

<p>1 Wednesday, 23 September 2020 2 (10.30 am) 3 THE CHAIR: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Day 3 of 4 this public hearing. Ms Hill, please go ahead. 5 MS HILL: Good morning, chair and panel. Before we begin 6 with the first witness, chair, there is a short point 7 I would like to clarify in relation to some of 8 the statistics that were adduced in the opening 9 statement I gave earlier in the week. 10 A point to clarify, please, in relation to some 11 information I read out about Bristol. I made reference 12 there to there being 1,000 children identified as of 13 heightened risk of sexual exploitation. I wish to 14 clarify that was from June 2020 in terms of 15 the statistics. The references I gave to 476 children 16 being specifically at risk and 276 offences being 17 identified come from a November 2019 document, so I just 18 wish to give that clarification, please, about those 19 figures and the dates. Thank you. 20 Our first witness, please, chair, is John Pearce. 21 MR JOHN PEARCE (affirmed) 22 Examination by MS HILL 23 MS HILL: You are John Pearce; is that right? 24 A. That's correct. 25 Q. You have provided the inquiry with a series of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 1</p>	<p>1 statements, Mr Pearce. I am just going to read out the 2 reference numbers because, chair, with your permission, 3 I would like to formally adduce the entirety of 4 Mr Pearce's evidence by publishing his statements in 5 full. The references are DUC000685; DUC000792, 6 DUC000793 and DUC000809. I would like to formally 7 adduce all of those statements in full, please. 8 Mr Pearce, if, at any point, you can't see or hear 9 me, please let me know, and if you don't follow the 10 question, please also indicate. 11 You have been provided, I think, with a copy of 12 a topics list that I propose to go through. In terms of 13 timing, Mr Pearce, we will run from now until the 14 11.30 am break. Then I envisage that after the break 15 I will have about another half an hour of questions for 16 you. I will try to go through the topics list as best 17 I can, but I may take the themes slightly out of order 18 to try to give some structure to your evidence, allowing 19 for that break that we have. 20 Can I also remind you, Mr Pearce, again about the 21 need to respect any restriction orders that have been 22 made as far as your evidence is concerned. I think you 23 understand the difficulties that we face at the moment. 24 Mr Pearce, can I bring up first on screen 25 DUC000685_001 and scroll in, please, on paragraphs 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 2</p>
<p>1 and 2, which should give you some assistance, Mr Pearce, 2 in providing the chair and panel, please, with some 3 information about your background. Can you give the 4 chair and panel your title at the moment, please, 5 Mr Pearce? 6 A. Corporate Director of Children and Young People's 7 Services for County Durham. 8 Q. Do we see in paragraphs 1 and 2 of your statement that 9 you were appointed into that role in September of last 10 year? 11 A. That's correct. I was appointed at the beginning 12 of September 2019. 13 Q. You have worked in local government since 1994, I think, 14 and, as we see at paragraph 2, have held several senior 15 positions in relation to children's services; is that 16 right? 17 A. That's correct. 18 Q. Has much of your work been in the same geographical area 19 as where you now work? 20 A. No. Prior to Durham, I did work in South Tyneside in 21 the north-east. Prior to that, most of my work was in 22 the north-west. So prior to South Tyneside, I was 23 Trafford in Greater Manchester. 24 Q. How long, then, have you been working within the Durham 25 area? Can I just look at those dates and try and --</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 3</p>	<p>1 A. Since September 2019. 2 Q. I see. Thank you. Can I deal, first of all, with our 3 theme of empathy and concern for child victims. Can 4 I ask, please, for internal page 4 of your statement, 5 paragraphs 17 to 19, to be brought up. I think we see 6 in those paragraphs, Mr Pearce, broadly, some of the key 7 elements of the evidence you have given the inquiry 8 about this topic. Perhaps just, please, help the chair 9 and panel understand what initiatives or activities 10 Durham Council take to ensure that there is proper 11 empathy and concern for child victims? 12 A. We provided information on the CSE training programme 13 that is in place across the Safeguarding Children 14 Partnership in County Durham. That was built up over 15 a period of time, based on approximately two years' 16 worth of engagements with young people, specifically 17 looking at victim-blaming language and the way in which 18 empathy and concern was expressed through both recording 19 and the way in which we practised. That has led to 20 a number of changes in the way in which we work and 21 develop our training, so documentation has been provided 22 as evidence around the language document that has been 23 prepared that we now use with all of our practitioners. 24 It's also led to quite significant change in the way in 25 which we provide multi-agency training, and that has</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 4</p>

<p>1 included engaging a young person who was part of that 2 work, that engagement work, who now delivers some of 3 the training and focus particularly on use of language, 4 how we record and how we work and engage with young 5 people. So I think, over a period of time, there was 6 a clear trajectory in terms of us working with young 7 people, understanding the challenges, I think 8 recognising some of the legacy issues that we still see 9 in terms of some of the language that's used, 10 particularly in case recording, and that's been 11 developed -- I think it was very much recognised that 12 where we had specialist staff -- so staff within our 13 ERASE team, which is a multi-agency team, or other staff 14 who had specific specialisms -- the quality of the way 15 they worked, the empathy and concern they showed, was of 16 a high standard. I think that's been recognised -- 17 certainly recognised through the Ofsted inspection in 18 2019. I think where we have more of a task and where we 19 are really focusing our activities is within the broader 20 workforce across all partner organisations and to make 21 sure that that -- that those really good examples of 22 high-quality practices is shared across a much broader 23 workforce. Clearly, County Durham is a very big 24 authority and so the scale I think presents us with some 25 challenges in ensuring that we have really got the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 5</p>	<p>1 quality that we could expect embedded across the whole 2 workforce. So that has been the direction of travel in 3 terms of the development of language toolkit, the 4 development of the training programme that is now used 5 with practitioners across the partnership. 6 Q. Can I also bring up, please, within your most recent 7 statement, which is at DUC000809_002, paragraph 7. 8 Mr Pearce, we see in that paragraph there is reference 9 there to Durham Children's Services and children 10 coproducing a document to help professionals understand 11 the power of their words. This was launched across all 12 children's services I think relatively recently, because 13 this statement was your most recent statement. Can you 14 help us with when that document was launched? 15 A. That was launched earlier on this year, February/March 16 this year that was launched and has been about since. 17 Clearly there have been some challenges in the last six 18 months, due to the COVID restrictions, in how we work, 19 but that was launched earlier this year. 20 Q. You say that that document is accessible to all people 21 working in children's services, and perhaps we can bring 22 up that document, please. It is your exhibit 26. It's 23 at DUC000812. If we can just perhaps go slowly, Danny, 24 through that document, this document has an introductory 25 page. If one looks on the contents page, please, at</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 6</p>
<p>1 internal page 3, just scroll in on that, we can see 2 that, broadly, the structure of the document is to have 3 sections that try to explain why language is important; 4 it gives a particular guide to the use of language; and 5 then has a section specifically about not using 6 victim-blaming language. Was the whole of this guide 7 designed with the participation of children, Mr Pearce? 8 A. Yes, it was. It was used -- and you will see the logo 9 on the front of the guide, which is "Investing in 10 children", which is a community interest company who 11 work in terms of advocacy and engagement and it's very 12 much driven by young people and the work with young 13 people. So the guide was -- young people are absolutely 14 at the core of the guide being developed in that way. 15 Q. Is it fair to say, as we can see from the title of 16 the document, "Language that cares", part of 17 the document is about what we have heard described as 18 victim blaming language, but it is quite a bit broader 19 than that; is that fair? 20 A. It is. It is much broader than that, and it's ensuring 21 that, you know, we have very child-focused approaches in 22 the way in which we work across all aspects of our 23 practice, and ensuring that we're using language in 24 a way which informs and supports our work, but is 25 appropriate in all aspects of our work, not purely</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 7</p>	<p>1 specifically around victim-blaming language, although 2 that is a core part of the guide. 3 Q. If we look, please, at chapter 1 that begins at internal 4 page 4, it is just two pages -- perhaps we could have 5 those side by side, Danny. This section, I think, tries 6 to explain -- I'm just trying to summarise it -- why 7 language is important and it talks about the impact on 8 children in particular, and I think the thrust of it is 9 perhaps summarised in the box at the bottom of internal 10 page 5 by the mnemonic here "CARES", so it is about 11 clear, straightforward and understandable language; 12 asking the child or young person what words they prefer 13 to be used; respect what the child or young person says 14 by using their chosen words; explain official words that 15 need to be used so everyone understands their meaning; 16 and support and challenge other professionals to use 17 language that cares. This isn't necessarily about 18 victim-blaming language, this is about language 19 generally; is that right? 20 A. That's correct, yes. 21 Q. If we go over the page, please, internal page 6, I think 22 we can just see there are some generic expressions, 23 I think, at the beginning. Then there is an A to Z, if 24 you scroll down to the following page, beginning at 25 internal page 7, that sets out the word that perhaps had</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 8</p>

<p>1 been used more traditionally and then suggestions for 2 better language. Is that fair? 3 A. It is. These are the words that children and young 4 people told us were a real problem when used by 5 professionals but were used on a regular basis and 6 a description of more appropriate language and where 7 children and young people have guided us to types of 8 language and the way in which we use language far better 9 in our work, and so that sets out what we would aspire 10 to. 11 Q. Just some of the ones that might be more pertinent to 12 the themes we are looking at, we see on _007 in the 13 middle of the page "abscond" and the preferred phrase 14 there is "running away" or "disappearing act"; is that 15 right? 16 A. That's correct. 17 Q. There are various other ones. Perhaps we can scroll in 18 at the top, please, of internal page 9. "Difficult to 19 place", at the top of that page. Where it says "We 20 prefer: failed by the system/hard to match to a suitable 21 family/hard to place/hard match/difficulty placing", the 22 "we prefer", does that reflect what the council prefers 23 or what the children who worked on this document prefer 24 or overall what everybody now prefers? 25 A. No, that was feedback from the children and young people</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 9</p>	<p>1 who worked on the document of the wording they prepared. 2 Q. Over the page we can see there are similar equivalencies 3 given for LAC, so an LAC review, a LAC review, "We 4 prefer meeting/personal progress plan/your six-month 5 review." 6 It is about trying to create simpler language; is 7 that right? 8 A. Yes. 9 Q. Then finally on this document, please, can we go to 10 internal page 15, which is the section that is perhaps 11 more specifically about victim-blaming language. There 12 is a narrative on page 15. Is the intention of this to 13 try to communicate what problems can be caused by using 14 victim-blaming language? Is that part of this? 15 A. It is. It's to provide a greater understanding for 16 practitioners of the impact of their words, the impact 17 of the language that they use and the impact that that 18 has on children and young people and to make them think 19 differently in terms of language and the way in which 20 they engage. 21 Q. Some of the phrases that perhaps we will see in some of 22 the paperwork are about -- if you scroll in, please, 23 Danny, on the third paragraph, where there is reference 24 here to -- we see, I think, on the third line down, 25 a child being involved in child sexual exploitation. It</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 10</p>
<p>1 goes on to say: 2 "We would never say that a 6-year-old is 'involved' 3 in sexual abuse, so why would we say this for an older 4 child or young person?" 5 Is it partly about trying to recognise that that 6 sort of language isn't fair or accurate, indeed, for 7 a young person? 8 A. It is, absolutely. And, I think, trying to change some 9 mind-sets, because I think it is clear, certainly when 10 we look at the case studies, you know, it is clear that 11 use of language hasn't been at the level that we would 12 want it to be, so it's very much trying to reframe that 13 and to try and get practitioners to think differently in 14 terms of the way in which they use language. 15 Q. Can we go down, please, to -- scroll over the next 16 paragraph. I think there is mention of "child 17 prostitution" as a phrase, about which I think we have 18 heard. Then the next paragraph that begins "Phrases 19 like 'lifestyle choices' and 'putting themselves at 20 risk' are now being challenged and are no longer 21 acceptable in our work." 22 Because they imply, again, a sense of responsibility 23 for the risks presented by perpetrators, but perhaps 24 place the responsibility on the child. Is there now, do 25 you think, a greater recognition that those sort of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 11</p>	<p>1 phrases are not appropriate? 2 A. I think there's absolutely a greater recognition. 3 I think we have still got more to do to ensure that's 4 embedded across the workforce. I think what I would be 5 confident of is that that terminology will be challenged 6 now in a way that it wasn't historically, so I would be 7 absolutely clear that we have still got a long way to go 8 to get to where we want to, but I would certainly expect 9 far fewer examples of these phrases being used now. 10 I would certainly expect, where they are, for them to be 11 challenged, and certainly our audit process picks that 12 terminology up and challenges back to practitioners 13 where examples are identified through our audit process. 14 Q. Can we take that document down now, Danny. I think, 15 Mr Pearce, in preparing to give evidence you have looked 16 at some of the case files of the children. I would just 17 like to bring up some to give the chair and panel 18 a flavour of what we are talking about. 19 In relation to a child known as A29, can I bring up, 20 please, DUC000584_008. Just to put this slightly into 21 context, this child, CS-A29, is a child who is 22 understood to have had ADHD, was, I think, at least part 23 of the time in a residential placement. The background 24 is set out in slightly further detail in the timeline. 25 But if you look, please, on internal page _008, do you</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 12</p>

<p>1 see references in this document to, about 15 lines down 2 perhaps from the top, the child "placing herself in 3 danger", "acting with impulsivity", and, again, on the 4 bottom of this page, "placing herself at risk of CSE"?</p> <p>5 A. There are certainly examples in here that would be 6 covered by the document we have just talked about as 7 being unacceptable.</p> <p>8 Q. Just to be completely clear, this document is a few 9 years old. So this document goes back to August 2016. 10 Do you think, since then, understanding about those sort 11 of phrases has improved?</p> <p>12 A. Absolutely. This referral came from a specialist 13 service, so I certainly wouldn't expect to see that type 14 of language used by any of our specialist services. At 15 this stage, I think that's progressed significantly 16 since 2016.</p> <p>17 Q. Sorry, just bear with me a second, please. Mr Pearce, 18 I'm told it would help if you spoke up a little bit. 19 I think the transcribers are struggling to hear you. 20 I'm sorry that I didn't see that message earlier. Can 21 you try to speak up a little bit more and perhaps, if 22 there are any more difficulties, I can be told.</p> <p>23 A. Yes, I certainly can.</p> <p>24 Q. Can we look at another document, please, about the same 25 child. DUC000785_001. This is about the same child,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 13</p>	<p>1 a different type of document, because this is the 2 minutes of the meeting. It's the operational MEG group 3 meeting. Just explain what that is, please?</p> <p>4 A. The operational MEG -- missing and exploited -- group. 5 So this was a multi-agency operational group that no 6 longer exists, but at this time, in 2018, had oversight 7 of those children who had been identified potentially at 8 risk of either missing or some form of exploitation.</p> <p>9 Q. If you look at the bottom of this page, there is 10 discussion about CS-A29 in the box at the very bottom. 11 Again, there is narrative on the right-hand side that 12 describes CS-A29 as "continuing to display risk-taking 13 behaviours". I think this is a comment that is being 14 attributed to certain people, but is that the sort of 15 thing that you would have expected to have been 16 challenged, given that this took place in July 2018?</p> <p>17 A. I would have expected it to have been challenged. At 18 that time, I think probably some of the improvement that 19 we have seen in the way in which we work and the way in 20 which we use language probably postdates that -- this 21 particular time in 2018. I think it came to documents 22 from mid 2019 onwards as being a significant improvement 23 in the trajectory of that work, but given the context of 24 this and the professionals involved in this particular 25 meeting, I would have expected that to be challenged,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 14</p>
<p>1 even at this time.</p> <p>2 Q. Just to be clear, this sort of minute is not the sort of 3 document that the child would ever see, but you would 4 still expect the language to be appropriate; is that 5 right?</p> <p>6 A. That's correct, because I think this reflects the way in 7 which professionals are operating and describing and 8 using language. So, yes, I would absolutely expect it 9 to be challenged even in this context.</p> <p>10 Q. Finally on this, can I bring up DUC000587, which is 11 a document -- again, the final document about this 12 child. My understanding is this is from the same month, 13 it is from July 2018. This is an ERASE assessment 14 information form which gathers a lot of information 15 about the child. Would the child see this, or would 16 anybody close to the child see this sort of document?</p> <p>17 A. Not as part of the normal operational way of working at 18 that time. But, clearly, with any professional 19 documentation, there would be access if a young person 20 or family member wanted to see that documentation, but 21 certainly, as far as I'm aware -- and I wasn't in Durham 22 at that time, but as far as I'm aware, these documents 23 at that time weren't shared.</p> <p>24 Q. Just a couple of points on it, please. Internal page 5 25 at the very bottom. You see the very last paragraph</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 15</p>	<p>1 records the mother's views and the father's views to do 2 with the child, and then, at the very bottom, it talks 3 about the child's behaviour of giving drugs to 4 a 12-year-old girl, the daughter of a family friend, 5 created some relationship difficulties as the child 6 failed to understand that this was inappropriate. 7 I will just show you a couple more passages, please, if 8 I may. Internal page 7 in the very middle of the page, 9 just next to the heading "Provide evidence of CSE", 10 there is a passage that CS-A29 has lived in 11 a residential unit. Can we see that part, Danny: 12 "Since been accommodated on 22 December 2016. There 13 had been no missing episodes until late January. Since 14 that time, there have been eight [this is the end of 15 July] ... There is limited but concerning information 16 about CS-A29 when she is missing, taking cowies ..."</p> <p>17 Do you want to explain to the chair and panel what 18 that is?</p> <p>19 A. No, I can't.</p> <p>20 Q. "... getting drunk, associating with individuals and 21 situations that pose risk to her". 22 If you scroll down: 23 "Her missing-from-home episodes appear to be in 24 relation to wanting to be with her friends/associates 25 not because she's unhappy about her living arrangements.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 16</p>

<p>1 She is reluctant to engage in any Return to Home 2 Interviews." 3 It goes on to talk about her views about her 4 accommodation. There are several further references 5 over the page, and I won't take you to all of them, 6 around her refusing to engage, that sort of phrasing. 7 If we look, please, at the top of internal page 10, 8 about three lines down, in the second box, she is 9 described as "taking risks by sexualised behaviour". 10 There are several different references in here to 11 language that perhaps would you have expected to have 12 had it challenged even in July 2018? 13 A. I wouldn't have expected language of this type to be 14 used at that time and I certainly would have expected it 15 to be challenged at that time, yes. 16 Q. Take that down, please, and go back to Mr Pearce's first 17 statement, to DUC000685_004, paragraph 17, please. Help 18 me understand part of your evidence, Mr Pearce. I think 19 you were asked about the initiatives the council had 20 taken and you were asked whether or not appropriate 21 language is challenged. You said this in the third 22 sentence: 23 "CSC [children's social care] have not recorded or 24 have any evidence where victim-blaming language has been 25 challenged in the time period requested by the inquiry."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 17</p>	<p>1 Which I think covered a range of -- a period of 2 the last few years. Just help me understand that, 3 because, on the face of it, you're saying that there is 4 no evidence that victim-blaming language has been 5 challenged. Please help the chair and panel understand 6 that? 7 A. What we are saying there is we don't have any recorded 8 evidence of where language has been challenged within 9 a meeting during that time period. So what we weren't 10 able to say, I would hope that professionals will 11 provide the challenge during that period, but there was 12 no recorded evidence that we could go to that could 13 identify examples where challenge had been provided. 14 Q. Do you, yourself, have experience of having seen or 15 heard inappropriate language being challenged? 16 A. Not directly, but in my role as corporate director, 17 I would not be in those sort of operational meetings, so 18 I'm certainly aware of where we have conducted audits 19 and language has been identified and that has been fed 20 back through to the practitioner in terms of 21 the appropriate use of language. But through a far more 22 formal mechanism in terms of an audit, but I wouldn't 23 have been present, due to the nature of my role, in the 24 types of operational meetings where this information is 25 being collated and documented in this way.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 18</p>
<p>1 Q. Just finally on this topic, to what extent now do you 2 think staff understand that it is their role to 3 challenge this sort of language? Firstly, we understand 4 that that should happen and, secondly, to what extent do 5 they feel comfortable doing that? 6 A. I think, as I set out before, that varies across the 7 workforce, so I think there's a very clear understanding 8 in our specialist services, in our ERASE team, in those 9 services that work on a consistent basis with young 10 people. I think in the wider workforce there are still 11 significant challenges in terms of embedding appropriate 12 use of language and challenge in that way, but I would 13 certainly expect, across a significant proportion of our 14 services, and certainly all of our specialist services, 15 that there would be an awareness and there would be 16 a level of challenge. I would hope the language is not 17 being used, but where it is, I would certainly expect 18 a challenge to be put in. 19 Q. Those are all my questions on that theme, Mr Pearce. 20 I'm going to move on and I'm sorry to jump around 21 a little bit. I am going to take now the issue of 22 children with a disability, which features a bit later 23 on in the topics list. Can I ask you some questions, 24 first of all, about paragraphs 56 to 60 of your first 25 statement, so bring up, please, if we could, Danny,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 19</p>	<p>1 DUC000685_003. Could we scroll in, please, on 2 paragraphs -- sorry, I have given you the wrong 3 reference. It is paragraph 56, internal page 11. You 4 have given some evidence there about the way in which 5 children's disabilities are taken into account. 6 Perhaps, Danny, we could have side by side the bottom 7 paragraphs of page 11, paragraphs 56 to 57, and then 8 over the page, running through to paragraph 60. Just 9 help us in simple terms, please, with what you have said 10 there about how a child's disability is factored into 11 the risk assessment process? 12 A. At this time, the child's disability would have been 13 considered through the normal risk management processes 14 and identified as part of the risk assessment 15 information form. Until November 2019, we didn't have 16 specific recognition around any disability or additional 17 vulnerability within the CSE assessment form. So in the 18 first statement, that wouldn't have been covered. 19 I think it may have been updated subsequent to that. 20 But I think there was a recognition that the approach 21 and certainly the identification of disability within 22 the risk assessment process wasn't strong enough and 23 that was rectified from November 2019 with a revised 24 form and an updated form. 25 So in paragraph 57 here, I talk about disability not</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 20</p>

5 (Pages 17 to 20)

1 being included as a risk identifier on the risk
 2 assessment form. That was the case up
 3 until November 2019, and is no longer the case. That
 4 has now been incorporated.

5 Q. For completeness, we can bring up your latest statement,
 6 which I think helps with this: DUC000793_008. I think
 7 at paragraphs 36 to 39, you deal with this there; is
 8 that right?

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. Help us, then, in understanding, when the risk
 11 assessment form is completed, how is disability of
 12 a child factored into that risk assessment on the
 13 standard form that's used?

14 A. So, as part of that change, we then introduced
 15 a mechanism where we aligned the risk assessment form
 16 more closely, particularly with the education, health
 17 and care plan process and special educational needs
 18 service. So there is an educational lead, who is part
 19 of this process now, who can bring a range of
 20 information around any additional vulnerability due to
 21 disability or any links across into the education,
 22 health and care plan process, and they are part of
 23 the discussion in terms of that risk assessment. So any
 24 relevant information is included.

25 They also form part of the weekly vulnerability

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1 just looked at. But we can see in the middle of this
 2 first page there is space there for disability. Is that
 3 what you expect to now see populated and factored into
 4 the risk assessment process?

5 A. We would expect that to be populated. We would also
 6 expect any additional information or specific issues
 7 that have been raised to form part of the risk
 8 assessment.

9 Q. Does the presence of a disability in a child feature as
 10 a specific risk indicator or is it simply noted as part
 11 of their key details on the first page?

12 A. No, the way in which the process works from November
 13 '19, it is specifically identified as a risk indicator
 14 and whether there's any additional risk as a result of
 15 a child's disability but as part of the risk management
 16 process.

17 Q. I think while we are in this form, we will go through
 18 some of the headings, although this is perhaps more
 19 relevant to the wider risk assessment theme. Can I just
 20 take the chair and panel through. Internal page 2,
 21 please, talks about the way in which safeguarding risk
 22 indicators are assessed, and then there are very broadly
 23 a series of topics, if we can perhaps just put side by
 24 side internal pages 3 and 4. You can see on page 3
 25 there are risk indicators around accommodation and

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1 tracker. And the screening information that's used,
 2 that was introduced around the same time as the
 3 vulnerability tracker, was brought in at that time.
 4 There is now a live input from a specialist within the
 5 SEN service, the special educational needs service, to
 6 make sure there are no missing links in terms of
 7 the impact of disability. That's also helped with other
 8 professionals understanding the impact and the role that
 9 disability can play in terms of vulnerability.

10 So by integrating that additional specialist into
 11 the process, into the risk assessment process, I think
 12 we are now in a much better position in terms of
 13 identification and support and ensuring that all of
 14 the various processes are lined up, because historically
 15 we would have had a complete separation, parallel
 16 running of an education, health and care plan process,
 17 and that is the case for certainly a couple of the case
 18 studies that wasn't aligned in informing the risk
 19 assessment process. So those things have now been
 20 brought together through the way in which we changed the
 21 process in November '19.

22 Q. Can I ask for the assessment information form to be
 23 brought up, please. It is DHP000481_001, the first
 24 page. I think this is a similar form to what we have
 25 actually looked at already populated for the child we

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1 around education, and then one can see, going through
 2 the form, emotional health, violence and other types of
 3 spheres of life, if one can put it that way, with
 4 different elements of risk within those topics. Is that
 5 right?

6 A. That's correct, yes.

7 Q. Where, now, would disability be included as a risk
 8 indicator?

9 A. So it is not identified specifically as a stand-alone
 10 risk indicator. It would feed through the information
 11 provided by professionals involved and discussion would
 12 feed through the understanding of risk against each of
 13 those domains.

14 Q. Can we take that down, please, Danny, and ask to look at
 15 a different document, please, which is DHP000461. Just
 16 to help us understand this a little bit, although it is
 17 not a document from your council, I know it is from the
 18 police, but this is information here about how the
 19 impact of disabilities and CSE risk is discussed and
 20 considered within the constabulary. Do you have
 21 dealings with that side of the police as well as part of
 22 your multi-agency liaison with them?

23 A. Yes. So the approach and the risk approach is
 24 a multi-agency approach. So the police clearly are
 25 a key partner in that and would -- you know, this

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1 **document I think is specifically about police input to**
 2 **that organisationally, but it's about how they input**
 3 **into multi-agency -- into a multi-agency process, as we**
 4 **have described, in terms of the risk assessment approach**
 5 **and way of working.**
 6 Q. To what extent do you consider that the police's
 7 involvement or understanding of disability factors we
 8 have just been through has changed in recent years?
 9 **A. I think not just the police, but I think as with local**
 10 **authority and other partners, it is an area of**
 11 **development for us. I would be clear that it is an area**
 12 **that, whilst we have made more robust and have improved,**
 13 **there is still a significant amount of work to do around**
 14 **this theme. Certainly our learning through this process**
 15 **and as part of the next steps following this inquiry, we**
 16 **would be interested in how we can further develop our**
 17 **work, and that's the case for the partnership as**
 18 **a whole, including the local authority and the police.**
 19 Q. The mention at the top of this page, please, if we can
 20 just scroll in on the bold writing, Danny, where it says
 21 the constabulary makes sure that education and health
 22 services are involved to manage the risks to children
 23 with disabilities, to what extent do you think there is
 24 sufficient involvement of education and health services
 25 where you're making decisions and looking to provide

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1 a care plan for children with disabilities?
 2 **A. So that goes back to the point I made before about the**
 3 **vulnerability tracker and the weekly screening meetings**
 4 **held around vulnerability tracker. Education and health**
 5 **professionals are involved in that, including those from**
 6 **the special educational needs and disability service.**
 7 **So on a weekly basis, there's live input from those**
 8 **services to ensure that risks are identified and they're**
 9 **managed for children with disabilities, and that process**
 10 **has been in place since November '19. So that meeting**
 11 **covers -- includes police, local authority, specialist**
 12 **services, education and health.**
 13 Q. Can I go back, please, to your very recent statement
 14 from August. It is DUC000809_002, and your paragraph 6,
 15 where there is mention there of a presentation to the
 16 strategic CEG. Just help the chair and panel with that
 17 abbreviation, please?
 18 **A. So that's the strategic child exploitation group. That**
 19 **meets quarterly and provides strategic overights of**
 20 **partnership approaches and ways of working.**
 21 Q. Which agencies are present at the CEG?
 22 **A. So that's, again -- has been an area where the**
 23 **membership has grown -- (inaudible), health, police,**
 24 **local authority, social care, education colleagues have**
 25 **now joined as part of this process. So it was**

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1 **identified that that was a gap, so this presentation was**
 2 **given earlier on this year to the strategic CEG by**
 3 **colleagues from the centre and they have subsequently,**
 4 **as part of that, been identified as members of**
 5 **the group. So that's a fairly recent development**
 6 **(overspeaking) --**
 7 Q. Sorry, carry on, please.
 8 **A. So, yeah, it's multi-agency -- health, police,**
 9 **education, social care.**
 10 Q. For completeness, can we just bring up briefly the slide
 11 from this training, they are from June of this year,
 12 DUC000813_001. The focus of it, or the title of it, was
 13 "Child exploitation -- young people with SEND [special
 14 educational needs]". Throughout the training, if we can
 15 just scroll through, there is information given about
 16 the needs of children with special educational needs.
 17 If we look at internal page 4, there is the Durham
 18 picture, if you like. If we can scroll in, you can see
 19 there are some statistics given there about, for
 20 example -- it's a little bit hard to see. If we can
 21 look at the little purple circle on the left.
 22 55 per cent of looked-after children have a recognised
 23 special educational need. One in six children in
 24 County Durham, and there are various statistics given.
 25 If we can go, please, finally on this, to internal

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1 page 5, there was local data given here about events
 2 since lockdown, and you will no doubt explain in due
 3 course to the panel about the child exploitation and
 4 vulnerability tracker. But did this reflect, if you see
 5 the bottom of page 5, since lockdown, 25 of the cases
 6 that have been considered -- I think there were 57 cases
 7 considered since lockdown in March -- were of young
 8 people with identified special educational needs?
 9 **A. That's correct. That's information we have had since**
 10 **the new approach was brought in in November '19. But**
 11 **I think that would be reflective of the position in**
 12 **County Durham.**
 13 Q. Just to be clear, there are 57 cases of child
 14 exploitation. I'm sorry to ask you again, Mr Pearce,
 15 I am asked to ask you to, I think, move closer to your
 16 screen. I think the transcribers are struggling to hear
 17 you. Thank you. You can take that document down now,
 18 thank you, Danny.
 19 Just one final question on the disability topic,
 20 please. It may be that we have gone over this, and
 21 forgive me if I have taken this out of order, Mr Pearce.
 22 INQ005027_004. That's the minutes of a meeting
 23 from October 2019 of the Durham Safeguarding Children
 24 Partnership. At internal page 4, just about two-thirds
 25 of the way down, there is discussion there about the CSE

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1 matrix. It says here, just above the number 4:
 2 "It was noted that there is nowhere on the CSE
 3 matrix to record the 'category' for child with eg
 4 learning disability, language barriers ..."
 5 Pausing there, the CSE matrix, just help us
 6 understand what that is, please?
 7 **A. The CSE matrix is a document that we have previously**
 8 **looked at, which provides a whole range of information**
 9 **around identifying the levels of risk and the analysis**
 10 **around those risk identifiers.**
 11 Q. To what extent has that now been addressed, the issue
 12 that was flagged in October 2019?
 13 **A. That will have been addressed -- that informed part of**
 14 **the vision to the matrix in November 2019, so this will**
 15 **have been taken into account as part of that review in**
 16 **the update of the matrix that came into force**
 17 **in November 2019.**
 18 Q. Following on from the evidence you have given -- we can
 19 take that document down now, Danny -- to what extent do
 20 you think now there is knowledge of the impact of
 21 a child's disability or the potential impact of
 22 a child's disability on their ability to understand risk
 23 or to avoid risk, even though that's not the language
 24 you perhaps use, but to what extent do you think there
 25 is an understanding of how those two things are, or

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1 **we are not in a position yet to see is the impact of**
 2 **that. So I think we are probably still at too early**
 3 **a stage to confidently say that that's having the impact**
 4 **that we would want it to.**
 5 Q. Can I just take you, finally on this theme, to
 6 a different sort of case, a different case in fact,
 7 CS-A51, please. It is DUC000784. This is, just to
 8 orientate you and the chair and panel, a summary that
 9 I think the council have provided of a particular
 10 child's case, rather than a contemporaneous document.
 11 Is that right? I think this is a narrative that you
 12 have provided about a particular --
 13 **A. This is the narrative, based on the timeline of**
 14 **the child's case.**
 15 Q. In fact, if we just scroll in at the beginning four
 16 paragraphs, please, an ERASE CSE worker had been
 17 allocated to A51 because the child had been assessed as
 18 at high risk of CSE after forming an online relationship
 19 with an older male. The child had been adopted at
 20 a young age along with her brother, diagnosed with
 21 autism, stated she struggles to form relationships,
 22 didn't have a good relationship with her parents, feels
 23 unheard and not understood. It goes on to say:
 24 "Work has been undertaken with parents regarding the
 25 impact autism can have for CS-A51 as she struggles to

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1 might be, linked?
 2 **A. I would say that's very much a developing understanding.**
 3 **I think it is fairly early days in terms of the**
 4 **approaches that we have brought in over the last year.**
 5 **So I think there's a better understanding than there**
 6 **was. However, I think that's still very much an area**
 7 **for development for all of us.**
 8 Q. I think the documents that I took you to in the first
 9 theme around empathy and language, there was a lot in
 10 those documents about that child, about CS-A29, about
 11 risk and choices and things like that. That was a child
 12 recorded as having ADHD. Can you feel more confident or
 13 not, now, that there would be a greater understanding of
 14 the relationship between that child's disability or at
 15 least their ADHD and their ability to recognise risk?
 16 **A. I would expect that to be the case, and I think there**
 17 **would be a far greater understanding than there was at**
 18 **that time where I think, you know, at that time it's**
 19 **very evident that information was gathered but the**
 20 **impact wasn't considered in terms of risk and the**
 21 **assessment of risk, so I think the work that I've**
 22 **described, and certainly the engagement of**
 23 **educational -- special educational needs and disability**
 24 **professionals within the process has certainly expanded**
 25 **the knowledge base and the level of understanding. What**

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1 form relationships ...
 2 "An intervention with CS-A51 continued,
 3 communication style was adapted using appropriate
 4 language and visual exercises to enable her to
 5 understand the work being completed and her parents'
 6 perspective, given her learning needs."
 7 Do you want to offer any comment on that narrative,
 8 Mr Pearce?
 9 **A. I think that narrative, and certainly the identification**
 10 **of the impact of autism in this particular case, I think**
 11 **it's clear from this narrative that impact was taken**
 12 **into account. There was an amendment and adaptation to**
 13 **the way in which communication was carried out, and**
 14 **certainly I think a recognition, within the way in which**
 15 **this case summary is written, of the specific challenges**
 16 **relating to disability and certainly far more**
 17 **appropriate in terms of recognising the impact of**
 18 **disability.**
 19 Q. I think just to orientate the chair and panel, you can
 20 see on the very top line there is reference
 21 to January 2019, that being the date on which the CSE
 22 worker was allocated to this child. I think we know
 23 separately from our timeline about CS-A51 that the key
 24 events in relation to that child's experiences were
 25 from December 2018 to February 2019. So a relatively

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1 recent example, but would you hope that that sort of
 2 practice is to be repeated and is now more common?
 3 **A. Yeah, absolutely. It is a far better example of the way**
 4 **in which we would expect our practitioners to work now.**
 5 Q. Just before the break, then, I will ask some questions
 6 about one more theme, Mr Pearce, if I may. I would like
 7 to ask you some questions about partnership working on
 8 CSE. Can we go back, then, please, to your first
 9 statement, so DUC000685_002-003, please. It is your
 10 paragraphs -- first of all, paragraph 10, if you just
 11 scroll in on paragraph 10. You deal here with some
 12 different elements of partnership working. First of
 13 all, help us understand what evidence you're giving here
 14 about the low number of referrals from education and
 15 health. What was the significance of that?
 16 **A. So I think that identified that there was a lack of**
 17 **visibility in terms of education and health and the**
 18 **impact of education and health issues as part of**
 19 **the process. It was very much a police and social care**
 20 **led process at that time. So the strategy and delivery**
 21 **plan that was developed in 2016 was identified as a gap**
 22 **and as a risk and very much a focus in terms of how the**
 23 **way in which the strategy was implemented incorporated**
 24 **a broader range of professionals who have a particular**
 25 **focus on education and health. I think, at that time,**

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1 DUC000793_002, and in particular paragraph 5. You
 2 describe there the partnership working between the
 3 police and the local authority managed by ERASE, and you
 4 give some evidence there about what your understanding
 5 is of the number of active investigations or organised
 6 networks. So help us with what evidence you have given
 7 there, please, Mr Pearce?
 8 **A. So this paragraph describes a partnership working**
 9 **through the multi-agency ERASE team. At the time of**
 10 **the statement being prepared, the multi-agency working**
 11 **hadn't identified any child sexual exploitation through**
 12 **organised groups. There were no live cases within the**
 13 **definition being used by the inquiry.**
 14 Q. Go on, please, in that statement, internal page 9,
 15 paragraph 36 -- sorry, paragraph 40, please. Under the
 16 heading "Partnership working". You have provided
 17 information to the inquiry about the operational and
 18 strategic missing and exploited groups meeting, the MEG
 19 meeting. Help us with what you go on to say about the
 20 review of the effectiveness of that group in the context
 21 of the new safeguarding arrangements in Durham?
 22 **A. I think during that period there was a recognition,**
 23 **certainly during autumn 2018, that the way in which the**
 24 **operational MEG was working had quite a lot of crossover**
 25 **and potential duplication with care planning processes,**

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1 **it was very much a -- ERASE had come in, but it was very**
 2 **much an approach that was an approach in terms of how**
 3 **to -- how we would work but not co-ordinated in the way**
 4 **in which we would expect it to be and certainly the way**
 5 **in which we have seen it to be much more recently.**
 6 MS HILL: Thank you very much, Mr Pearce.
 7 Chair, I am asked if we might take a slightly
 8 earlier mid-morning break. I think, Mr Pearce, we may
 9 need to check your technology a little bit. I think
 10 there are still some difficulties in hearing you.
 11 Chair, it is now 11.20 am. Could I suggest we break
 12 until 11.40 am to allow for this issue to be looked at?
 13 THE CHAIR: Yes. We will return at 11.40 am. Thank you.
 14 (11.23 am)
 15 (A short break)
 16 (11.40 am)
 17 MS HILL: Mr Pearce, I think you will need to unmute
 18 yourself. I am hoping that the technical issues about
 19 your evidence have been resolved, but no doubt I will be
 20 told if there are any difficulties still in hearing you.
 21 I was asking you some questions before the break
 22 about the topic of partnership working and you'd just
 23 given me some evidence taken from your first witness
 24 statement. Could I ask, please, for your second
 25 statement, or a later statement, to be brought up.

