



***What can be learnt from other jurisdictions  
about preventing and responding to child sexual  
abuse?***

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# Purpose and approach



# Research questions



- *What can be learnt from jurisdictions outside of England about the role of institutions in preventing and responding to child sexual abuse and exploitation?*
- *What does the evidence show is best practice for institutions in preventing, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse?*



# Approach



- Agreed search terms for online databases and ‘grey literature’
- Included peer reviewed research, in English, from 2004-2016
- All research assessed against agreed quality criteria
- Additional searches for ‘promising’ research
- Weight of evidence assessed on quality of research, relevance to review question and ethics.



# Search and review results



12,169 records from database and other searches

1,460 screened with 977 excluded

483 full text articles screened  
and 383 excluded

88  
studies  
included




# Recommendations for Change



- In the December 2016 review - recommendations for change will be aligned to, and across four themes:
  - **Cultural:** attitudes, behaviours, values in institutions that prevent us from stopping child sexual abuse;
  - **Structural:** legislation and organisational frameworks in other jurisdictions within and between institutions;
  - **Financial:** funding positions for relevant institutions/services;
  - **Professional and political:** leadership, professional, practice issues for those working/volunteering in relevant institutions.



# Presentation structure

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- To maximise conceptual coherence, this presentation is aligned to the Inquiry's four themes
  - To further manage the material, organisational and sector responses within the four Inquiry themes categorised as:
    - *primary prevention*, stopping child sexual abuse (including CSE)
    - improving *identification, disclosure, reporting and responses*
    - *control and management of perpetrators*, ensuring they do not reoffend
  - *Support for victims and survivors* will be the focus of the July seminar so is not discussed today.



# General findings



- No jurisdiction has everything 'right'
- More known about what does not work
- Adequately resourced, comprehensive, well coordinated, multi-sector approaches best
- Effective responses consider; diversity of problem, age appropriateness, respond to underlying vulnerabilities and contexts





# Evidence gaps



- Outcomes and impact
- Coordinated multi-sector responses
- Comparisons across jurisdictions
- Drivers of demand for abuse and protective factors
- Peer-on-peer abuse
- Compensation schemes
- Barriers to disclosure in younger children and boys
- Finance and cost effectiveness





# Primary prevention



# Primary prevention: Cultural



- Most information found from Australia, Finland, Norway, Sweden and USA
- Three main types of response:
  1. Tackle demand and attitudes, norms and drivers
  2. Reduce risks and vulnerabilities of children as victims
  3. Context and accessibility (situational prevention)
- All relevant but situational prevention most widely used



# Primary prevention: Cultural



- Schools programmes can increase knowledge and begin to change culture, attitudes and environments
- Social marketing and media helpful when used to reinforce learning (not alone)
- ‘edutainment’ appears promising, with wide reach
- Supporting parents discussing sexual health and safety has positive effect
- More evidence on evaluation and protective factors required



# Primary prevention: Structural



- Policy/legislation can provide protective environment
- Regulation of sexual offending very strong in England, at forefront of primary prevention/early identification efforts online
- Sexual services legislation in Sweden and Norway not yet evaluated
- Image takedown, site blocking, online safety resources show success



# Primary prevention: Structural



- Need evidence on comparative effectiveness of different child protection agencies or arrangements
- UK's pre-employment vetting and barring procedures 'most developed regulatory system'
- Vetting and barring policies only are limited to those convicted
- Need wider focus on organisational safety and regulation of unmonitored contact with children



# Primary prevention: Financial



- Little information on the effective use of resources
- More work needed on cost effectiveness of responses
- Standardised data on costs required to inform fiscal assessments which underpin prevention policy



# Primary prevention: Professional



- Pre/school programmes improve knowledge of protective behaviours and disclosures
- Preventative education should be age appropriate and recognise diversity of recipients
- Teachers require training to build confidence and skills
- ‘Whole school’ approaches involving parents, faith and community groups more effective





# Primary prevention: Professional



- Travel and tourism sector tackling CSE through awareness education, codes of conduct and safety standards
- UK, Canada, Australia, Netherlands have good policies/guidance addressing child abuse in sport



# Case study: help before offending



***Stop It Now!** offers services in the USA, Australia, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK.*

*The helpline is free and confidential for adults who are worried about their own behaviour towards children or who are concerned about a friend or family.*

*Motivations of callers worried about their own behaviour are discussed. People are encouraged, through agreed actions, to develop a life in which their needs are met positively and children are not sexually abused.*



# Key messages: Primary Prevention



- *Cultural:* Education, social marketing/media all helpful but approaches need to address demand involving a broader range of audiences
- *Structural:* Tackling systemic factors such as privacy issues and opportunities for abuse in organisations most immediately effective response.
- Preventative interventions to be underpinned by accessible services for those who disclose
- *Financial:* More evidence required on cost of prevention
- *Professional and political:* professional guidance, leadership and training all key effective prevention strategies





# Identification, disclosure, reporting and response



## Identification, disclosure, reporting & response: Cultural



- Proactive approaches using a range of sources increase reporting, arrests, prosecution and convictions
- Involving communities through proactive outreach, capacity building, taking a holistic approach to community problems and building trusting relationships



## Identification, disclosure, reporting and response: Structural



- Mandatory reporting can increase reports of child sexual abuse, however reports of unsubstantiated cases can also increase. Evidence base on MR is mixed
- Views are mixed on whether increased reporting aids early intervention or creates over-reporting and potential harm



## Identification, disclosure, reporting and response: Financial



- Little evidence on cost of approaches
- Mandatory reporting would very likely require additional resources
- Costs will depend on the nature of the regime introduced
- Additional training will require resources and practices may not be effective if organisations lack sufficient capacity



## Identification, disclosure, reporting and response: Professional



- Professionals need awareness of barriers to reporting and avoid relying on disclosure
- Require proactive approaches and relationship building over time
- Specialist mobile teams/task forces can have a positive impact
- Additional training required to recognise other indicators





## Identification, disclosure, reporting and response: Professional



- Organisations need to address the organisational barriers and provide safe spaces for children to report
- New technologies such as *telemedicine* can give access to specialist skills in identification and assessment
- Evidence insufficient to support screening of child sexual abuse in health services
- Child friendly interviewing, guided by protocol and with trained professionals produces better evidence



## Case study – child centred approach



*The Barnahus (Children's House) in Iceland is a multi-agency one stop shop service for sexually abused children and their families. It brings together social work, health, therapy, investigation and prosecution services, in a child friendly environment to provide a holistic, coordinated prevention and response service.*

*The model uses methods of child friendly interviewing and investigation which are designed to reduce the number of times a child has to be questioned. There is promising evidence this approach has increased willingness to report child sexual abuse cases and increased satisfaction of service users.*



## Key messages: Identification, disclosure, reporting and response



- *Cultural*: Proactive approaches and community engagement improve reporting, especially if cultural barriers exist
- *Structural*: Mandatory reporting can increase reporting but evidence on benefits is not conclusive
- *Financial*: Evidence on costs is poor, but implementation of new practices would require additional resources
- *Professional and political*: Training required to ensure guidance is implemented and practises adjusted to remove barriers to reporting

