



INDEPENDENT INQUIRY CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks public hearing - one page summary

From Rochdale to Rotherham, major recent cases of child sexual exploitation by organised networks have sparked national concern. A number of investigations have already been held in response to high profile prosecutions, including serious case reviews and an independent inquiry in Rotherham, which, like this Inquiry, was chaired by Professor Alexis Jay OBE. The principal aim of this forward-looking investigation is to determine whether authorities have taken on board the lessons from previous failures.

The sexual exploitation of children is a hidden problem. It is clear that cases are under-reported but it is very difficult to accurately measure the true scale. Research suggests many thousands of children are harmed each year. As of February 2020, there were over 90 police investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation in operation.

What is not disputed is the devastating effect of sexual exploitation on children. These can include mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder. Effects can also include age-inappropriate sexual activity, alcohol and drug misuse and a lack of ability to trust others and build relationships.

This two-week public hearing (21 September - 2 October) will focus on three overarching questions:

1. Is the sexual exploitation of children being prevented or at least reduced?
2. Are children now better protected by institutions from the perpetrators of sexual exploitation?
3. Are perpetrators who associate with others to exploit children being identified, disrupted and brought to justice?

In order to thoroughly examine these issues, the Inquiry will focus on six geographic areas. They provide a range of sizes, demographics and social characteristics. The areas are Durham, St Helens, Warwickshire, Tower Hamlets, Swansea and Bristol.

Key definitions:

Child sexual exploitation: Child sexual abuse which involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where a child receives something, as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. It can occur through the use of technology.

Organised networks: Two or more individuals who are known to (or associated with) one another and are involved in the sexual exploitation of children. This includes introducing them to other individuals for the purpose of exploitation, trafficking a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation, taking payment for sexual activities with a child or allowing their property to be used for sexual activities with a child.