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1 **and it wasn't quite achieving the impact and the**
 2 **outcomes that the partnership were looking for. So that**
 3 **was reviewed following the October 2018 MEG meeting and**
 4 **a new structure and meeting process was developed to**
 5 **enable more effective ways of working and ensuring that**
 6 **there wasn't that crossover. So it was certainly felt**
 7 **at that time that, for some of the children and young**
 8 **people being considered through the operational MEG**
 9 **group, there were a number of concurrent care planning**
 10 **processes and other processes that were looking at**
 11 **similar care planning issues, and so we wanted to ensure**
 12 **that there was a clear delineation in terms of how those**
 13 **multi-agency processes worked.**
 14 Q. I'd like to ask you some questions just about one
 15 child's case in relation to this theme, please, if
 16 I may. CS-A118. I think you were asked to look at some
 17 background paperwork around this child. Can I ask,
 18 please, for DUC000797 to be brought up, which is the
 19 assessment information form for this child. It is fully
 20 completed. I don't think we need to go through all of
 21 the details. But just if we can see, on the top of this
 22 page, 797, the date on this seems to be August 2018. Is
 23 that right?
 24 **A. That's correct, yes.**
 25 Q. The information that's contained within it obviously

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1 includes details along -- underneath all of the various
 2 headings, but perhaps we can go to the final page,
 3 please, which is internal page 12. One can see that
 4 this child was categorised as at the highest risk on the
 5 overall assessment chart. That's reflected by the X in
 6 the box. Is that right?
 7 **A. That's correct, yes.**
 8 Q. If we just roll forward, please, in the chronology for
 9 this child, DUC000795_001. I think that document we
 10 have established was 8 August 2018. This document then
 11 is 11 October 2018. This is an initial CSE meeting, an
 12 ERASE initial CSE meeting. Just help us understand the
 13 link between these two documents, please, in terms of
 14 process?
 15 **A. So in terms of process, this will have been developed**
 16 **for the CSE meeting that was to be held in October 2018,**
 17 **the ERASE meeting, so what was the operational MEG**
 18 **became a monthly ERASE meeting, and so there's some**
 19 **terminology -- that's just the crossover in terms of**
 20 **terminology, but this will have been prepared for that**
 21 **monthly CSE meeting.**
 22 Q. Help us understand the title on this document: "ERASE
 23 initial CSE meeting". What does that indicate to you?
 24 **A. So from my understanding, that would be the first**
 25 **meeting of those monthly ERASE meetings at which this**

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1 **protection review conference for this child that was**
 2 **happening in October 2018, and action was identified**
 3 **through that process. So this was one of the cases**
 4 **where there was -- there was, I think, at the time,**
 5 **a concern about duplication of care planning processes,**
 6 **so I think, looking back on the case, the decision was**
 7 **to focus care planning through the child protection**
 8 **process.**
 9 Q. Is it fair to read this document as suggesting that, as
 10 at 11 October, this child was still at high risk, or
 11 not?
 12 **A. Yes.**
 13 Q. So on this child's case, then, finally, can we look,
 14 please, at DUC000787_001, which is then 30 October 2018,
 15 so about two and a bit weeks later. One can see this is
 16 the operational MEG group meeting. Under the box, or in
 17 the box, where it says "existing referrals", it says
 18 this:
 19 "Carole [the ops manager] outlined the new process
 20 for referrals and the way these will be set out.
 21 A discussion will take place about each young person and
 22 if it is felt that there are no major concerns in
 23 relation to the missing from home or CSE, they will be
 24 removed from the agenda; S/W [I assume social worker]
 25 will be informed of action taken and a new referral form

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1 **young person had been considered.**
 2 Q. This document includes information from a range of
 3 partners. I think it includes police intelligence and
 4 police reports, and so on. I don't think we need too
 5 much of the detail, but we can scroll in, please, on
 6 DUC000795, where one can see information is provided by
 7 the police of a sexual assault on this child. If we go,
 8 please, to internal page 3. Scroll in at the top
 9 underneath the heading "Crime -- IP". We can see
 10 information about that. Then, going over the page,
 11 there are various intelligence reports that run to
 12 several different pages, I think, about this child. We
 13 don't need to go into all of those details, but just go
 14 back, please, to the front page, DUC000795_001, where,
 15 in the risk category here, the risk of "high" on
 16 8 August was noted and then 11 October:
 17 "See action for social worker."
 18 Can you help us with understanding how that reflects
 19 what risk this child was considered to be at or what
 20 process was in place around that issue?
 21 **A. So I'm not sure exactly what the comment "See action for**
 22 **social worker" relates to. My understanding of**
 23 **reviewing the case is that there was a parallel child**
 24 **protection process, statutory child protection process,**
 25 **happening at the same time, so there was a child**

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1 attached, should they need to be referred to the group
 2 again."
 3 We can see in the list of children whose -- young
 4 people whose names are removed, CS-A118, and indeed A29,
 5 who I think we have looked at separately.
 6 So from your review of the material, are you able to
 7 help with the basis for removing this child from the
 8 agenda on 30 October?
 9 **A. Yes. From my review of this, my understanding is that**
 10 **I think the minutes have been quite clumsily worded,**
 11 **unfortunately, but the -- as part of the transition of**
 12 **the arrangements at that time and the review of**
 13 **the working of the operational MEG group, it was decided**
 14 **to focus on a smaller group of children and particularly**
 15 **to not focus in as much detail through this forum on**
 16 **those who had concurrent care planning processes where**
 17 **these details were being considered in detail through**
 18 **multi-agency mechanism.**
 19 **As I described for CS-A118, that was the case**
 20 **through the child protection process, and my**
 21 **understanding from the review is that was the reason**
 22 **that they were removed from that meeting, because they**
 23 **had very recently been considered through a multi-agency**
 24 **child protection review process. That was part of**
 25 **the transition to new arrangements. I think certainly**

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1 **the way in which the minutes are worded is probably not**
 2 **helpful in terms of explaining the rationale for that.**
 3 Q. It does talk about a child being removed from the list
 4 if it is felt there are no major concerns in relation to
 5 CSE, which is perhaps hard to square with this child
 6 being seen as at high risk, is it?
 7 **A. I agree entirely. I think the way in which it's worded,**
 8 **I don't think that the rationale, as has been explained**
 9 **to me as part of my review of these cases, that the**
 10 **rationale in the minutes doesn't clearly set out the**
 11 **rationale in relation to these cases and I think,**
 12 **unfortunately, the way in which they're worded is**
 13 **clearly a contradiction in terms of the level of risk.**
 14 Q. Can we move on to the next topic, which is the wider
 15 topic of risk assessment. You have provided some
 16 detailed evidence about this in your first witness
 17 statements, please, at DUC000685_005, paragraphs 21
 18 through to 22. I think you have already given quite
 19 a bit of this evidence, essentially, around the
 20 multi-agency approach to risk assessment and around the
 21 form. But just if we can focus in, please, on
 22 paragraph 25 on this page. Just give us, please, those
 23 statistics, Mr Pearce?
 24 **A. So in terms of the statistics, the multi-agency meetings**
 25 **between April 2017 and March 2019 considered 103 young**

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1 we have noted on the topics list for you the Care
 2 Quality Commission's report from 2017. If we can just
 3 perhaps briefly bring up INQ004293_012. I think the
 4 focus -- we don't need to have the detail, perhaps. But
 5 what is being said on this page is that, as at the time
 6 of this report in 2017, health services were well
 7 engaged with ERASE, but it says that with the exception
 8 of the sexual health services, there wasn't use of CSE
 9 risk assessment tools in acute or community or primary
 10 care services. Has that changed since 2017?
 11 **A. That has improved across services. We have, I think, as**
 12 **is the case in many areas, quite a fragmented health**
 13 **provider system. You know, Durham is a big county. So**
 14 **there are a number of different health providers. So**
 15 **I think it's fair to say that it has improved**
 16 **significantly since 2017, but there are some differences**
 17 **across the wider organisations.**
 18 Q. Just for completeness on this document, internal
 19 page 15, please. On the bottom of that page, there was
 20 mention in a positive sense of the involvement of
 21 the school nursing service in relationships with the
 22 ERASE team. Do you want to tell us a little bit about
 23 that, please, Mr Pearce?
 24 **A. The school nursing team are very much integrated in**
 25 **terms of the way in which they work. They have**

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1 **people. Seven of those discussed during April 2017**
 2 **to March 2018 had been identified as victims of CSE and**
 3 **in the period April 2018 to March 2019, a further six**
 4 **had been identified as victims of CSE during that**
 5 **period.**
 6 Q. I don't need to bring it up. For the panel's reference,
 7 in due course -- I think in your latest statement you
 8 were asked some more questions about these statistics
 9 and you gave some further details. For the panel's note
 10 in due course, it is DUC000793_002-004, paragraphs 7 to
 11 13. But I don't think I need to bring it up.
 12 We have already looked at the assessment tool that
 13 you have mentioned earlier, and I think you hinted at
 14 the findings of the Ofsted report in 2019. Is there
 15 anything else in particular that you would like to say
 16 about the risk assessment tools?
 17 **A. No. I mean, other than I think the evidence today and**
 18 **also in the documentation that's been provided describes**
 19 **very much quite a significant trajectory from 2015**
 20 **onwards and quite some substantial changes. Certainly**
 21 **the way in which we use the risk assessment tools and**
 22 **our risk assessment methodology, even over the last**
 23 **12 months, has changed quite significantly and has been**
 24 **an area, I think, of real progress.**
 25 Q. I think, for completeness, as well as the Ofsted report

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1 **strong -- a strong safeguarding specialism focus within**
 2 **the school nursing team. It's actually just recently**
 3 **been reprocedured with the same provider to a slightly**
 4 **newer specification which is enhancing their partnership**
 5 **working and levels of integration, although in many ways**
 6 **that's just describing the way in which the service has**
 7 **been operating and continues to operate. So, you know,**
 8 **they're a core partner within the way in which the ERASE**
 9 **team works.**
 10 Q. Finally on this document, internal page 22,
 11 paragraph 2.17. I think the Care Quality Commission at
 12 that point found:
 13 "The substance misuse service's children and young
 14 people and families practitioners worked effectively and
 15 in co-operation with ERASE ..."
 16 Is that right?
 17 **A. That's correct again. The model of ERASE is very much**
 18 **an integrated partnership model that has developed**
 19 **substantially, even since the time at which this**
 20 **inspection report was considered, and I think, as**
 21 **I mentioned earlier, that was reflected in the 2019**
 22 **Ofsted report which was very positive about the ERASE**
 23 **model and the breadth of partnership working that the**
 24 **inspection team had seen.**
 25 Q. I don't know, Mr Pearce, whether you were listening to

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1 any of the evidence from yesterday. Were you listening
 2 to any of the evidence?
 3 **A. I have seen the transcript of the evidence from**
 4 **yesterday, but I wasn't able to listen to it.**
 5 Q. I'm sure I'm doing the witnesses a bit of a disservice,
 6 but can I broadly say that there was discussion about
 7 whether a transition from talking about risk to talking
 8 about harm would be a helpful transition, and that,
 9 rather than focusing on incidents that might suggest in
 10 the current language a child is at risk, it would be
 11 better to focus on their actual harm or their actual
 12 well-being. Do you have a view on that?
 13 **A. Yes, I think that's a really helpful suggestion and**
 14 **certainly something we would be supportive of exploring**
 15 **further. We have talked a lot at a local level around**
 16 **moving away from more of an incident-based analysis into**
 17 **a far greater understanding of broader well-being and**
 18 **issues looking in a far more holistic way at a young**
 19 **person rather than having a very specific incident-based**
 20 **risk methodology. So I think that's certainly something**
 21 **that would be positive, and we have started doing some**
 22 **work around contextualised safeguarding model, which you**
 23 **will be aware of from some of the national work, and we**
 24 **very much want to develop a slightly better attuned**
 25 **practice approach to the way in which we work with young**

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1 **people. I think that would absolutely be a positive**
 2 **element of work going forward.**
 3 Q. Another question, perhaps, about risk assessment but
 4 slightly more granular, if I may. You have been asked
 5 to consider some evidence from Pebbles Care, who I think
 6 are a provider of some accommodation services in your
 7 area. One element of that witness evidence -- I will
 8 just read it out -- is to this effect, that risk
 9 assessment and risk management plans form part of
 10 the day-to-day care plan of each individual young
 11 person. Risks are regularly reviewed and evaluated
 12 within the home. Police and social workers are called
 13 upon to support the home if risk is apparent, but at
 14 times -- this is what is said -- "they lack
 15 understanding of what the home is legally permitted to
 16 do to keep young people safe from harm. We are often
 17 asked to just lock the doors or restrain to prevent
 18 a young person from leaving, essentially depriving them
 19 of liberty."
 20 Do you want to respond to what's being suggested
 21 about social workers not perhaps appreciating the
 22 position that the home is in in that regard?
 23 **A. Absolutely. First of all, I would be really clear that**
 24 **I would not expect that sort of practice or suggestion**
 25 **from any of our social care staff. I think, for**

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1 **clarity, we should reference the fact that I think**
 2 **Pebbles Care have one home in County Durham but my**
 3 **understanding is we haven't had any County Durham young**
 4 **people placed in Pebbles Care, so from a social care**
 5 **perspective, we would have very limited interaction or**
 6 **involvement certainly in terms of providing social care**
 7 **advice, and I would be very concerned if there were any**
 8 **examples of that type relating to our services and**
 9 **I would want them to be addressed immediately and**
 10 **certainly would want them to be highlighted and**
 11 **escalated through to me so we are able to deal with**
 12 **them. But I absolutely would be exceptionally**
 13 **disappointed, which I think is probably too gentle**
 14 **a word, if that was the case in terms of any of our --**
 15 **in terms of advice provided by any of our services.**
 16 Q. You were asked, I think, to look at a few of
 17 the particular children's cases under this heading,
 18 Mr Pearce. Can I ask you to look now, please, at CS-A50
 19 and look, please, at document DUC000796. Just by way of
 20 background, just before we look at the document, this
 21 child was understood to have had a history of domestic
 22 violence and neglect. There were concerns about whether
 23 there was a responsible adult caring for the child.
 24 There were reports that the child had been raped at the
 25 age of 13. Various other concerns about this child. We

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1 can see this document I think is dated 15 January 2018.
 2 If you go just briefly through to look at the
 3 different indicators of risk, on internal page 3,
 4 please, there is a note that -- the child has an "X"
 5 against "high risk of", and that is the risk indicator
 6 of family and peer relationships; high risk in
 7 accommodation; high risk in education. If we carry
 8 through, medium risk on internal page 4 in terms of
 9 emotional health and experience of violence, but then
 10 high risk on page 5 of running away/going missing, low
 11 risk of contact with abusive adults or risky
 12 environments. I don't think we need to go through all
 13 of the other boxes, but overall this case concludes by
 14 putting the child at medium risk. That's what's seen on
 15 internal page 10.
 16 Having read into this case, Mr Pearce, and looked at
 17 the background a bit, do you think that the assessment
 18 that this child was at medium risk was accurate?
 19 **A. I think in terms of risk, no. I think it reflects the**
 20 **way in which, certainly at the time, risk was assessed.**
 21 **So the model and approach that we had taken and had been**
 22 **applied locally was that all children who had been**
 23 **identified either medium or high risk were supported and**
 24 **had the same level of oversight, there was no**
 25 **differentiation. My understanding is that the only**

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1 differentiation in terms of a medium or high risk was
 2 that there was an identified perpetrator in those who
 3 were identified at high risk and that was the
 4 differentiation between a medium and a high risk in this
 5 case.
 6 So I don't think that reflected in any way a medium
 7 risk to the young person. I think the risk assessment
 8 is clear that the risk to the young person is at high
 9 risk, but the way in which the classification was used
 10 at that time, they were not identified at high risk
 11 because there wasn't an identified perpetrator.
 12 Q. We have already looked at the case of CS-A29. That was
 13 the very first case I took you to, with the language.
 14 I have got a few more follow-on questions around that.
 15 You were asked in particular to look at documentation
 16 around the time at which the child was discharged from
 17 care and whether or not essentially those risks were
 18 downplayed or whether they were accurately classified at
 19 the time the child was discharged from care. Do you
 20 have a view about that?
 21 **A. In terms of the risk being done -- so the risk had been**
 22 **identified and moved down to low at that time. I think**
 23 **that the movement between what was a high risk to a low**
 24 **risk over a very short period of time hadn't given**
 25 **sufficient weighting to embedding any of the changes and**

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1 the review of that risk. So I think my view from
 2 reviewing it is that it was moved to a low risk too
 3 quickly. I think some of that does reflect the point
 4 I just made around the classification system and the way
 5 of working and, actually, children that identified at
 6 low risk at this stage very much fitted within a single
 7 agency care planning process, and so the risk was being
 8 managed through the children in care care planning
 9 process. I think, looking back at it, that's one of
 10 the key drivers for that quite significant shift into
 11 low very quickly and I think it's probably fair to say
 12 that that risk was probably downgraded too soon and
 13 overoptimistically at that time.
 14 Q. A further question about the language issue. I'm sorry
 15 to come back to this but I have been asked to ask you
 16 some further questions, and we are happy to put these
 17 questions.
 18 Those issues that I took you to at the very
 19 beginning about language being used around this child,
 20 have those professionals who used that language had the
 21 concerns drawn to their attention?
 22 **A. I'm not aware, because those comments dated back to**
 23 **2016/2017.**
 24 Q. And 2018, I think, weren't they?
 25 **A. And 2018. I can't answer that question. I'm happy to**

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1 look into that and find out whether they have been
 2 addressed. I know the referral form from 2016 related
 3 to a commissioned service that was no longer
 4 commissioned. So that was a service that finished in
 5 2017. So I think, in that instance, the referral form
 6 almost certainly will not have been fed back. Whether
 7 there are practitioners who are still in our system who
 8 were involved in the other examples you gave and whether
 9 that's been fed back to them, I couldn't confirm that.
 10 But I'm happy to look at that and provide a follow-up
 11 response to the inquiry if you think that would be
 12 helpful.
 13 Q. Certainly the document I took you to that ends with 785
 14 is not that historic. It is July 2018. It looks as if
 15 the person who's used the phrase "risk-taking
 16 behaviour" -- it is reported as being a social worker.
 17 Can you undertake that some steps will be taken to draw
 18 these concerns to that person's attention?
 19 **A. Absolutely, yes.**
 20 Q. Generally, what systems do you have in place to ensure
 21 that if that language is used now, it is identified and
 22 challenged?
 23 **A. Anything that's identified through case recording, so**
 24 **I can only talk on behalf of children in social care.**
 25 **In terms of anything that's identified through case**

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1 recording or through a meeting, that information -- or
 2 through an audit process, that information will be fed
 3 back as part of the supervision process, and I would
 4 expect discussion with the individual worker through the
 5 line management process.
 6 I think it's also fair to say that we would be using
 7 the specialists in the system to look at developing
 8 a greater capacity and understanding across those areas
 9 who we would have more concerns about, also into more of
 10 our generic social work teams and we would use some of
 11 our specialists to do that. Certainly where we
 12 identified anything, we would feed that back through the
 13 supervision process.
 14 Q. Thank you, Mr Pearce. In the time I have remaining,
 15 I have one more area of evidence to ask you some
 16 questions about, please, and that's the theme that we
 17 have identified around Return Home Interviews and
 18 looked-after children. You have given some evidence,
 19 and I will just perhaps bring these passages up very
 20 quickly. In fact, I will just note that in your first
 21 statement you have given some evidence about this --
 22 that's DUC000685. I don't think we need to bring it up,
 23 but it is actually at paragraphs 34 to 39, 40 to 47 and
 24 78. In your second statement, you have given some
 25 evidence about it, DUC000793, paragraphs 18 to 21 and 25

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1 to 27. Then most recently, Mr Pearce, perhaps we can
 2 bring up your August statement, DUC000809_002,
 3 paragraph 10, please. I think that brings us right up
 4 to date in terms of what the council is doing around
 5 missing children. Do you want to tell us what you say
 6 at paragraph 10?

7 **A. I think as part of the changes I have already described**
 8 **that were undertaken in November 2019, I think there was**
 9 **a gap identified in terms of the missing from home**
 10 **co-ordination, so we have developed a missing from home**
 11 **coordinator role. Additional capacity was put in to**
 12 **undertake that. The missing from home coordinator now**
 13 **undertakes all the Return Home Interviews for children**
 14 **in care and they also provide quality assurance and**
 15 **oversight of other Return Home Interviews that are**
 16 **taken.**

17 So we were aware that those Return Home Interviews
 18 that were undertaken by the ERASE team historically, and
 19 continue to be, were of very high quality. Those that
 20 were undertaken in the more generic teams were of poorer
 21 quality and certainly needed more work.

22 So by bringing that additional capacity with the
 23 missing from home coordinator that allowed a single
 24 point of oversight, a focus on quality, particularly for
 25 our children in care and Return Home Interviews.

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1 page, please, the topics that the audit was required to
 2 look at were around how seriously the council takes
 3 children and young people going missing, whether the
 4 best opportunity is given to those children to let us
 5 know and understand why they have gone missing and,
 6 essentially, is enough done around protecting those
 7 children who go missing and what difference is made to
 8 their safety and well-being. I think you have provided
 9 some further documentation around this in the form of
 10 a report from June of this year, DUC000807.

11 Is this a report on missing-from-home children that
 12 relates to this same topic?

13 **A. It does. I suppose what I would say about this report,**
 14 **this is very much a position statement as part of our**
 15 **next stage of development, so it doesn't necessarily go**
 16 **into the detail around quality. It is a point-in-time**
 17 **position statement.**

18 The audit that was undertaken identified through the
 19 partnership has been delayed for COVID reasons, so that
 20 has just recently started to come through the
 21 partnership. This is part of the enhancement we had in
 22 terms of resource and capacity, and the partnership
 23 basis was the development of the new analyst role, and
 24 this was the sort of starting point for the analyst in
 25 terms of pulling together a position statement of our

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1 **It also enabled us to have -- to join up the missing**
 2 **from home coordinator with the police missing**
 3 **coordinator, so they have daily catch-ups where they**
 4 **look at any children and young people where they believe**
 5 **there may be some concern and that means that there's**
 6 **a live sort of oversight of missing issues. What we are**
 7 **starting to see is the impact in terms of quality of**
 8 **Return Home Interviews and our learning from them**
 9 **starting to significantly improve. I would caveat that**
 10 **by saying that this started in April 2020, and, with the**
 11 **changes to practice driven by COVID, or the way in which**
 12 **(inaudible) by COVID over the last few months, again it**
 13 **is quite an early stage. We might not have seen the**
 14 **level of impact that we would have done in more normal**
 15 **times, but certainly, what we are starting to see is**
 16 **the -- with the oversight and scrutiny and the quality**
 17 **of the Return Home Interviews that are being carried out**
 18 **by the missing from home coordinator is a significant**
 19 **improvement.**

20 Q. You have also explained, I think, just go back up,
 21 please, Danny, to the previous page in this statement,
 22 the bottom of internal page 1, paragraph 4, that the new
 23 Safeguarding Partnership required an audit to take place
 24 of Return Home Interviews -- that's paragraph 4 --
 25 in February of this year. If you scroll on to the next

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1 **activity.**

2 Q. If we go internally within it, albeit with those
 3 caveats, there is discussion around the times that
 4 children were missing, around looked-after children.
 5 But then, at internal page 6, please, Return Home
 6 Interviews. There are discussions there about the --
 7 under the heading "Return Home Interviews":
 8 "Of the 921 missing-from-home incidents forcewide,
 9 189 (21 per cent) had Return Home Interviews linked.
 10 These interviews related to 131 children ..."

