Public Petitions Committee

Tackling child sexual exploitation in Scotland

Written submission from Clackmannanshire, Stirling and Falkirk Child Protection Committees and Multi-Agency Partnerships

In your own organisation’s experience–

What barriers exist to identifying, disrupting or prosecuting child sexual exploitation (CSE) perpetrators? How might these be overcome?

Barriers to identifying, disrupting or prosecuting child sexual exploitation (CSE) perpetrators include:
- lack of awareness of the issues amongst professional staff and the general public (adults and children and young people)
- attitudinal issues around negative stereotyping and blaming of victims
- lack of joint working between agencies and services to share information and co-ordinate appropriate responses in terms of individual incidents and the wider picture
- systems which do not explicitly record child sexual exploitation
- current problems/ambiguities in legislation relating to consent

Barriers might be overcome by:
- improved training and awareness-raising for professional staff pre- and post-qualification around child sexual exploitation
- work in schools and youth services with children and young people to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation
- work to raise awareness in the wider community of child sexual exploitation
- all the above to include clear challenge to the negative stereotyping of victims
- clear multi-agency guidance in relation to responding to child sexual exploitation
- developing systems that specifically record child sexual exploitation
- Further clarification of consent within existing legislation

What difficulties exist around keeping looked-after children and young people (accommodated or at home) safe from CSE perpetrators? How might these be overcome?

Difficulties around keeping looked-after children and young people (accommodated or at home) safe include:
- the additional vulnerabilities of this group related to poor self-image and multiple reasons for being looked after

These might be overcome by:
- specific targeting to ensure this group access relevant information and support and that carers are appropriately trained and resourced to protect them

What barriers exist to combating perpetrators’ use of online / social media? How might these be overcome?

Barriers to combating perpetrators’ use of online/social media include:
- lack of understanding of professional staff and the general public (adults and children and young people) of links between online/social media and child sexual exploitation
- lack of confidence in professional staff and the general public (particularly adults) in relation to the internet/social media generally
- lack of joint working between agencies and services to share information and co-ordinate appropriate responses

Barriers might be overcome by:
- improved training and awareness-raising for professional staff as above to include issues around online/social media
- work in schools and with the wider community also to include this aspect
- multi-agency guidance to include issue of online/social media

What types of training has your organisation had on ways of identifying, disrupting or prosecuting CSE perpetrators?

Training has been delivered to professional staff through Practitioner Forum meetings in Clackmannanshire and Stirling and is planned in Falkirk.
Training has been given to foster-carers in Stirling.
Central E-Safety Partnership works with professionals and the general public (adults, children and young people) in Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling to raise awareness of internet safety issues including child sexual exploitation.
The two Child Protection Committees and three Violence against Women for a within Forth Valley are in the process of organising a conference around commercial sexual exploitation which will include child sexual exploitation.

(For Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service): Have you used the 2005 and 2009 Acts* to disrupt, prosecute, charge or convict perpetrators of CSE, do problems remain about using these Acts? If so, please provide detail.

In Forth Valley Division there have been no cases dealt with under this legislation.

It would be of benefit if there was a marker on the Crime reports and Missing Person reports so that officers can be guided and reminded to consider Child Sexual Exploitation when dealing with missing young persons who are vulnerable and those involved in internet crimes or sexual investigations where they may be at risk of becoming the victims of exploitation.

(For Police Scotland): Lack of co-ordination, and differing policies, among Scotland’s eight police forces were previously seen as difficulties in countering CSE. The Scottish Government has stated that is looking to improve the way CSE is identified by the new single police force. How does Police Scotland intend to make this improvement?

There is an ongoing working group undertaken by Police Scotland which is led by ACC Malcolm Graham and DCI Norrie Conway, and the group are seeking to gather case studies and develop a training package for all police officers. This will improve understanding and raise awareness of CSE across Scotland.
· If you have experienced an example of good practice in relation to any of these questions, please describe it for us.

The two Child Protection Committees in Forth Valley have agreed to participate in the Scottish Government’s national pilot in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation.