents	Familial	Disruption orders
Child sexual abuse	Accused	Teens	Extra-familial	CSE letter
Sexual abuse	Person of interest		Institutional	Child abduction warning notices
Incest				

Bibliographic databases/repositories searched

Barnardo's

Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

College of Policing

Criminal Justice Abstracts

Emerald

FORENSICnetBASE

Google Scholar

IICSA research reports

Institute of Social Sciences

International Centre at the University of Bedfordshire

ISI Web of Science

JISC Journal Archives

Lucy Faithfull Foundation

Medline

Mendeley

NCJRS

NSPCC

PAIS

PsychINFO

Researchgate

Sciences Direct

Scopus

Social Care On-line

Sociological Abstracts

UK Register of Child Protection Research

Unicef

Centre of expertise
on child sexual abuse

The photograph on the cover was taken using actors and does not depict an actual situation.