11 Do you want to give any further evidence around this
 12 issue, around what these statistics suggest?

13 **A. I think, in terms of the data that was used, the**
 14 **missing-from-home incidents forcewide were taken from**
 15 **the police dataset, so I think there's probably**
 16 **a disconnect in terms of the missing-from-home incidents**
 17 **recorded forcewide on the police system compared to**
 18 **those children who we would be undertaking Return Home**
 19 **Interviews for. So I think in terms of a context of our**
 20 **missing-from-home data, it's probably not that helpful.**
 21 **I think the missing-from-home data that's been provided**
 22 **through the audit and through the partnership score card**
 23 **will probably provide a better example of the activity**
 24 **as it currently stands --**

25 Q. Just perhaps looking at the very end of this document,

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<p>1 there are, on internal page 11, a series of bullet 2 points around further things that might be looked at as 3 far as the writer of this report is concerned. Is there 4 anything in there that you want to make any observation 5 on, around whether these are helpful things to be 6 looking at in further detail or not? 7 A. Yes, so this is a document that comes through one of 8 the subgroups of the partnership and, you know, that 9 group is looking at how the next steps are implemented. 10 That will be looked at alongside the audit information 11 that's now becoming available. But there are certainly 12 some key issues in here in terms of use of the 13 Philomena Protocol which we know has a positive impact 14 where that has been used, looking at some of 15 the similarities and themes and issues that are 16 identified. I think they're all things that we would 17 expect to be recognised. I think joining up the 18 activity data with the vulnerability tracker will be 19 really helpful. So I think there's an opportunity there 20 for us to really drill down into the information, and 21 I suppose this is the starting point that, now we've got 22 this analyst capacity, we will be able to point that 23 capacity at the areas the partnership thinks will have 24 the biggest impact. Given how recently that capacity 25 has become available to the partnership and some of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 57</p>	<p>1 the challenges that we are having at the moment through 2 COVID, I think that this is probably a next steps focus 3 for the partnership in terms of how we use that capacity 4 to really drill down. 5 I think historically you will see, from the range of 6 information we have provided, we have been very good at 7 collecting information. I think at the partnership we 8 recognise that we need to do far more from an analytical 9 perspective, so we have continued to be very information 10 rich. But we need to make sure we are using that 11 information and we have got a robust analysis to be able 12 to focus on the right areas and to be able to really 13 understand the impact and how it comes in the right way. 14 Q. Two further short points on this topic, and that will 15 conclude my questioning, Mr Pearce. Can I bring up the 16 audit that took place last year, for completeness, 17 March 2019, DUC000770_002. I think, if I have 18 understood this correctly, this is a council document 19 and this is an audit that was done last year and, very 20 simply, gives some indications of what the writer, 21 having, I think, looked at ten Return Home Interviews 22 prior to 7 March, what's working well, what's worrying 23 and what needs to happen. So that deals with perhaps 24 some points of content of these interviews. Is that 25 fair?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 58</p>
<p>1 A. It does. It is a model that we use in terms of looking 2 at what's working well, what needs to happen next, to 3 ensure that we can take the learning out of them and 4 this dip sample is specifically around return 5 interviews, but, actually, that dip sample approach as 6 part of our broader audit system and framework is 7 something that we use consistently and, really 8 importantly, there's the "what needs to happen next" bit 9 and how we make sure that that's embedded into our 10 learning. 11 So in this example, there's a timeline from this 12 audit in March 2019 through to the June report to the 13 partnership that built on the work of the visit of 14 the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre and that 15 then fed through some of the changes that were made 16 in November 2019. So there's a range of evidence that 17 was used and the sort of "what needs to happen next" bit 18 being then incorporated into changes in the way in which 19 the partnership worked. 20 Q. Final question on this topic -- it is jumping around the 21 timeline a bit -- it is July 2019. DHP000423. This is 22 a meeting of the criminal exploitation subgroup of 23 the Safeguarding Children Partnership. If we go, 24 please, Danny, to internal page 7, topic 9, "Return Home 25 Interviews". In particular, this was about Darlington</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 59</p>	<p>1 and Durham Return Home Interviews. The final part of 2 this page confirms that the council's position had been 3 to decide that all missing children recorded as such 4 would now receive a return interview. And went on over 5 the page to talk about using a joint form between 6 Darlington and Durham. To what extent has that been 7 implemented, the drive to ensure that all missing 8 children do receive a return interview? 9 A. That approach was part of the alignment and the changes 10 were made in November 2019. So this is very much part 11 of the evidence base that informed those changes. So 12 I would expect to have seen those changes having been 13 made and in place from November '19. 14 Q. The audit that's taking place at the moment, will that 15 look at both the number and content of Return Home 16 Interviews? 17 A. My understanding, it does. I have not seen the report 18 yet that's come out from it, but my understanding is, 19 yes, it does. 20 Q. Presumably, if that is completed in a reasonable period 21 of time from now, you will provide that to the inquiry 22 in due course, will you? 23 A. Yes, we are more than happy to provide that to the 24 inquiry. 25 MS HILL: Thank you very much indeed, Mr Pearce. Those are</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 60</p>

15 (Pages 57 to 60)

1 all the questions I have, chair.
 2 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Hill. I have some questions and
 3 then I will turn to my colleagues and ask them for any
 4 questions.
 5 Questions from THE PANEL
 6 THE CHAIR: The first one is about the relationship of
 7 the MEG planning process to the child protection
 8 planning process that you referred to. The deletion of
 9 children from the MEG process, does that have the effect
 10 of artificially reducing the numbers of children where
 11 CSE is a known element or risk, or does the child
 12 protection process also separately identify elements of
 13 child sexual exploitation?
 14 **A. No, it doesn't dilute in any way at all. I think the**
 15 **concern at that particular time was it was duplicating**
 16 **and that the operational MEG, as it stood at that time,**
 17 **was getting too involved in care planning rather than in**
 18 **strategic management of risks around missing or sexual**
 19 **exploitation, and was getting into far broader care**
 20 **planning issues. So I think that's where the separation**
 21 **would come out, and I think the way in which the**
 22 **partnership meeting structure was redesigned after that**
 23 **stage, and certainly the way in which it operates now,**
 24 **has resolved those issues, so I think they were very**
 25 **much a concern at a point in time.**

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1 absolutely not be aware of the full scale of
 2 exploitation. I think that will be the case across all
 3 councils across the country.
 4 I think what we have done is put in place systems
 5 and processes to get far better at awareness raising, at
 6 identification, at ensuring that all of
 7 the practitioners across the partnership are far more
 8 conscious and aware of risk and able to identify where
 9 there are concerns. I think the modelling and the
 10 approach that we have enables far better profiling and
 11 disruption of perpetrators and hotspot activity, and
 12 I think, you know, that's clearly something the police
 13 lead on, but I think, you know, we've got a much better
 14 picture and understanding than we may have had in the
 15 past. I couldn't honestly tell you that that is
 16 complete. I don't think anybody would be able to across
 17 any authority.
 18 THE CHAIR: A further point is about your relationship with
 19 education providers and whether -- you just referred to
 20 prevention. Are schools actively involved in prevention
 21 identification?
 22 **A. They are. We have a very well-developed designated**
 23 **safeguarding leads group which forms part of the new**
 24 **Children's Safeguarding Partnership arrangements. We**
 25 **have really strong relationships. We are fortunate in**

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1 THE CHAIR: So those children who were included in the child
 2 protection planning process all have an accurate
 3 reflection in the figures of elements of child sexual
 4 exploitation, actual risk?
 5 **A. I would expect that to be the case as part of their**
 6 **child protection planning process, absolutely.**
 7 THE CHAIR: We can ask them of course, but they work using
 8 the same kind of identification process, do they?
 9 **A. So in terms of the identification process, the model**
 10 **that we have now, which I described as -- we use the**
 11 **child vulnerability tracker. So that's used on a weekly**
 12 **basis, and that's a multi-agency tracker around child**
 13 **vulnerability, and that will inform other care planning**
 14 **processes. What it doesn't do is get into specific care**
 15 **planning issues in the way in which we had some concerns**
 16 **about in the past. So that is overlaid on top of**
 17 **the care planning process, to provide that insurance**
 18 **around risk.**
 19 THE CHAIR: My second point is a general one: what is your
 20 opinion of the true scale of child sexual exploitation
 21 in Durham and, indeed, how well you are tackling it?
 22 **A. In terms of scale, I think, as would be the case in any**
 23 **place across the country, the identification of**
 24 **the children and young people that we work with will be**
 25 **a proportion of the overall level of risk. We will**

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1 Durham that we still retain quite a significant
 2 education service, which is under my remit as DCS. So
 3 we do have capacity to ensure that we are able to work
 4 with schools and a range of education providers to
 5 ensure that they're fully engaged and fully engaged with
 6 safeguarding in all its forms. So I think those links
 7 and -- you know, so, for example, over the last six
 8 months, the daily and weekly safeguarding discussions
 9 that we have been having during the COVID period, the
 10 head of education who works for me is a core part of
 11 that group and we have a number of educational
 12 professionals and specialists who are part of our
 13 safeguarding mechanisms, as well as our (inaudible)
 14 designated safeguarding leads. So I do think that's an
 15 area where we are strong in Durham.
 16 THE CHAIR: From that, can I assume that all education
 17 providers, whether directly provided or in another
 18 format, are fully co-operative with addressing the child
 19 sexual exploitation agenda?
 20 **A. Completely. I have not seen any barriers at all, and**
 21 **we -- you know, all of our schools and education**
 22 **providers, regardless of their governance status or**
 23 **form, they are all fully engaged. We are in regular**
 24 **contact with them. If there are any concerns that's**
 25 **identified or any barriers, we can address those, and so**

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1 **I think, as a system, the education system is**
 2 **functioning well and, certainly in the year that I've**
 3 **been here, I've not come across any barriers or any**
 4 **providers who aren't willing to engage.**
 5 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Pearce. Ms Sharpling?
 6 MS SHARPLING: Thank you, chair. Just a couple of questions
 7 from me, if I may.
 8 Thank you, Mr Pearce. I want to ask you some
 9 questions about implementation. We have heard from
 10 a number of core participants and witnesses that there
 11 is a significant difference between the policy intent,
 12 which may be good or adequate and fit for purpose, to
 13 the actual implementation of new ways of working with
 14 front-line practitioners. It is that area that I would
 15 like to concentrate on.
 16 Let's take one of the themes, such as the use of
 17 appropriate language. Do you happen to know what
 18 implementation processes were put in place to make sure
 19 that that was properly and effectively put in place at
 20 local level?
 21 **A. In that particular example, we talked about the toolkit**
 22 **and the level of training that has been identified and**
 23 **all practitioners and the expectation that all**
 24 **practitioners are part of that training. That is**
 25 **relatively new, so that's from February/March this year**

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1 delivering the change at ground level?
 2 **A. Yes, absolutely. So from a social care perspective, we**
 3 **have a Social Work Academy which covers all of our newly**
 4 **qualified social workers and we also, over the last six**
 5 **months, have developed a Leadership Academy which is**
 6 **targeted at front-line team managers and the training**
 7 **around use of language and documentation is fully**
 8 **embedded within that. So it's a core part of the Social**
 9 **Work Academy work. So for any newly qualified social**
 10 **worker, the same for any induction process for anybody**
 11 **appointed into social care, and it's also a part of**
 12 **the leadership academy that targets our front-line team**
 13 **managers.**
 14 **I think we probably identified about nine or ten**
 15 **months ago that we needed to have a far greater focus on**
 16 **our first-line team managers and that's something that**
 17 **we're really working on developing and so we have got**
 18 **some dedicated resourcing capacity to lead that work and**
 19 **using the Social Work Academy model which has been well**
 20 **embedded now, it's been in place for three years,**
 21 **developing a similar footprint across the Leadership**
 22 **Academy for team managers.**
 23 MS SHARPLING: Changing tack completely, could I also ask
 24 you about the financial challenges and resources that we
 25 have heard about. I was wondering whether you have lost

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1 **that that has been in rollout. I think, as I described**
 2 **in my evidence, that is not fully embedded yet, so in**
 3 **terms of implementation, we still have more to do on**
 4 **that.**
 5 **We do have, and will continue to ensure there is**
 6 **a feedback loop in terms of our ongoing engagement with**
 7 **children and young people, but also through audit**
 8 **mechanisms and more formal mechanisms to make sure that**
 9 **that's picked up.**
 10 **I think, given our scale in County Durham, some of**
 11 **those implementation challenges can be difficult. We**
 12 **have 14 social care teams geographically based across**
 13 **the county. So having worked in smaller authorities, as**
 14 **well as large authorities, I think some of that**
 15 **implementation is more challenging in a large authority**
 16 **and potentially takes a little bit longer, but I think**
 17 **we're really focused on the implementation, certainly**
 18 **the management, oversight and implementation across all**
 19 **of these aspects of work, including the example you have**
 20 **highlighted.**
 21 **I think we are really clear in our expectations**
 22 **around the way in which that work is being embedded.**
 23 MS SHARPLING: Has there been, for example, any specific
 24 engagement with, say, team leaders, who play such
 25 a vital role, along with others, of course, in

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1 a cadre of social workers in your efforts to save money
 2 over the period of, say, the last three years?
 3 **A. Not at all. In fact, I think it was recognised in the**
 4 **Ofsted inspection 2019 that there's been a significant**
 5 **investment in children's social care. But investment**
 6 **has only just been keeping up with the growth in work**
 7 **and caseloads. We have actually had quite a significant**
 8 **investment and, as it stands at the moment -- hopefully**
 9 **my finance director is not watching this, but as it**
 10 **stands at the moment, we are not being advised that we**
 11 **need to make any reductions from a financial**
 12 **perspective.**
 13 **Clearly, we are looking at and working with the**
 14 **implications of austerity more broadly and the impact**
 15 **that that has across our communities and also the**
 16 **financial strain that there is across the system as**
 17 **a whole. But certainly not in terms of social work**
 18 **capacity or requirements around reductions in social**
 19 **work. That hasn't been the case in Durham.**
 20 MS SHARPLING: Thank you.
 21 THE CHAIR: Mr Frank?
 22 MR FRANK: No, thank you.
 23 THE CHAIR: And Sir Malcolm?
 24 PROF SIR MALCOLM EVANS: Just one quick question from me, if
 25 I may.

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1 In the course of one of your answers, you alighted
 2 on the issue about risk assessments and moving over from
 3 a risk-based to a harm-based paradigm. What do you
 4 think might be the practical implications of this, if
 5 you were to follow such a route?

6 **A. I mean, I think it aligns really well with the practice
 7 model we've developed in our relationship-based practice
 8 and, actually, that is probably a natural continuation
 9 of the way in which our practice has been moving over
 10 the last two to three years. So, you know, I think
 11 there's definitely a challenge which currently exists
 12 regardless of how we move forward, which is around
 13 a greater understanding of a child's life -- of a child
 14 and young person in totality and making sure the child
 15 is very much at the centre of that and that's something
 16 our relationship-based practice model is trying to
 17 address.**

18 **So I think any barriers would be barriers that we
 19 are going to be receiving anyway as part of that change
 20 of direction and the way in which we are focusing on
 21 working. So I think, you know, there's very much an
 22 opportunity for that to be seen as a potential
 23 continuation of that approach.**

24 PROF SIR MALCOLM EVANS: Thank you.
 25 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Pearce. I'm afraid I just have

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1 one other question which I omitted to ask.
 2 With regard to the skills of youth workers and known
 3 to be relevant to certainly the identification agenda
 4 with children and young people who are sexually
 5 exploited, has there been any reduction in the
 6 numbers -- first of all, do you deploy them in this kind
 7 of role, in street work, for example, and has there been
 8 any reduction in the numbers along the lines that
 9 Ms Sharpling was asking you about any cost pressures for
 10 the council?

11 **A. So the council made a decision a few years ago now that
 12 we have a model called Area Action Partnerships, so
 13 across our 14 communities, community areas, there's An
 14 Area Action Partnership in each of those. So a lot of
 15 youth service activity was devolved into those Area
 16 Action Partnerships as part of that.**

17 **We retain a relatively small specialist core, and
 18 that's a model that has operated over the last three to
 19 four years that continues to be the case.**

20 **There haven't been any reductions or (inaudible) in
 21 the time I have been here, but I'm conscious that, at
 22 the time that that model was introduced, there will have
 23 been reductions in the level of capacity and the way in
 24 which that youth service support was delivered.**

25 THE CHAIR: Are they engaged in the child sexual

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1 exploitation agenda?

2 **A. Yes. So where there are youth workers, it tends to be
 3 where we have specialised youth workers, they are
 4 absolutely engaged, and, for example, we talked a bit
 5 about Investing in Children area, which was one of
 6 the spinoffs that was set up at the time that that model
 7 changed, and they are absolutely core in terms of
 8 a whole range of work that we do with young people, but
 9 they have been very much at the centre of the work
 10 around child sexual exploitation.**

11 THE CHAIR: Perhaps you would be able to provide us with
 12 some information about the kind of work that youth
 13 workers are engaged in?

14 **A. Yes, absolutely. I'm happy to do that.**

15 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Thank you for your
 16 evidence.
 17 MS HILL: Thank you, chair, and thank you, Mr Pearce.
 18 (The witness withdrew)
 19 MS HILL: Chair, we propose to invite you to call the next
 20 witness even to take a few brief questions. I know that
 21 we do need to rise for lunch at 12.45 pm. Can I hand,
 22 please, to Mr Livingston to ask questions of the next
 23 witness?

24 THE CHAIR: Go ahead, Mr Livingston.
 25 MR LIVINGSTON: Good afternoon, chair and panel. We are now

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1 going to hear from Michael Banks, the independent chair
 2 of the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership.
 3 MR MICHAEL BANKS (sworn)
 4 Examination by MR LIVINGSTON
 5 MR LIVINGSTON: Mr Banks, you have provided the statement,
 6 an eight-page statement, which is at INQ005012. Have
 7 you had a chance to look at that statement recently,
 8 Mr Banks?

9 **A. Yes, I have.**

10 Q. Is that statement true, to the best of your knowledge
 11 and belief?

12 **A. Yes, it is.**

13 Q. Chair, I'd like to formally adduce the entirety of that
 14 witness statement.
 15 Mr Banks, the panel have a copy of your statement,
 16 which will be uploaded to the website in due course, so
 17 I won't go through line by line, but I will take you to
 18 particular topics.
 19 We are going to go from now only until 12.45 pm,
 20 when we will be breaking for lunch for an hour, and then
 21 I will have some further time afterwards to ask you
 22 questions, so I will proceed with a few questions now,
 23 Mr Banks.
 24 At paragraph 1 of your statement, you set out your
 25 professional background. In summary, you were a police

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1 officer for 30 years, until July 2015, reaching the rank
 2 of deputy chief constable. Is that right?
 3 **A. That's correct.**
 4 Q. Since April 2018, you have been independent chair,
 5 firstly of the Durham Local Safeguarding Children's
 6 Board, and then, since April 2019, of its successor, the
 7 Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership; is that right?
 8 **A. That's right, yes.**
 9 Q. Can you explain, in your words, what the role of
 10 the partnership is?
 11 **A. Well, the role of the partnership is to co-ordinate the**
 12 **different partners into achieving safeguarding and**
 13 **promoting the welfare of children in County Durham. In**
 14 **doing so, it helps the partners to fulfil their**
 15 **obligations under the Children's Act 2004, the Children**
 16 **and Social Work Act 2017 and the Working Together**
 17 **guidance 2018.**
 18 **So it's to co-ordinate -- the partnership is to**
 19 **co-ordinate the different agencies towards achieving**
 20 **that end.**
 21 Q. So is it a case of essentially pulling together these
 22 individual agencies and making sure that they work
 23 together on a multi-agency basis?
 24 **A. Yes, I think that's the key. It is about being truly**
 25 **multi-agency as opposed to multiple agency.**

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1 **centre of what the partnership was set to achieve.**
 2 Q. Would I be right in saying that, beforehand, it was
 3 multi-agency in the sense that each agency, whether it's
 4 the local authority, whether it's the education service,
 5 whether it's the police or whether it's the youth
 6 justice service or the probation service, they had
 7 a sort of equal role in the partnership, whereas now
 8 it's elevated these three to the top and then they sort
 9 of corral those below them. Is that right?
 10 **A. I think it was more probably perceived that the local**
 11 **authority had primacy within the partnership, but in our**
 12 **case there were 34 different partners around the table**
 13 **of the LSCB. By changing to the way we have changed, we**
 14 **have created the executive group that I have referred to**
 15 **within my statement, and met with much greater**
 16 **regularity than the old LSCB. That, I'm hoping, will**
 17 **have made us more responsive to need. We took the**
 18 **opportunity to change the partnership structure, to**
 19 **change the scrutiny arrangements, to change the meetings**
 20 **model, and there is a lot to unpack there. But it's**
 21 **also about making sure that those other partners who are**
 22 **not statutorily responsible, they are still obliged to**
 23 **be part of it. You can't opt out of it. And so to make**
 24 **sure that they feel they are part of the wider**
 25 **partnership even though there is an executive to drive**

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1 Q. This change from Local Safeguarding Children's Boards to
 2 partnerships happened in 2019 during the existence of
 3 this inquiry. So I wonder if you could tell us just
 4 briefly the sort of practical impact of that change from
 5 safeguarding board to safeguarding partnership?
 6 **A. Yes. I think, if I may just start with the context.**
 7 **Obviously we had the Wood Report 2016 and there were**
 8 **a couple of things stood out to me from that. That was**
 9 **about the low levels of confidence from both the chairs**
 10 **of the existing boards and the partners as to the**
 11 **effectiveness of the boards. I think there were**
 12 **60-odd per cent, 50-odd per cent respectively. That's**
 13 **pretty bad. One would expect the confidence levels to**
 14 **be 90 to 100 when you're dealing with an issue like**
 15 **safeguarding.**
 16 **I think there's also a recognition that, rather than**
 17 **have a national diktat as to what the partnership should**
 18 **look like and who should be part of it, it was left more**
 19 **to local determination within the guidance.**
 20 **Also, the three statutory partners were created --**
 21 **namely, the police, the local authority and the Clinical**
 22 **Commissioning Groups -- who had joint and equal**
 23 **responsibility for setting up the partnership and for**
 24 **convening the other relevant agencies to be part of**
 25 **the partnership and ensuring that the child was at the**

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1 **business on a day-to-day basis.**
 2 **I think when you look at the operational model that**
 3 **we have set up, there are a number of ways in which the**
 4 **other relevant agencies contribute towards the**
 5 **partnership.**
 6 Q. Is it fair for me to suggest that this changeover has
 7 really had efficiency, then, as opposed to anything
 8 else?
 9 **A. I would hope it's effectiveness as well. There are some**
 10 **carry-overs. Obviously child sexual exploitation was**
 11 **a key theme of the old LSCB. But you will have also**
 12 **seen, and we will probably discuss, some of the changes**
 13 **that have been made within child sexual exploitation to**
 14 **sort of broaden the remit and to put things in place**
 15 **which hopefully has a positive impact on our collective**
 16 **effectiveness.**
 17 MR LIVINGSTON: Chair, I think before moving on to the next
 18 issue, this is probably a good time to break for lunch,
 19 if that's okay. So until 1.45 pm.
 20 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Livingston. We will return at
 21 1.45 pm.
 22 (12.45 pm)
 23 (The short adjournment)
 24 (1.45 pm)
 25 THE CHAIR: Mr Livingston?

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1 MR LIVINGSTON: Thank you, chair. Mr Banks, I'm just
 2 checking you can see and hear me okay again.
 3 **A. Yes, sir.**
 4 Q. Mr Banks, we talked just before the break about the role
 5 of the partnership as a whole. I want to focus now
 6 a little bit on your role. If we can turn to reference
 7 INQ005013 and have that up on screen, Danny, please.
 8 Mr Banks, this is a one-page document setting out
 9 a description of your duties. It was a description of
 10 your duties as transitional chair. Does this still, at
 11 least roughly, represent your duties?
 12 **A. Yes, it does.**
 13 Q. I just want to run through a few of them. At the top,
 14 it says there the overarching duty is to provide
 15 leadership and strategic direction to the partnership in
 16 delivering the statutory objectives of coordinating and
 17 monitoring the effectiveness of inter-agency work to
 18 safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young
 19 people. Then it sets out various other things that you
 20 are to ensure. At the third bullet point you will see
 21 it says:
 22 "The voices of children and young people are
 23 championed and represented and are influential in the
 24 work of the [partnership]."
 25 Can you just explain briefly how you ensure that?

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1 **A. Yes. It's been in a number of ways. First of all,**
 2 **whilst we were in transition from the old partnership to**
 3 **the new, we had consultation with Investing in Children,**
 4 **which is an independent body which is largely run by the**
 5 **young people themselves. The Voice of the Child is key**
 6 **in our performance framework, which I'm sure we will**
 7 **touch on a bit later, so there are performance**
 8 **indicators against that. We also decided to promote and**
 9 **champion young people within the partnership to appoint**
 10 **a Young Person's Commissioner, so when we became a new**
 11 **partnership, we appointed a 17-year-old young woman into**
 12 **that particular role. Part of her role is to assist**
 13 **with scrutiny about our services, so she --**
 14 Q. Mr Banks, does she attend meetings with the partnership?
 15 **A. She attends the part of the partnership which is the**
 16 **scrutiny panel. (Interference) to the partners. Also,**
 17 **part of her role is to connect with young people, so she**
 18 **will liaise with whatever youth groups there are,**
 19 **including the Youth Council, et cetera.**
 20 Q. One of these bullet points which I want to focus on
 21 a bit is four from the bottom. It says that one of
 22 the things you are to ensure is that the partnership
 23 operates independently of all partner organisations and
 24 has the capacity and ability to challenge practice and
 25 hold agencies to account as necessary. Mr Banks, when

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1 you were talking earlier about the partnership, you
 2 spoke about it as a coordinating body, but do you accept
 3 that it also has a function as a challenging body that's
 4 supposed to hold -- and you are supposed to hold the
 5 agencies to account?
 6 **A. Yes, it certainly does that, and that appears in our**
 7 **operating practices, yes.**
 8 Q. To what extent do you feel, as chair, that you are able
 9 to hold agencies, so the police or children's social
 10 care, to account?
 11 **A. In a number of ways. You will see that we report to the**
 12 **chief officer group. I have, in the past couple of**
 13 **years, had individual meetings with the chief officers**
 14 **of the statutory groups about issues. That might be**
 15 **funding issues, to be able to provide services. So**
 16 **I feel I've got access to the top people in the**
 17 **statutory partners around that.**
 18 **We obviously meet as an executive group, which is**
 19 **able to challenge within the executive group each**
 20 **other's practices and performances. That might, for**
 21 **example, come out from an external inspection, which**
 22 **raises some issues about an individual partner. So, for**
 23 **instance, the police have recently had one which was**
 24 **raised -- came to the partnership for us to look at and**
 25 **there's an action plan to be reported back on in due**

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1 **course.**
 2 Q. That's a good example. So the police, as I think
 3 Ms Hill will come on to talk about with Mr Orford this
 4 afternoon, recently had a fairly critical HMIC report --
 5 HMICFRS report. So if you see something like that which
 6 raises some practice problems and you see that an agency
 7 like the police is not responding properly to them, what
 8 can you do to make sure that they respond properly?
 9 **A. I think in this case they have responded properly.**
 10 **There were many good examples of practice in that**
 11 **inspection and there were some that weren't. It's**
 12 **making sure that we are aware, as a collective**
 13 **partnership, that those issues, where they have been**
 14 **found short, are picked up on and there's something put**
 15 **in place around that. So there's a level of assurance.**
 16 **Part of the ways of holding individual partners to**
 17 **account is through assurance reporting, so that happens**
 18 **on an annual basis, so I'd expect to pick that up not**
 19 **just directly through challenge, but also through some**
 20 **of the assurance processes that we have put in place,**
 21 **some security processes.**
 22 Q. Are you satisfied that in your role as independent
 23 chair, you are actually able to be independent, given
 24 that these are the people you are working with, given
 25 your own background within the police service? Are you

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20 (Pages 77 to 80)

1 satisfied that you are able to act independently?
 2 **A. Yes. I'm five years-plus out of the police now.**
 3 **Partnership working was always my passion when I was in**
 4 **the police. So I'm used to working in partnership. I'm**
 5 **used to challenge within partnership. The building of**
 6 **the relationships is important to enable to do that, but**
 7 **I think it's also important to recognise that my role**
 8 **was brought in as a transitional chair. It was**
 9 **originally for 12 months. That was achieved and I was**
 10 **asked to stay to make sure it was put into place. The**
 11 **partnership is of a maturity now that it no longer needs**
 12 **an independent chair. What it needs is an independent**
 13 **scrutineer. So that's what we have appointed.**
 14 **So this, in effect, is my last day. We have an**
 15 **independent scrutineer who has been appointed from the**
 16 **beginning of this month, and that person much more sits**
 17 **independently outside of the partnership and will be**
 18 **able to provide assurance, provide challenge, provide**
 19 **the audit and scrutiny depth and width that is needed**
 20 **now at this stage of the partnership.**
 21 **My role, essentially, is getting the things in**
 22 **place.**
 23 Q. It would be helpful if you are able to provide a little
 24 bit of an explanation of that after, in writing, if
 25 possible, as to what the new position will be?

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1 **A. Absolutely. Yes.**
 2 Q. I want to come back to a couple of things. In your
 3 statement, Mr Banks, at paragraph 6 -- that's
 4 INQ005012_004 -- you say that until very recently --
 5 this is a big paragraph, but it's just in the middle.
 6 I will just refer to it rather than finding it in the
 7 big block of text. You say that, until recently -- and
 8 Mr Pearce said it this morning -- the partnership has
 9 been, on occasion, data rich and analysis poor. Can you
 10 explain what you mean by that, please?
 11 **A. Yes. I will say from the outset I think we are still**
 12 **a little bit that particular way, but we have moved**
 13 **a bit.**
 14 **In the performance information data that we gather,**
 15 **there are over 100 different bits of data that we gather**
 16 **as a partnership. What I'd like to see more of is**
 17 **greater analysis of that information which helps us to**
 18 **drive the business, which helps us to identify where the**
 19 **gaps are.**
 20 **An example would be the audit into missing from**
 21 **home, the Return to Home Interviews that you referred to**
 22 **earlier. You know, that talks about the age profile of**
 23 **the people missing, how long they were missing, that**
 24 **sort of thing.**
 25 **It is a start. It doesn't really get into the "so**

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1 **what", and "where does that take us?" That's another**
 2 **piece of work that needs to be done. As I say, we have**
 3 **made a start in that we have appointed an analyst but**
 4 **I think there needs to be more direction that what we**
 5 **come back with is analysis that helps to drive the**
 6 **business of the partnership.**
 7 **It is analysed in a different way, in that the**
 8 **performance challenge and impact group, which is**
 9 **a subgroup of the partnership, do receive this**
 10 **information data, do look at what the key messages are**
 11 **coming out of it, interpret it and what the challenges**
 12 **they think are, and that is reported back up to the full**
 13 **executive group and we have a discussion around that.**
 14 **But I just feel that we need to up our game in relation**
 15 **to the analysis of the information that we have got.**
 16 Q. I want to come on and talk about each of those
 17 constituent parts, the data rich and analysis poor part,
 18 a little bit. If we can go to DUC000815 and have that
 19 up on screen, please. Mr Banks, as you will be well
 20 aware, this is the performance score card which is
 21 produced by Durham Safeguarding Partnership and
 22 Darlington Safeguarding Partnership. If we can go to
 23 page 2 of that, please -- it is very small. We will
 24 zoom in on different bits in a minute.
 25 What you can see, possibly on the left-hand side,

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1 is, this is looking at data about missing children. It
 2 says "Missing" in the top left-hand corner. It goes on
 3 this page and the next page and it provides various bits
 4 of data on that. I just want to show you, while we are
 5 here, that you will see that, on this table, every
 6 second column is about Durham and every second column is
 7 about Darlington. Do you see that?
 8 **A. I do.**
 9 Q. If we can go over to the next page, then, page 3, and if
 10 we can look at number 7, please. That's great. So this
 11 was the data in the score card about the number of
 12 children who were a victim of CSE. This is the number
 13 of missing children who were a victim of CSE and the
 14 number of missing children who were at risk of CSE. You
 15 will see there that, in the columns which were headed
 16 "Durham", there's nothing entered for each of those
 17 things. Are you able to explain that?
 18 **A. Yes. This document -- first of all, it is not**
 19 **a document in its entirety that I would routinely see.**
 20 **There are aspects of this document which are taken and**
 21 **built into the performance framework I mentioned to you**
 22 **earlier. But my understanding is, this is part of**
 23 **the joint work done by the coming together of Durham and**
 24 **Darlington as a strategic child exploitation group, and**
 25 **they have agreed a set of performance indicators which**

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1 are to be populated. Due to the situation we have found
 2 ourselves in in recent months, some of the Durham data
 3 hasn't been transferred across, but the intention is
 4 that it will be.

5 There are some things, just looking at this, that
 6 are glaring gaps. I mean, on the previous page, there's
 7 no data on SEND, there's no box for ethnicity, and there
 8 should be. So this is something that's been brought
 9 together from, I think, April of this year, but it's
 10 clearly not finished. But I'm assured that we have the
 11 data to populate that, it is just that it hasn't been at
 12 this moment in time or won't have been submitted to this
 13 point.

14 Q. I think this was looking at 2019/20. You're saying that
 15 you are confident that the partnership does have the
 16 number of missing children who are a victim of CSE and
 17 the number of missing children who are at risk of CSE;
 18 it is just not in this document?

19 A. Yes. As far as I can ascertain. This is a prototype of
 20 what it is going to look like.

21 Q. If we can go to page 7 of this document, please. At the
 22 top, you will see that it refers there to the number of
 23 new episodes with CSE risks where a child is at risk of,
 24 or a victim of, CSE, and it lists numbers for Durham for
 25 each quarter. Now, this doesn't distinguish between the

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1 number of children at risk of CSE and the number of
 2 children who have been victims of CSE. Do you know
 3 whether the partnership has access to that breakdown?

4 A. Not specifically, no.

5 Q. The reason I'm asking, Mr Banks, is, we heard yesterday
 6 from two academic specialists that they felt there was
 7 often a conflation between the number of children at
 8 risk of CSE because of various factors and the number of
 9 children who have actually been victims of CSE. So the
 10 reason I ask you is that this seems to make that
 11 conflation, where it just has one number for both.

12 A. Yes. I don't routinely see this and there's information
 13 that's put into another performance document that comes
 14 to the executive, and it's built around the -- I'm just
 15 trying to see if I can find that.

16 This is the type of information that I would get,
 17 and I'm looking at this, it's linked to the vision which
 18 I submitted in my papers as document 7 of my papers, and
 19 attached to that has been developed a performance
 20 framework. When I look at child sexual exploitation,
 21 the data that we receive from the police is number of
 22 reported CSE incidents, number of individuals with
 23 a safeguarding referral where recorded as victim. So
 24 that would appear to differentiate -- I think you're
 25 pointing out there the difference between what's been

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1 reported and how people are being identified as
 2 a victim. For instance, at the time of this data, which
 3 is old, because it was the prototype, the referrals in
 4 that period were ten and the number of recorded victims
 5 in that period were eight. So, yeah.

6 Q. So although not in this document, you do have access to
 7 that breakdown when it's reported --

8 A. Yes. I think what's being shown there is the prototype
 9 of what the new extended child exploitation group are
 10 going to be looking at, and then, when it comes up to
 11 the executive, it's presented in a different format.

12 Q. Looking at that table, for example, and looking at the
 13 other information that's provided to you, are you still
 14 of the view that the partnership is data rich?

15 I suppose the question I wanted to ask is, do you think
 16 that there is an understanding, a sufficient
 17 understanding, of the number of cases where a child is
 18 a victim of CSE or the number of missing children who
 19 are victims of CSE, for example?

20 A. I think, as we heard from Mr Pearce earlier, that would
 21 be very difficult to say with any certainty at any point
 22 in time. But I think where we have made a step change
 23 in difference now is that, because all of the partners
 24 have access to submit concerns about child sexual
 25 exploitation and all of those concerns will come through

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1 First Contact and then to the ERASE team to be put on
 2 the tracker, we are much better informed as
 3 a preventative tool to look at the information that we
 4 are getting and the analysis and the profiling is done
 5 at that level there.

6 When I was referring to the data rich and analysis
 7 poor, I was referring to some of the audits that we're
 8 doing, as I made mention to. But I think, in this
 9 circumstance, getting the numbers of children -- in
 10 terms of the numbers that you have there, the quota
 11 which comes after that, which obviously you don't have,
 12 it rises to -- I think it is 52 referrals. Also,
 13 there's an increase in submissions in relation to young
 14 males as well.

15 So I think we are getting better at identifying
 16 where those vulnerabilities are, getting it into the
 17 right team, getting it properly discussed and assessed,
 18 the risk factors, and then providing bespoke solutions
 19 to that particular child and monitoring it.

20 Q. Thank you, Mr Banks. I now want to look at the idea of
 21 being analysis poor. If we can have up the recent
 22 annual report of your partnership, that's at
 23 INQ006252_030. There is a little bit about the inquiry
 24 there and it refers to this idea of being data
 25 rich/analysis poor and gives a brief explanation of what

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<p>1 that means. Then it says: 2 "With the introduction of our new analyst, we will 3 grasp this opportunity and drive forward in the areas 4 which require focus in the coming year." 5 When was the analyst recruited? 6 A. I think it's towards the end of 2019. In my 7 statement -- 8 Q. Yes, it probably is. I can find that later. 9 I appreciate that things have been a bit different 10 this year, of course, because of COVID, but are there 11 any improvements that you have seen so far with the 12 recruitment of this analyst? 13 A. First of all, I think when we have the analyst -- again, 14 this is in my statement. This analyst isn't full time 15 working on the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership, 16 it is a joint role, so she works with the adults. So 17 I think we probably get the equivalent of about a day of 18 that. 19 I think part of the initial -- she's obviously not 20 managed by me. But part of the initial task was to set 21 up the reporting system that we have. Like I say, it 22 took a while to come to an agreement around what that 23 dataset would be, but that has taken place now. I think 24 we are at a stage now where we really need to say, well, 25 again, this is data, it is a collection of data, and</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 89</p>	<p>1 start to really get into the analytical capability of 2 what's there. 3 But to give you an example, and we mentioned they 4 were quite open about it, how the IICSA question set 5 enabled us to hold a mirror up to ourselves and to say, 6 "Where do we feel we are lacking?", and one of those 7 areas was with special educational needs and 8 disabilities. So since that time, we have had top 9 managers who are involved in those services present to 10 the strategic child exploitation group. One of 11 the people now sits on the risk assessment. During that 12 presentation, it quite clearly provided some context to 13 help the partnership be more aware of what the risks 14 were, and those risks, of course, are now building to 15 the risk assessment process. 16 So I think that's an area where, you know, we found 17 that we were lacking, we have brought the right people 18 in, and some positive changes have occurred as a result 19 of that. 20 Q. If we can stay on the annual report and go to page 6 of 21 that, please. I should have said at the beginning that 22 this is an annual report for 2019/20 which was published 23 in September, this month. Is that right, Mr Banks? 24 A. Yes. Whether it's actually been published or not, 25 I don't know, but --</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 90</p>
<p>1 Q. I think it has because I think I found it, so that's 2 fine. You will see on the right there it is giving some 3 figures and it says there: CSE referrals, 115. Do you 4 know whether that figure refers to children being 5 referred for being at risk of child sexual exploitation? 6 A. I would feel that that's the cumulative number who have 7 been submitted as per the data you put up before. 8 Q. It says there that this figure has fallen from last 9 year, as in previous, and reflects a heightened 10 awareness around the risk. It would be helpful if you 11 could explain how a lower number of referrals shows 12 a heightened awareness around the risk, because it might 13 suggest to people that it's, in fact, the opposite. 14 A. Yes, I can see what you're saying there. I think there 15 has been a heightened awareness within the partnership 16 about the risks. There is a child sexual exploitation 17 tool on the website, on the partnership website, which 18 takes partners through what to look out for. So it may 19 well be that people feel more informed as to when 20 something needs to be submitted or not. 21 Q. Are you comfortable -- or the partnership, but you in 22 particular -- that the number of CSE referrals going up 23 or down doesn't necessarily reflect improved practice as 24 you might expect? So, for example, that the number 25 figures going up might actually show an improvement in</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 91</p>	<p>1 practice because it shows that your team and 2 Social Services and police are actually identifying more 3 cases? 4 A. It's one of those double-sided issues, isn't it? It is 5 a similar thing as, you know, are you successful in 6 dealing with domestic violence because there's more 7 reporting, because people are more confident to report 8 it to you, or are you successful because you have 9 reduced the numbers, where that could mean people are 10 not comfortable reporting it to you? It is perhaps 11 a bit difficult to interpret that. Perhaps it is a bit 12 of sloppy writing. 13 Q. If we could turn to DHP000379, please, and have that up 14 on screen. Mr Banks, this is a problem profile produced 15 into child sexual abuse and exploitation in July 2019. 16 I appreciate this was commissioned by the police rather 17 than the partnership. Is that right? 18 A. That's correct. 19 Q. Have you had a chance to consider it anyway? 20 A. I have looked at it as part of this inquiry with the 21 documents that have been submitted. I can't recall it 22 coming in this format to the full partnership. 23 Q. I just want to take you to a couple of bits of it, then. 24 If we can go to page 2, first of all. In the bottom 25 half of the page, it says that there is a three-month</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 92</p>

<p>1 sample of 360 crimes, of which 55 per cent are contact 2 offences, and then the second arrow says: 3 "Child sexual exploitation remains a small part of 4 the overall CSAE picture -- with 5.8 per cent of 360 5 crimes ... showing evidence of exploitation." 6 If we can then go to page 13, please, this is part 7 of the same profile. Under "CSE", it says: 8 "The three-month sample size did not lend itself to 9 adequate analysis of child sexual exploitation. Where 10 no explicit mention of grooming or exploitative 11 techniques was mentioned, crimes were classed as CSA 12 rather than E." 13 In the paragraph below, it says: 14 "Of the contact crimes and associated safeguarding 15 reports, just 5 per cent (nine offences) had an element 16 of CSE." 17 Mr Banks, I know that this probably didn't come to 18 you in this form, but looking at this and looking at 19 what it says, that the sample size didn't lend itself to 20 adequate analysis, is this an example of the "analysis 21 poor" that you were talking about? 22 A. It could well be, but it could also be a failure in 23 recording practices, because it looks like it's 24 extrapolating key words there, and if certain things 25 aren't mentioned, it gets graded as something different.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 93</p>	<p>1 Having read this for the first time fairly recently as 2 part of this process, that's certainly something that 3 I'll be asking -- or, rather, pointing back to the chair 4 of that particular group to clarify that, because if 5 it's -- if that's saying what I'm saying it's saying, it 6 means we could be underestimating the problem that we 7 have got. 8 Q. Thank you. I want to move on now to the issue of 9 children with a disability. At paragraph 7 of your 10 statement, you say, and you have said earlier, that the 11 partnership identified children with disabilities and 12 special educational needs as a key priority gap in the 13 partnership's safeguarding role, and you say in your 14 statement that there's a lack of meaningful data and 15 therefore analysis, and then you go on to say that 16 there's a need to make this a priority area for action. 17 The annual report that we have just looked at 18 doesn't list children with a disability as a priority 19 anywhere. Can you assist us with why that would be the 20 case? 21 A. Yes. I think when you talk about priorities in general 22 within a partnership, you are talking about sometimes 23 subjects like child sexual exploitation, like neglect, 24 like domestic abuse, that sort of thing. What I was 25 referring to in my statement was that was clearly an</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 94</p>
<p>1 area where we were lacking, as I said earlier, doing the 2 research to submit the statement for this inquiry, and 3 what's happened since then, as we've just talked about 4 before, and as Mr Pearce submitted -- or was questioned 5 about as part of his evidence, there was a presentation 6 given to the strategic child exploitation group. It 7 showed how the children with the special educational 8 needs and disabilities mapped against the then 14 risk 9 criteria and how that might look. So it was really 10 useful in terms of giving context to not just respond to 11 the potential and very real vulnerabilities of people 12 with SEND in terms of child sexual exploitation, but 13 also about thinking about how to design the services 14 around that. 15 Now, that may not seem a lot, but it is a step 16 change from where we were when I was writing this 17 particular statement, and the fact that we have got 18 someone who is -- can recognise this and can inform the 19 risk analysis is, again, another step forward in terms 20 of that. 21 Also, having meaningful data. Just things like, you 22 know, off the top of my head, I didn't know how many 23 children of school age had a special educational need or 24 disability criteria. I didn't know the percentage of 25 the people going missing from home, or whatever, who</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 95</p>	<p>1 have that marker. 2 So it's enabled us to begin to get a better picture 3 of where children with special educational needs and 4 disabilities feature in this particular area, and then, 5 once we have got a better picture of that, we will 6 better be able to respond. 7 Q. Mr Banks, you say both in your statement, which 8 I appreciate was earlier this year, but also in the 9 annual report, which is this month, that further work 10 needs to be done to understand how the partnership can 11 inform and reduce exploitation within areas of potential 12 risk, such as children with special educational needs 13 and those with physical disabilities. Can you give us 14 a couple of examples of what the further work that's 15 going to take place is? 16 A. Yes. There is a toolkit being developed through the 17 child exploitation group, the strategic child 18 exploitation group, that will give practitioners better 19 guidance on special educational needs and disabilities 20 and the risks involved and, yes, so it's a toolkit in 21 the first instance that's being developed around that. 22 Then, of course, it's a monitoring piece of data 23 within the score card that you have seen, and, yes, it 24 will also be within the training schedule as well. It's 25 also on the vulnerability tracker and in terms of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 96</p>

1 **the threshold document as well.**
 2 Q. Moving to a slightly different issue now, within the
 3 evidence that we have heard this morning, but also some
 4 of the documents that you have disclosed to us, it is
 5 clear that Durham has moved from a child sexual
 6 exploitation model to a child exploitation model where
 7 child sexual exploitation is considered as part of
 8 a wider focus on criminal child exploitation, and that's
 9 included sort of renaming the groups and things like
 10 that to child exploitation rather than child sexual
 11 exploitation.
 12 Yesterday, this investigation heard evidence from
 13 two specialists, saying that they thought steps like
 14 this were the wrong move because children who have
 15 suffered child sexual exploitation tended to have
 16 different needs from those who had suffered other types
 17 of criminal exploitation, whether it's county lines or
 18 other physical exploitation. Do you have a view on
 19 that?
 20 **A. Well, clearly I'm no expert, I'm no academic in this**
 21 **regard. But what I do know is that, depending on what**
 22 **category of exploitation it is, it's likely to be**
 23 **broadly the same agencies that are dealing with it.**
 24 **It's not to say that the remedy is the same, and that's**
 25 **why each has to be taken -- it is not just on the crime**

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1 **our first development day, the entire partnership, was**
 2 **around child criminal exploitation, of which, of course,**
 3 **child sexual exploitation is a part. It was about**
 4 **educating the wider partnership on emerging risks and**
 5 **then to turn it back on them to say, "Well, how does my**
 6 **individual agency need to respond to this and how do we,**
 7 **as a partnership, need to respond to it?" So I don't**
 8 **see it as a dilution, I see it as a raising of awareness**
 9 **and a raising of a professional need, as individuals,**
 10 **and as a partnership, to get to grips with this issue**
 11 **and to put things in place to prevent it, to disrupt it,**
 12 **to tackle it.**
 13 Q. Finally, Mr Banks, I want to come on to the issue of
 14 auditing. Very briefly, am I right in thinking that
 15 some auditing is carried out by single agencies, like
 16 the Social Services or the police? There's obviously
 17 external auditing and then there are audits that are
 18 carried out by the partnership as a whole. Is that
 19 correct?
 20 **A. Yes.**
 21 Q. I want to just take you to one of those, DUC000763. If
 22 we can look at page 3 of that. This is, Mr Banks,
 23 a multi-agency audit which was conducted by the
 24 safeguarding board in October 2018, so the previous
 25 iteration. It sets out some learning points at the

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1 **type, it is on the individual as well. Because**
 2 **safeguarding occurs in a contextual way. But to my**
 3 **mind, you're bringing together a group of people at the**
 4 **strategic child exploitation group and also at an**
 5 **operational level who are developing a broad and wide**
 6 **level of expertise in these particular areas who are**
 7 **developing relationships as individual partners or**
 8 **getting to know each other's business about what works**
 9 **well, what doesn't, where the rubbing points are, and**
 10 **are coming to solutions to how to move forward in**
 11 **a partnership way.**
 12 **So, in terms of bringing people together in that**
 13 **way, I actually see it as a positive step. However, if**
 14 **there's academic research that tells it's negative,**
 15 **I would love to receive that, or the partnership would,**
 16 **and then they can have a look at that and see whether**
 17 **they need to change their wording practices. I mean,**
 18 **that's why -- it's another area, when we look at what we**
 19 **do, we look at national and local professional practice,**
 20 **and that informs how we do things.**
 21 Q. Are you confident, at least, that this move towards
 22 a child exploitation model has not diluted the focus on
 23 child sexual exploitation?
 24 **A. No. When we established ourselves as the new Durham**
 25 **Safeguarding Children Partnership, which is April 2019,**

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1 bottom, including the need for terminology to be clearly
 2 understood between agencies, consistent recording of
 3 risks, the need to conduct Return Home Interviews for
 4 all missing-from-home episodes. When an audit like this
 5 is carried out by the partnership, Mr Banks, are you
 6 confident that each of these learning points is taken
 7 forward and practice is improved?
 8 **A. When we get a particular series of recommendations like**
 9 **this, obviously this is the report that went in to the**
 10 **partnership. The partnership discuss it and then there**
 11 **are actions that fall from it. So an action plan was**
 12 **established to cover this, but there was also**
 13 **recognition that we were in October and we would be**
 14 **transitioning into the new partnership in the April, so**
 15 **that any outstanding actions would be picked up within**
 16 **that partnership.**
 17 **A lot of the things that are listed here have been**
 18 **picked up within the new child exploitation group, but**
 19 **what I wouldn't be able to give you at this moment in**
 20 **time, because looking at this and then going back to my**
 21 **records I couldn't find a list for everything that's**
 22 **there, I couldn't give you definitively what has**
 23 **happened against each of those points, but, broadly**
 24 **speaking, a lot of those points have been picked up.**
 25 Q. The final one you'll see, Mr Banks, is that more

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1 challenge by partners is needed. You already told us
 2 that your role is being replaced by an independent
 3 scrutineer. Is that to meet that point?
 4 **A. It will help to meet that point. In terms of more**
 5 **challenge by partners, you can take that in a couple of**
 6 **ways. It is difficult because I'm trying to remember**
 7 **back to an old partnership of two years ago of**
 8 **the context in which that was said. But I think in**
 9 **terms of -- there is a challenge at a number of**
 10 **different levels. There have been challenges in**
 11 **discussions within the ERASE meetings, weekly meetings,**
 12 **about the vulnerability submissions and what needs to**
 13 **happen at that particular point. There will be**
 14 **challenges within various meetings, multi-agency**
 15 **meetings, to do with child protection matters. There**
 16 **will be challenges within -- as there are within the**
 17 **executive group as to how we are doing things and views**
 18 **how we do things differently.**
 19 **So there is challenge throughout the partnership,**
 20 **and we, from the word go, said it was important, to the**
 21 **extent that, when we launched the partnership, we**
 22 **delivered a partnership pledge, a challenge pledge,**
 23 **which I think you have in the bundle of evidence there,**
 24 **and that was signed up to by all the partners because we**
 25 **recognised the importance of challenge.**

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1 **recognising the management of risk missing-from-home**
 2 **child sexual exploitation. So I do think we have**
 3 **a robust scrutiny arrangement in there, we have**
 4 **a programme of audits where we audit six times per annum**
 5 **on different topics. Those are intelligence led so we**
 6 **are looking at things that are in our face now. So**
 7 **that's there.**
 8 **Having the independent scrutineer as opposed to an**
 9 **independent chair who is facilitating meetings and**
 10 **development days and that sort of thing, I just think**
 11 **takes us to another level of being able to interrogate**
 12 **the breadth and depth of what the partnership operates**
 13 **in a very, very complex way across scores of different**
 14 **agencies involved. That's been a really positive step,**
 15 **but building on firm foundations that we have already**
 16 **put in. So there are things that we need to tighten up**
 17 **on, granted. There are some things that we have missed**
 18 **out, granted. But I think we have got the partnership**
 19 **relationship and the partnership will -- and now an**
 20 **added member, an independent scrutineer, that will make**
 21 **that come to fruition.**
 22 MR LIVINGSTON: Thank you, Mr Banks. Those are all the
 23 questions I have for you. The chair and panel may have
 24 a few questions for you now.
 25 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Livingston. I will begin and then

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1 Q. Mr Banks, one final question from me: today, you said,
 2 is effectively your last day. What changes could be
 3 made, going forward, to enable the partnership to carry
 4 out its scrutiny and challenge function more
 5 effectively?
 6 **A. Well, first of all, I think we do have an effective**
 7 **scrutiny function. It's in the bundle of evidence that**
 8 **you've got there. We scrutinise on a number of**
 9 **different levels, so we have appointed now an**
 10 **independent scrutineer. We have a third party assurance**
 11 **model that we adapted from our health colleagues. We**
 12 **have an independent scrutiny panel which meets to hold**
 13 **the partnership to account. We have our section 11**
 14 **audits, by which we check that the partners are**
 15 **fulfilling their statutory obligations. We have**
 16 **assurance reporting from the partners every year that**
 17 **they're fulfilling their obligations. And then finally**
 18 **with scrutiny, we have our external audits such as the**
 19 **joint target area inspection which we were subjected to**
 20 **last year, HMICFRS for the police, Ofsted for the local**
 21 **authority. As you said, two of those have reported.**
 22 **The police one did have some issues, but the Ofsted one**
 23 **recognised the pace of change that we've made as**
 24 **a partnership and also recognised a lot of the good work**
 25 **that the partnership was doing, specifically around**

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1 ask my colleagues if they have any questions.
 2 Questions from THE PANEL
 3 THE CHAIR: Just regarding the last point that was taken up
 4 there about changes made, despite the comments that have
 5 been made or the critique that there have been
 6 improvements in the last couple of years, how has this
 7 translated into improved outcomes for children in regard
 8 to the role of the partnership?
 9 **A. That is the difficult thing to measure, but what we have**
 10 **done is, the way we have designed the partnership is**
 11 **that we have the performance challenge and impact**
 12 **subgroup, which identifies areas of concern of good,**
 13 **bad, indifferent, and that feeds into the embedded**
 14 **learning group, and that identifies from a number of**
 15 **things, whether it's the audits, the scrutinies,**
 16 **et cetera, areas of professional practice improvements**
 17 **that need to be made.**
 18 **So just now, we have recognised 11 areas of**
 19 **professional practice improvement that need to be made**
 20 **for the effectiveness of the partnership and the**
 21 **outcomes for families and children.**
 22 **We also have practitioner surveys, and when we have**
 23 **our training modules that we put in place for the**
 24 **partners -- a recent example would be the 180 partners**
 25 **have been through an e-learning for child sexual**

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<p>1 exploitation and the analysis that we did on how they 2 found that, 86 per cent of them found that it positively 3 impacted on their professional practice and two-thirds 4 of them said they could see genuine improvement in the 5 service to children and families.</p> <p>6 So it's that sort of thing. But we also recognise, 7 because we had sort of an action plan from the JTAI 8 inspection, which moves into other areas too. But it's 9 the impact that has to get measured long term. We can 10 put things in place, we can think, "Right, 11 professionally, this is the right thing to do at this 12 moment in time", we agree a policy process, we train our 13 partners for it, we look to embed it in organisations as 14 a partnership, and what needs to happen next is in-depth 15 audit and scrutiny against what we have put in play.</p> <p>16 We have that in a limited way through the audits but 17 I think the independent scrutineer will do that a lot 18 more.</p> <p>19 THE CHAIR: Thank you. My next question is about what you 20 referred to as the pledge on partnership challenge. How 21 often has that been enacted?</p> <p>22 A. Well, in terms of do I know whether there's a challenge 23 been made? Is that what you are asking me? The answer 24 to that is, I don't at this stage, but it is in the 25 partnership forward plan for audit and review I think</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 105</p>	<p>1 from November onwards. It was due to take place in June 2 but fell foul of the postponing audits due to COVID, so 3 we'll be doing an audit of the partnership pledge to see 4 how effective it's been.</p> <p>5 THE CHAIR: But you, yourself, haven't witnessed that 6 particular form of challenge being carried out?</p> <p>7 A. I haven't in the meetings that I've been in, I haven't 8 witnessed the need for a challenge to take place. One 9 of the professional practice improvements that 10 I referred to earlier is about professional challenge. 11 So that's taking national and local research in terms of 12 challenge and coming up with an action plan in relation 13 to it. I don't have it in front of me, Professor Jay, 14 but I would be more than happy to submit that to you, if 15 it is helpful.</p> <p>16 THE CHAIR: Thank you. These are somewhat diverse questions 17 here, but were any of the Serious Case Reviews being 18 carried out on your watch involving child sexual 19 exploitation?</p> <p>20 A. No. There were two which I submitted as part of my 21 statement where there was an element of investigation 22 into child sexual abuse or exploitation. Those both 23 remain unpublished, but, to the best of my knowledge, 24 they don't contain what we would refer to as child 25 sexual exploitation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 106</p>
<p>1 THE CHAIR: But none of the ones listed -- I think it may 2 have been seven published and five in the pipeline -- 3 have contained elements of child sexual exploitation. 4 Is that the case?</p> <p>5 A. Yes. Otherwise, I would have submitted them in the 6 statement, if that had been the case.</p> <p>7 THE CHAIR: Does that surprise you?</p> <p>8 A. Well, a couple of things. First of all, Serious Case 9 Reviews were unusually high for Durham over the last 10 couple of years. But of course they occur for very 11 different reasons, and often the main reason is neglect 12 or interfamilial abuse or injury, and, as I say, the two 13 cases that I have been privy to in that timeframe that 14 had any sexual element to it I submitted in my 15 statement. As you have heard, and as we get reported to 16 us, there doesn't appear, at this stage, to be an 17 organised crime element to child sexual exploitation 18 within Durham, but I'm very conscious of a report in 19 The Telegraph by the Children's Commissioner last year 20 who was saying that children's partnerships, safety 21 partnerships, didn't want to make the same mistakes 22 around child sexual exploitation as they did with county 23 lines and vice versa. I'm very much aware of that and 24 that was the challenge I put down to our people. So I'm 25 very conscious it's dead easy for me to sound glib and</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 107</p>	<p>1 say, "We don't have that problem". All I'm saying is, 2 at the moment, we haven't found that problem. We may 3 very well have it.</p> <p>4 I'm sorry, I have lost your sound, chair.</p> <p>5 THE CHAIR: Another question concerns the members of 6 the partnership or the attendees at meetings at the 7 strategic child exploitation group. How many people 8 would routinely attend these meetings?</p> <p>9 A. I would say, looking at the minutes, about 15, I think. 10 But you've got the full list of attendees on the back of 11 the statement and there's a marker on it which says 12 which of them were present or not.</p> <p>13 THE CHAIR: Did you say 15?</p> <p>14 A. I think so, yes.</p> <p>15 THE CHAIR: Likewise, across the overall partnership, how 16 many would be routine attendees at the partnership 17 meetings, the overarching partnership?</p> <p>18 A. The way we have designed the new partnership is that the 19 executive group, or the statutory partners, so you've 20 got the three partners there plus the designated doctor, 21 plus the chairs of the three subgroups and the business 22 manager. So that's routinely the executive. Where the 23 other relevant agencies come in are in a number of 24 different ways.</p> <p>25 They are members of the subgroups, where they choose</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 108</p>

1 to be, but we have also created four sector groups --
 2 education, health, the voluntary sector and criminal
 3 justice -- where the professionals from those sectors
 4 can come together, receive information from the
 5 partnership and also ask information of the partnership.
 6 Just doing it in this particular way, and it is yet to
 7 be audited -- one of the things I forgot to mention
 8 before is we're getting a Local Government Association
 9 type of audit done at some point in this year. So we
 10 are yet to examine the effectiveness of it. But what it
 11 stopped us having was having a cast of what seemed
 12 thousands around the table, where they weren't always
 13 the key players, who couldn't commit their organisations
 14 to action, who couldn't commit the resources of the
 15 organisation, and now we have stopped that. I just feel
 16 that, as a partnership, we are more fleet of foot than
 17 we were a year or so ago.

18 THE CHAIR: That was the purpose of my question, because the
 19 previous LSCBs could be criticised substantially for the
 20 cast of thousands, as you describe it, and the fact that
 21 that led to nobody being accountable for certain things.
 22 So you think that has improved, do you?

23 **A. I do personally and I will just have to wait to see the**
 24 **independent assessment of it.**

25 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Sharpling?

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1 THE CHAIR: Mr Frank?

2 MR FRANK: No, thank you.

3 THE CHAIR: Sir Malcolm?

4 PROF SIR MALCOLM EVANS: No, thank you.

5 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Banks.

6 **A. Thank you.**

7 **Further examination by MR LIVINGSTON**

8 MR LIVINGSTON: Mr Banks, before you go, just one final
 9 thing in relation to a question from the chair. You
 10 were asked about Serious Case Reviews, and in your
 11 statement at paragraph 9 you said that an SCR was
 12 commenced in January 2020, known as Richard and Rebecca,
 13 where CSE has been identified as a factor, and you say,
 14 at that point, terms of reference have not yet been
 15 agreed, the SCR is ongoing. Can you update us on the
 16 progress of that?

17 **A. To my knowledge, CSE was not found to be a factor in**
 18 **that. I believe the SCR is not yet published and is**
 19 **therefore embargoed, but I would be happy, outside of**
 20 **this live streaming, to provide any information I can**
 21 **give around that, but I can't give it to hand at this**
 22 **moment in time.**

23 MR LIVINGSTON: That would be helpful. Thank you.
 24 (The witness withdrew)

25 MR LIVINGSTON: Chair, I suggest we take a short break.

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1 MS SHARPLING: Thank you, chair. Just one question, just
 2 really for clarification, from me, Mr Banks.

3 Are you able to describe the partnership
 4 relationship with the Police and Crime Commissioner --

5 **A. It is not --**

6 MS SHARPLING: -- (overspeaking) setting the strategic
 7 priorities for the police service?

8 **A. Our statutory relationship is, of course, with the chief**
 9 **constable.**

10 MS SHARPLING: Yes, I understand that.

11 **A. In Working Together 2018, it talks about leadership,**
 12 **whether it's political leadership from the portfolio**
 13 **holder responsible for children and young people in the**
 14 **local authority, but also makes mention of the Police**
 15 **and Crime Commissioner.**

16 **We don't have the Police and Crime Commissioner**
 17 **present at any of our meetings, but there has been an**
 18 **invitation to the Police and Crime Panel to be part of**
 19 **the independent scrutiny group who will look to hold the**
 20 **partnership to account. I'm waiting for legal advice in**
 21 **relation to that, in relation to whether there's any**
 22 **clash of interests in that at all, but that's our**
 23 **limited association with the Police and Crime**
 24 **Commissioner.**

25 MS SHARPLING: That's helpful. Thank you, Mr Banks.

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1 I think there is also a slight issue with being able to
 2 bring up documents on screen right now anyway. Can
 3 I suggest we break until 2.55 pm?

4 THE CHAIR: Yes, 2.55 pm we will return, thank you.

5 MR LIVINGSTON: That will be with Mr Orford. Thank you.
 6 (2.40 pm)

7 (A short break)

8 (2.55 pm)

9 THE CHAIR: Ms Hill?

10 MS HILL: Thank you, chair. Our next witness, please, is
 11 David Orford.

12 MR DAVID ORFORD (sworn)

13 Examination by MS HILL

14 MS HILL: You are David Orford, and you are Deputy Chief
 15 Constable of Durham Constabulary; is that right?

16 **A. That's correct.**

17 Q. Thank you. Mr Orford, you have provided the inquiry
 18 with a series of witness statements. Chair, I would ask
 19 your permission, please, to adduce these parts of
 20 the statements. DHP000440, DHP000456, DHP000506 in
 21 full, and then, as far as DHP000454 is concerned, only
 22 pages 11 to 20. Chair, with your permission, I will
 23 adduce that part of Mr Orford's evidence.

24 Mr Orford, can you give the chair and panel a brief
 25 summary of your professional background, please?

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1 **A. Yes, I have served in Durham Constabulary since 1995 in**
 2 **a number of posts, predominantly in uniform and**
 3 **specialist uniform operations. I previously held the**
 4 **post of assistant chief constable for a number of years**
 5 **and I'm currently the deputy chief constable, having**
 6 **been in post for just over a year. I have given**
 7 **evidence to the inquiry in the past in relation to**
 8 **non-recent institutions and the investigations into**
 9 **them.**

10 Q. You have been provided with a topics list, Mr Orford.
 11 I will do the best I can to follow the structure of
 12 the topics list. I have at least an hour's worth of
 13 questioning for you, and I think we will go until
 14 4.00 pm, and then we will see how we are. Please, of
 15 course, remember the restriction orders that you have
 16 been reminded about, I think, in giving your evidence.

17 **A. Understood.**

18 Q. Can I ask you some questions first of all, please, about
 19 the issue of profiling and perhaps just bring up, if we
 20 could, your statement that ends with 456, internal
 21 page 009, please. Pausing there, you have indicated in
 22 your evidence that the profile of the CSE issue in
 23 Durham was drawn up I think in July 2019. You explain
 24 in this part of your second witness statement that it
 25 was a refresh of the one done in 2016. Just scroll in,

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1 **where quite deep analytical work is required and there**
 2 **has to be a subjective and human assessment of a lot of**
 3 **that data, then the bigger the dataset, the more**
 4 **challenge that is, and for the officer who oversees**
 5 **this, which is the assistant chief constable, they will**
 6 **commission the work and often negotiate on the scope and**
 7 **scale of what that analytical work is.**

8 **So this is a perfect example of how we might look,**
 9 **quite in a short space of time, to get an initial**
 10 **snapshot as being described, but actually acknowledge**
 11 **the analytical weakness in there so that a decision can**
 12 **be made balancing both of those issues.**

13 Q. I think the sample size was one issue, but your
 14 statement quotes the profile as identifying some other
 15 issues around classification of the crimes that were
 16 being looked at. Is this right, it makes clear that one
 17 of the issues was that crimes were classed as CSA, ie,
 18 child sexual abuse, rather than CSE, unless there was
 19 explicit mentioning, as is said here, of grooming or
 20 exploitative techniques. So that and some other issues
 21 that you summarise at paragraph 25 are another reason,
 22 are they, why the dataset is not as completely robust as
 23 you might like?

24 **A. That's absolutely correct, that where you have**
 25 **a national definition, as we have in this space, and the**

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1 please, on paragraph 23. Can you just help us
 2 understand from there, Mr Orford, what the dataset was
 3 that was used to construct the profile?

4 **A. I couldn't give the panel the analytical level of detail**
 5 **probably into what that dataset was, but certainly the**
 6 **analyst is examining crimes that have been reported,**
 7 **intelligence reports and access to vulnerability reports**
 8 **that are entered through our Red Sigma operational**
 9 **policing system. So it would be the full spectrum of**
 10 **data that they have access to, which wouldn't have been**
 11 **potentially in place in 2016, as our systems have been**
 12 **updated.**

13 Q. Paragraph 23 I think makes clear that the timeframe was
 14 a three-month period. If you scroll down, please,
 15 Danny, to paragraph 25, part of the profile itself is
 16 quoted. Perhaps we can bring up paragraph 26 on the
 17 next page too. Your statement quotes the profile,
 18 Mr Orford, as saying that the three-month sample size
 19 did not lend itself to adequate analysis of child sexual
 20 exploitation. Do you want to provide any further
 21 evidence about that?

22 **A. Certainly. One of the challenges we have certainly in**
 23 **a force the size of Durham is that our analysts have to**
 24 **cover a number of specialist areas to ensure we cover**
 25 **the full spectrum of policing. Where you have an area**

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1 **analyst is having to look line by line through almost**
 2 **all of those crimes to identify if this is the case, if**
 3 **there is exploitation, and, equally, maybe**
 4 **cross-reference that to intelligence reports that were**
 5 **put in about that crime, and because our system links**
 6 **them really, really well, it actually creates a lot of**
 7 **information for that analyst to work through, so you can**
 8 **probably hopefully get the challenge there even just**
 9 **with a small dataset over three months.**

10 Q. Can I bring up, please, paragraph 31 of your statement,
 11 over the page. You quote there, Mr Orford, the
 12 definition of organised group offending that was used,
 13 and that is the definition taken from the College of
 14 Policing guidance. Is that right?

15 **A. Yes.**

16 Q. Does that definition help us understand the conclusion
 17 that was reached about organised group offending in the
 18 profile?

19 **A. It's certainly the definition we are working with at the**
 20 **moment. I think one of the challenges we have in**
 21 **identifying organised criminal group exploitation is the**
 22 **challenge between an individual in an organised crime**
 23 **group who is exploiting children and the focus of that**
 24 **group to be exploiting children. If that organised**
 25 **crime group is operating across other areas of**

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1 **criminality, often the two can conflate and cross over**
 2 **on each other. So it is quite a challenge for the**
 3 **analyst to be absolutely 100 per cent certain,**
 4 **potentially, that an organised crime group have its**
 5 **entire focus on exploiting children.**
 6 Q. Can we look now, please, at the profile itself, and
 7 bring up, please, Danny, DHP000379. We have looked at
 8 this document already, but we can just see the front
 9 page of it. Perhaps just to orientate the panel, if you
 10 go to the next page internally, there are some key
 11 findings about the offences. There are key findings
 12 from the sample. There are then, over the page, risks
 13 and opportunities for development. If we look
 14 specifically a bit further on within the profile,
 15 please, the heading of "CSE" begins on page 13. We can
 16 see this under the heading "CSE". That's the quote
 17 I think I took you to.
 18 **A. Yes.**
 19 Q. About the issues with the sample size.
 20 **A. Yes.**
 21 Q. Going over the page, there is then further consideration
 22 of the lone offenders or group offending element.
 23 That's on page 14, please, Danny. If you scroll in on
 24 that half of the page. The risk that is identified at
 25 the bottom was in this form, wasn't it, that new

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1 opportunities to identify networking should be actively
 2 scoped utilising the data and scanning already in place,
 3 including community intelligence and phone contact data
 4 from both victims and offenders, to better inform the
 5 picture of group and organised offending in
 6 County Durham. Has that opportunity or series of
 7 opportunities been taken up by the force and, if so, can
 8 you explain how?
 9 **A. One of the ways we have sought to expand this**
 10 **understanding has been the adoption of a child**
 11 **exploitation vulnerability tracker that has had its**
 12 **genesis within the world of county lines, and so,**
 13 **equally, there are challenges and crossovers between**
 14 **county lines operating models and organised crime**
 15 **models. But the actual exploitation of children within**
 16 **that environment gave rise to the county line tracker,**
 17 **and we have expanded that and used it as a result of**
 18 **bringing the county lines national team in to inspect**
 19 **us, because we didn't perceive we had an issue in**
 20 **relation to county lines within the force area, but we**
 21 **wanted to keep checking and wanted to keep exploring.**
 22 **So that's a good example where we have taken lessons**
 23 **from that area of children being exploited and used it**
 24 **more to inform that local area picture.**
 25 Q. If you go back, please, to the document and look under

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1 the heading "Lone offenders or group offending?", you
 2 can see that certainly at the time the profile was drawn
 3 up, it says in the second sentence here:
 4 "This sample does not contain evidence of an
 5 organised group of adults targeting children and young
 6 people for sexual abuse and exploitation. It does
 7 indicate certain circumstances where either more than
 8 one person will offend against the same child at the
 9 same time, or in the case of familial abuse, one family
 10 over time can exhibit several perpetrators and victims."
 11 How confident do you feel going forward that your
 12 new approach will be able to identify those sort of
 13 groups?
 14 **A. We're certainly more confident that we have the data to**
 15 **allow the better analysis, because we are then able,**
 16 **through our multi-agency work, to share those data gaps**
 17 **with partners.**
 18 **So, in terms of the lone offender, certainly our**
 19 **evidence would indicate that we have more interfamilial**
 20 **offending within County Durham and our limited exposure**
 21 **to organised crime offending has been that there were**
 22 **individuals within organised crime groups who had**
 23 **opportunities to exploit children rather than that**
 24 **concerted effort from the entire organised crime group.**
 25 **But this is where it is absolutely vital that we**

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1 **bring in other agencies and peer review in this space.**
 2 Q. Can I ask you some questions about some evidence you
 3 have given about the way in which some of the offences
 4 were looked at. So I think part of the process of
 5 analysing the profile or defining the profile was to
 6 look at different criminal offences. Can I ask you,
 7 please, to look at DHP000456_013. Scroll in, please,
 8 Danny, on paragraph 36. Just remind yourself, perhaps,
 9 Mr Orford, of what you have written here about the way
 10 in which certain offences have been recorded and the
 11 issue of consent?
 12 **A. Yes.**
 13 Q. A question that's been put that we have agreed to ask is
 14 along these lines, that you indicate at the beginning of
 15 paragraph 36 that, of the 35 contact offences referred
 16 to in the profile, the term "consensual" has been used
 17 in relation to offences where the victim is not yet 13.
 18 Can you clarify how that sits with the age of consent?
 19 Forgive me, I think the question is, how does that fit
 20 with an understanding that the age of consent is 16?
 21 **A. Yes. I think this is a good example of how improving**
 22 **the awareness of language in this entire space across**
 23 **the police service is absolutely crucial. Because an**
 24 **individual may understand potentially the legal**
 25 **definition, but in using words that maybe are more**

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1 applicable in everyday speak, it does not lend itself
 2 very well to demonstrating that we are very well aware
 3 of the position the young person finds themselves in,
 4 and so the guidance from the NPCC in this space, which
 5 is quite recent, is something that the force is seeking
 6 to improve and develop over time.

7 **But, on the profile that they have found, what it**
 8 **actually shows is that the specialists who are working**
 9 **in this area within the force have got it right at the**
 10 **forefront of their mind.**

11 Q. I'm not sure if you were listening to the evidence from
 12 Mr Banks from the partnership. Did you listen to his
 13 evidence, Mr Orford?

14 **A. I caught most of his evidence, yes, I did.**

15 Q. I think the suggestion that was put to him was around
 16 a similar question, to do with the nature of
 17 the profiling and whether or not there is a risk that
 18 the problem is being underestimated.

19 **A. Yes.**

20 Q. Do you agree with that analysis?

21 **A. I think there is a challenge for officers, certainly**
 22 **front-line officers, to be fully aware of the wide use**
 23 **of terminology across the areas that they are likely to**
 24 **come across in policing. The more succinct and the more**
 25 **direct that we can help them with better definitions,**

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1 at the end of an investigation?

2 **A. Yes. Working with the regional crime network that we**
 3 **have through regional organised crime units. So we have**
 4 **one for Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria Police areas.**
 5 **There is an assessment done with forces at a regional**
 6 **level as to the footprint of what a force might believe**
 7 **is an OCG, on organised crime group. As a consequence,**
 8 **that OCG will be assessed as to what activity is then**
 9 **undertaken and it could be that it is undertaken at**
 10 **a regional level.**

11 **I should have mentioned earlier, probably, that one**
 12 **of the ways we check ourselves is that analytical work**
 13 **into CSE is obviously undertaken at that regional crime**
 14 **unit as well. So, having decided that an OCG is in**
 15 **existence and worked out its operating model, then**
 16 **various tactics are put in place in order to detect,**
 17 **disrupt and deter the activities of that OCG, and then**
 18 **it is rescored at a later date, and, should that**
 19 **activity have been mitigated through -- it could be**
 20 **criminal justice routes or other disruption activity,**
 21 **then they will be archived, which means that they don't**
 22 **receive the attention, potentially, that others do, and**
 23 **it sits there for further intelligence development,**
 24 **should something arise.**

25 Q. Then can I bring up, please, DHP000492, which is your

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1 **the more chance you have of more accurate recording.**

2 Q. Can I ask you to look at just one specific element of
 3 your profiling evidence in writing, please. It is
 4 DHP000440_016, paragraph 54. This is the evidence that
 5 you have given, Mr Orford, about the ethnicity of both
 6 suspect offender and victims in the 2017/18 and 2018/19
 7 figures. Do you want to just summarise what the
 8 findings are that you set out here at paragraph 54?

9 **A. It would appear to indicate that our offenders match our**
 10 **community makeup and our demographics within the county.**

11 Q. So you give the figures here that 98.2 per cent of
 12 the Durham area are classified as white, and that the
 13 vast majority of both suspects and victims here are also
 14 recorded as being white northern European; is that
 15 right?

16 **A. Yes.**

17 Q. You have provided some documentation, Mr Orford, in
 18 relation to certain operations, criminal operations,
 19 that have got some different names that are, I think,
 20 OCG investigations. Perhaps I can just bring up one to
 21 see if you can talk us through this. It's
 22 Operation Athena, I think, DHP000489. I think you have
 23 given us two or three of these examples. Just help us
 24 understand the sort of work that's being done. Where we
 25 see it is an OCG archiving report, does that mean it is

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1 operational threat and risk document, I think,
 2 from November of last year. I only need to go to
 3 internal pages 5 and 6, please, and just bring up --
 4 sorry, it is DHP000489. This is a document I'm sure
 5 you're familiar with, Mr Orford, that sets out the force
 6 profile on CSAE but then says that there are no OCGs
 7 currently mapped for CSAE locally or nationally. That's
 8 actually the only phrase I wanted to adduce from that
 9 document. Just help us understand that. That is --
 10 first of all, help us understand what mapping means and
 11 what the significance of that phrase means?

12 **A. So an analyst will take a wide variety of information**
 13 **sources from policing and outside of policing and, using**
 14 **a number of risk assessment approaches, will score an**
 15 **OCG as to the level of risk that they pose in relation**
 16 **to the type of criminality that they have been**
 17 **identified against.**

18 Q. So the understanding of the force as at the latter part
 19 of last year -- this is from 5 November last year -- was
 20 that there were no OCGs currently mapped for CSAE; is
 21 that right?

22 **A. That is correct, yes.**

23 Q. Is there also a risk that that is an underestimation of
 24 the problem, do you think?

25 **A. Personally, I think that you have to balance the**

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<p>1 challenge of how an OCG operates. So if it is in the 2 online space, I think the gap is larger. Where the OCG 3 is acting potentially in the public space, and we have 4 seen crossovers between risks related to individuals 5 and, say, modern slavery, human trafficking, et cetera, 6 then you are more likely to gain intelligence 7 opportunities that you can triangulate to confirm or 8 negate their activity in relation to CSE. 9 So, like I have explained with county lines, you 10 have to keep looking and keep looking again. You cannot 11 sit back and say, "We do not have it". All you can ever 12 say is, "We haven't identified it currently". 13 Q. Finally on this topic, can I ask you to look at 14 a document, a report, prepared by Changing Lives, which 15 I think you have seen. It is INQ005600_024. You can 16 see this is a research project by the organisation 17 Changing Lives into sex work in Durham and Darlington. 18 Internal page 24 describes the experience of child 19 sexual exploitation that was reported here. 20 Having had a chance to have a look at this, is there 21 anything that you would wish to say about some of 22 the comments that are made in this report, Mr Orford? 23 A. Absolutely. I remember the team coming into the force 24 area back then, and whilst the report is from 2016, 25 actually some of those interactions were from well</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 125</p>	<p>1 before that. This was part of the genesis of bringing 2 in our ERASE team that started around this time and the 3 actual uplifting of force activity and awareness in what 4 was going on. 5 It was also commissioned jointly through our 6 previous PCC, who took a very close interest in this, 7 Ron Hogg. 8 So this actually provided quite a position statement 9 at the time for us to develop and bring in further 10 resources and analysis in this space. 11 Q. Those are all the questions I had on profiling, so I can 12 take that document down, please, and ask some questions 13 about disruption, which is the second part of our first 14 theme. You have given some detailed written evidence 15 about this, which I'm sure the panel can read in due 16 course. But you have been asked to address some issues 17 that have been raised quite recently by the HMICFRS 18 report. Perhaps we could bring that up, please. It's 19 INQ005331. You will be very familiar with this report, 20 Mr Orford, because I know -- and I will come to this -- 21 the force is doing work to respond to this report. But 22 this report was prepared, as we can see, relatively 23 recently, less than a year ago, so between October 24 and November of last year. 25 Just taking a step back from it before I look at the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 126</p>
<p>1 detail, is this fair, Mr Orford, that as far as our 2 themes are concerned -- and you're well aware, I think, 3 of what the eight themes we are considering are -- the 4 HMIC report was critical of the force in several 5 respects that relate to those themes, and it made 6 comments in particular around risk assessment and to 7 some degree also around disruption. Is that fair? 8 A. I'll expand on your disruption question later, because 9 it can mean a number of things in a number of different 10 areas, but, yes, we absolutely welcomed HMIC and their 11 report. We often, when HMIC come in, will direct them 12 to areas that we think we are falling down in and are 13 already doing work on, and it has been part of our 14 development as a force over many, many years and has 15 contributed to some excellent reports accordingly. So 16 that is an absolutely fair reflection of the force as it 17 was then. 18 Q. If you look, please, at internal page 13, one issue that 19 arose was identified by the inspectors -- in fact, 20 forgive me. Go back to page 11, please, Danny. You can 21 see from page 11 that one element of what the force 22 did -- the reviewers did was to look at some files, some 23 child protection files. I think they looked at 33 child 24 protection cases. The outcomes overall that were 25 assessed on page 11, if you scroll in to the bullet</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 127</p>	<p>1 points at the top, were that 20 were good, 27 required 2 improvement and 34 were considered inadequate. The 3 report went on to then try and draw out some common 4 themes. You can see the bullet points at the foot of 5 that page, so there were, as you said, some good points 6 around prompt initial responses, good use of body-worn 7 cameras, but as far as CSE is concerned, if one goes 8 over the page to internal page 13, please, the bullet 9 points at the top there -- just scroll in on that top 10 set of bullet points: 11 "CSE subjects having profiles giving a summary of 12 risks and information within the police systems. 13 "Officers displaying an appropriate awareness and 14 understanding of CSE." 15 "An evolving awareness and understanding of criminal 16 exploitation. 17 "Good use of child abduction warning notices ..." 18 Then this: 19 "Low- and medium-risk online cases were routinely 20 dealt with by non-specialist officers with no formal 21 training for the role." 22 Is that something that has been addressed? 23 A. Yes, we have increased our resources and capacity within 24 our specialist areas and we have increased the scrutiny 25 and triage through the digital investigation space to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 128</p>

<p>1 ensure the most appropriate officer is now tasked 2 accordingly. So that was quite an uplift of eight 3 detective constables and two detective sergeants into 4 the safeguarding world, and also in relation to 5 documenting and ensuring that the strategy decisions 6 were made and documented well. We have also uplifted 7 resources in that space as well. 8 Q. The issue of CAWNs we haven't gone into in great detail 9 so far in this hearing. That is one recognised element 10 of police disruption activity? 11 A. Yes. 12 Q. If you go, please, to internal page 20 within the 13 report, you will see that that issue is reverted to? 14 A. Yes. 15 Q. One of the observations that was made -- forgive me, it 16 is page 25. Apologies, Danny. Again, there was some 17 more developed narrative here about how front-line 18 officers had good knowledge, good awareness and 19 understanding of CSE, but if you look to the boxed-out 20 text, just the top and the bottom of the box, either 21 side of it: 22 "Both front-line and the ERASE team know how to make 23 good cause of CAWNs to protect children from 24 perpetrators within investigations. However, they are 25 not readily visible within the police systems."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 129</p>	<p>1 Can you help us understand what that meant? 2 A. The issuing of the CAWN by an officer, as I've 3 identified there, HMIC were very well aware that 4 officers knew about it and that they were used. But 5 recording that was often within free text, and then your 6 ability to search across systems as a consequence as to 7 whether they have been issued or not was sometimes 8 a challenge. So my understanding in this is that, 9 because it doesn't hold any statutory footing per se, 10 that should an offender at a later date actually 11 demonstrate any evidence that we can go towards 12 a prosecution, then their intelligence file will be 13 examined anyway and the CAWNs will be brought up 14 accordingly. So it is an example of disruptive activity 15 that we are undertaking in order to minimise the chance 16 of a child being subject to CSE. 17 Q. Go to the narrative below the box, Danny. The 18 inspectorate was also critical here, Mr Orford, saying 19 that the use of CAWNs was understood generally but then 20 it says this: there has been raising of awareness among 21 business, but the inspectors found limited evidence of 22 disruption activity, hotspot locations patrolling or 23 tasking in relation to known CSE perpetrators. 24 Pausing there, what did you understand the 25 inspectors were concerned about when they said that</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 130</p>
<p>1 they'd seen limited evidence of disruption activity? 2 A. When we identify either an individual who could be a CSE 3 perpetrator, then they could be monitored through 4 a number of different routes within the organisation. 5 So if they were already a registered sex offender, or 6 they had come onto the radar through a different route, 7 then, ultimately, a plan will be created around them and 8 activity targeted towards them. 9 So if they are already in the system for something 10 else, then there would be, probably, limited evidence 11 from HMIC that they would see accordingly. In terms of 12 the hotspot locations and patrolling, as you identified 13 from the problem profile, most of our offending happens 14 to be interfamilial and with lone offenders, so it is 15 not the case that we have a significant number of 16 hotspots to patrol. 17 Q. Is there any work that the force considers it necessary 18 to do to respond to that finding? 19 A. Well, what we are doing is, at the time that HMI 20 visited, our officers were still predominantly using 21 a previous operational policing system that relied on 22 them to input their information via a desktop back at 23 the police station. Since that date, we are now, within 24 the next couple of weeks, shortly to finish rolling out 25 all of our mobile data system to officers so they can</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 131</p>	<p>1 access that actually at the scene, which means that they 2 have got greater ability to be briefed and tasked 3 accordingly. So where there are potential for hotspots, 4 locations or individuals that need targeting, the 5 officers can respond in a better way. 6 Q. Just for completeness on this issue, please, can I bring 7 up the correspondence between the force and the 8 inspectorate, so it's DHP000518, please. This is 9 correspondence from April of this year between the 10 constabulary and the inspectorate, and I think what it 11 does is goes through each of the recommendations and 12 sets out what the force is doing in response to it. But 13 as far as disruption is concerned, I appreciate that 14 there are different ways in which you can approach that 15 word or define it, but I will come back to the missing 16 children recommendations, for example, but look, please, 17 at internal page 3. Recommendation 3 was around the 18 systems in place for investigating child protection 19 issues and exploitation issues, and it's said here that 20 the recommendation was to allocate investigations with 21 sufficient skills and capacity in the teams, improving 22 the way cases were recorded, and things of that nature. 23 Do you want to just summarise very briefly, Mr Orford, 24 what the force is doing to respond to that 25 recommendation?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 132</p>

<p>1 A. As outlined in the document there, we increased the 2 resources in the areas identified. We also 3 reprioritised training and we also introduced new 4 training as a result of some of the gaps that HMI 5 identified. 6 Q. Over the page, please, recommendation 4, at the foot of 7 internal page 4, was also around the way in which 8 offences were investigated and recorded. Just taking it 9 briefly. 10 Recommendation 5 was also about the way in which 11 registered sex offenders should be managed. Is that 12 right? 13 A. That's correct. We introduced quite a significant 14 amount of change into that space as well. Although the 15 overarching approach was praised by HMIC of using 16 a blend between the neighbourhood teams and the public 17 protection unit with the more specialist officers. 18 Q. Would you accept that these recommendations are quite 19 wide ranging in what the force is being asked to do? 20 A. In terms of wide ranging, could you help me out? 21 Q. If one looks, for example, at recommendation 5, that was 22 to -- the constabulary immediately act to review and 23 improve its management of sex offenders. 24 Recommendation 4 was around the way in which, within 25 three months, the force ensures offences are</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 133</p>	<p>1 investigated, relevant information is recorded. 2 A. Yes. 3 Q. These are quite wide-ranging recommendations, are they 4 not? 5 A. They are certainly ones that we acted on straight away, 6 and HMIC acknowledged that accordingly. 7 Q. Similarly, recommendation 3 was around ensuring that the 8 resources put into these investigations was adequate. 9 So, again, quite wide ranging, was it not? 10 A. Yes, I will accept that. 11 Q. Is there anything else that you would wish to say 12 specifically about disruption issues? 13 A. No. 14 Q. There's one specific question I have, in fact, for you. 15 You gave evidence in your written statement, the first 16 written statement, at paragraph 149 -- perhaps we can 17 just very briefly bring that up, Danny. DHP000440, 18 paragraph 149. This is about children with 19 a disability, Mr Orford. You can see, paragraph 149, 20 the force has delivered training in relation to CSE, 21 making clear that vulnerabilities arising from 22 disabilities can lead to victims being deliberately 23 targeted for CSE. The question is this: are there any 24 systems or strategies in place specifically to disrupt 25 the CSE of disabled children?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 134</p>
<p>1 A. This is one of the examples that I spoke about earlier 2 in relation to introducing the child exploitation 3 vulnerability tracker, because it takes a wider 4 perspective potentially on the initial risk assessment 5 around CSE, and it also introduces disability into that 6 assessment. So this also then leads through to 7 disruption activity, where a particular individual might 8 have been identified and tactics put in place to disrupt 9 that. 10 Q. We can take that down now, thank you. I would like to 11 move to a different document now, if I may, please. 12 Just pausing there, Mr Orford, you appreciate from the 13 topics list one of the questions that the inquiry -- one 14 of the jobs the inquiries has asked you to do is to look 15 at some particular children's cases and then try and 16 address them as best you can. We appreciate that you 17 were not directly involved in these cases, but I think, 18 given the pressures of time, I wonder if I might just 19 deal with things in this way. 20 If I could bring up, please, the timeline that's 21 been prepared by the inquiry that provides some kind of 22 narrative in relation to some of these cases. It is 23 INQ006149, I think. I'd like to go to internal page 3, 24 if I can. I think if we just have a look, please, and 25 try, if we can, on the screen -- I don't know if we can</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 135</p>	<p>1 put four pages on the screen at the same time? I'm not 2 sure we can. Mr Orford, you have been asked to look at 3 this case, CS-A29. There is a narrative summary set out 4 here of the inquiry's understanding of the key events in 5 relation to this child. Have you had a chance to have 6 a look at it? 7 A. I have had a chance to read through, yes. 8 Q. Do you have any comments to make about the level of 9 disruption that took place in this case? It's 10 understood, to be fair, that there were, I think, two 11 CAWN notices issued, that the child was taken into 12 police protection on more than one occasion. But, 13 overall, do you have a view on what level of disruption 14 took place in this case? 15 A. I would have to look in further detail into that and 16 give the inquiry a further statement, if they require 17 that. I couldn't say at this moment, in relation to 18 that, as to whether it was appropriate. 19 Q. We may well ask you to do that, because I think the 20 extent of disruption activity was on the topics list for 21 you for this child. So we may well ask you to address 22 that, if that's all right. 23 A. That's absolutely fine. 24 Q. Is it fair to say that your position would be the same 25 on the other two children I was going to do this</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 136</p>

1 exercise with?

2 **A. I think the issue with disruption is that you're**

3 **choosing tactics dynamically in relation to a potential**

4 **offending, and that situation changes, and so, unless**

5 **you can actually see the decision-making log and the**

6 **policy log, potentially, that is behind them, it is**

7 **quite difficult to judge whether that disruption was**

8 **appropriate for that particular time and place, because**

9 **you could be massively overdisruptive and achieve an**

10 **aim, but it wouldn't necessarily be the appropriate**

11 **tactic. So you've got to balance the two. That's why**

12 **I can take this away in more detail if that would help**

13 **the inquiry.**

14 Q. Perhaps we can just do it in this way: in relation to

15 CS-A29, whose narrative we just brought up, I think the

16 inquiry would be particularly grateful to understand

17 from you in writing -- it is understood that there were

18 two CAWNs issued, it is understood that the care home

19 was advised to have alarms put on the bedroom doors and

20 things of that nature, but the inquiry would be

21 interested to know whether the potential abuse of this

22 child was investigated and what disruption action was

23 taken?

24 **A. Absolutely. I will return to the inquiry.**

25 Q. Similarly, you can see on the topics list that under

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1 (interference) that you're familiar with. It's been

2 provided by Pebbles Care. We have already heard

3 a summary of their evidence from earlier today. An

4 observation has been made in the Pebbles Care evidence

5 around whether or not police who attend at their homes

6 understand what powers the homes have available to them.

7 Do you want to comment on that?

8 **A. I think, given the wide spread of potential attending**

9 **officers and the experience base of those accordingly,**

10 **it is probably not unsurprising that a front-line**

11 **response officer may or may not have that level of**

12 **detailed knowledge if that is the officer who has**

13 **attended. But it is unclear from the documentation I've**

14 **recently seen as to who the officer was or their**

15 **specialisms when they attended.**

16 Q. Finally on this area of evidence that the panel have had

17 adduced before them, can I just read out another element

18 of this evidence, that the writer of the Pebbles Care

19 statement says this:

20 "While I cannot discuss one specific incident from

21 Durham, it is my view that the police can at times lack

22 empathy and display frustration when they deem a young

23 person to continue to involve themselves in CSE. It is

24 as important for all police officers, not just the

25 specialists, to have a solid understanding that young

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1 this heading the inquiry was particularly interested in

2 your view on CS-A114. I think there is no need to bring

3 up the timeline for this child. From the paperwork the

4 inquiry has had access to, it looks as if the child was

5 raped at the age of 12. It is not clear what action was

6 taken to disrupt the access that the perpetrators had to

7 that child. In relation to A114, we would also

8 appreciate you addressing that, if that's all right?

9 **A. Absolutely.**

10 Q. Finally, A43. This was a case involving Grindr, which

11 you will understand the risks to young men in

12 particular, and boys, around that. It is not clear, on

13 the paperwork the inquiry has seen, whether the alleged

14 perpetrator had been interviewed and whether or not the

15 risk that that person might pose to other children was

16 considered and disrupted. So I think I have given

17 you --

18 **A. Yes. It does actually say on page 3, "Suspect NFA",**

19 **which I took to be "no further action". But, you're**

20 **right, it doesn't clarify as to whether they were**

21 **potentially arrested, detained, interviewed, et cetera.**

22 **So I will ensure that that is cleared up.**

23 Q. Thank you very much. I'd like to move on to some other

24 topics now, Mr Orford, if I may. I will take the next

25 topic, please, relatively quickly, and that's to invite

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1 people are the victims in this situation and that the

2 focus and frustration should be placed with the

3 offenders."

4 Just pausing there, we haven't chosen to ask you

5 lots of questions about language, but do you want to

6 respond to what's being said by Pebbles Care?

7 **A. If they're not referencing in particular to Durham,**

8 **I will be commenting generically then, and certainly it**

9 **is an area where, when the initial attending officer**

10 **attends at a scene, it will obviously be one of many**

11 **incidents they have attended in their course of duty,**

12 **and ensuring that they are in a position to put**

13 **themselves in the correct mind-set for that incident is**

14 **an ongoing challenge for policing and my officers.**

15 **Certainly the more CPD we can give them -- and in**

16 **Durham we regularly bring our response officers in to**

17 **the "Do it well, do it right" training where they are**

18 **updated across the piece, not just in CSE, but how**

19 **language is important in many of the incidents that they**

20 **will attend. Because if they lose that initial**

21 **confidence with the person who is reporting or**

22 **a witness, it can have serious implications for the rest**

23 **of the case.**

24 **So we regularly review and learn from these**

25 **incidents.**

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<p>1 Also, with the introduction of body-worn video to 2 all of our officers, we have rolled that out across 3 every officer and it has been in place for a number of 4 years now. That includes the ability for supervisors to 5 review and give feedback and development to officers on 6 the language that they use. 7 Q. I don't know if you heard the evidence from Mr Pearce 8 (interference) a guide that had been prepared partly 9 with the involvement of children around language. Are 10 you familiar with that document? 11 A. I've seen that document and also for the police service 12 we also have a similar one that's been produced recently 13 from the NPCC as well. It is along a very similar line. 14 Q. Have your officers had training in the NPCC document or 15 the local Durham document? 16 A. The actual training in it, I would have to go back and 17 check if it was included in the syllabus that the 18 officers get on the "Do it right, do it well" training. 19 However, they have had professional development training 20 in the specialist areas in relation to the change in 21 practice. 22 Q. Perhaps you could pick that up in writing after today, 23 if that's all right? 24 A. Yes. 25 Q. Moving to the next theme, please, can I ask you some</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 141</p>	<p>1 questions about risk assessment and protection from 2 harm. Again, you have mentioned already a little bit 3 about the CEVT, which I will come back to. But before 4 we do that, is it right to again recognise that some of 5 the HMIC findings touched on this issue of assessment of 6 risk? 7 A. Yes, and certainly in relation to how we categorise and 8 assess risk in relation to missing children as well. 9 Q. I will deal with that as, perhaps, a separate topic. 10 That's a different theme that I am going to come to. 11 As far as the risk to children, if we look, please, 12 at internal page _011, the overall outcomes on -- 13 forgive me, it's INQ005331_011. The overall outcomes 14 here, one can see -- they're bullet points, under the 15 "Outcomes of cases" heading. Just to be clear, what's 16 being talked about here is: 17 "We examined a total of 81 cases where the police 18 had identified children at risk." 19 And that was the results of their assessments of 20 the outcomes of those cases. If you go to the figures, 21 you see that 34 of those were considered inadequate, and 22 of those that involved section 47 enquiries below, there 23 was a smaller number -- six were good, one required 24 improvement and six were inadequate. I am just going to 25 put all of these issues to you together, if that is all</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 142</p>
<p>1 right. Then perhaps you can respond to it. 2 A. That's fine. 3 Q. If we go, please, to internal page 13, these were the 4 missing children figures in particular, and if you look, 5 please, at the bullet points at the top, but then also 6 the numbers that are given, where it says "Cases 7 assessed involving missing and absent children", one was 8 considered good, two requiring improvement and six were 9 inadequate. If you look at the -- just scroll down, 10 please, Danny, below that list of figures. Sorry, it is 11 the third set of bullet points on the page. The common 12 themes included some positives, as you have said: good 13 continuing management of children by ERASE; but then 14 limited activity to locate children overnight; 15 inappropriate use of "low" and "no apparent" risk for 16 children reported missing, even though information 17 indicating raised risk factors suggests a higher 18 classification would be justified; children reported as 19 missing not all routinely transferred onto the police 20 system -- I think that's the Sleuth system; there was 21 evidence of Return Home Interviews being conducted. 22 Finally, I think, on this topic, could I ask Danny 23 to bring up internal page 27, where concerns were raised 24 here -- I think there were some positives here about the 25 promptness in which electronic devices were</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 143</p>	<p>1 investigated. But the recommendation was here, as we 2 have seen, that teams be allocated sufficient resources; 3 improving the way cases are recorded. But also this: 4 there was a need to have improved sharing of information 5 with children's social care services. Is it fair to say 6 that that series of issues all to some degree deal with 7 the issue of risk to children and also with missing 8 children? 9 A. Yes. If you put it all together, then there were 10 a number of recommendations obviously that focus on the 11 area of risk. But each individual recommendation may 12 have had other mitigating factors within other processes 13 that reduced the risk to that missing person. 14 But the focus of the HMIC was particularly targeted 15 in this area and our response was equally swift in 16 relation to the gaps that they identified. 17 Q. Can we bring up, please, your action document, it's 18 DHP000518_002. It is recommendation 2, about halfway 19 down the page. Again, Mr Orford, quite a wide-ranging 20 recommendation: 21 "We recommend that Durham Constabulary immediately 22 improves practice in cases of children who go missing 23 from home. As a minimum, this should include ..." 24 It sets out certain minimum thresholds. Just 25 summarise very briefly how you have responded to that</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 144</p>

<p>1 quite wide-ranging recommendation in the three months 2 indicated -- sorry, this doesn't have a three-month 3 limit. This one says "immediately". 4 A. Yes. We instantly instigated retraining of the staff 5 responsible for that on-duty risk. We changed some 6 operational performance requirements, we reprioritised 7 our IT rollout. The issue with Sleuth was that it was 8 a legacy system the force were using and the last module 9 that was due to go onto the new system, Red Sigma, and 10 deployed out to officers, was that missing-from-home 11 module that allowed a better integration between an 12 ongoing investigation and ongoing monitoring, whereas 13 the old system required officers to return to the police 14 station, which created gaps, because investigations may 15 still have been progressed but it might not have been 16 documented until the end of the officer's tour of duty. 17 So we had to put, instantly, interim measures in place, 18 hence the three-hour reference there, that ensured that 19 officers got that information back onto the system as 20 quickly as possible, which then raised the chance of 21 further scrutiny. 22 The actual missing child was still being tracked and 23 monitored because a separate incident log had been 24 created, although the visibility of the action wasn't as 25 transparent to supervisors overseeing it.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 145</p>	<p>1 Q. Specific work has been done in the summer of this 2 year -- is that right? -- around missing children in 3 particular. There is, I think, a report we have already 4 looked at, but we will bring it up very briefly, 5 DHP000510, that I think has been prepared by 6 a researcher on behalf of the safeguarding partnerships. 7 This looks at and analyses, does it not, issues around 8 missing from home -- children who are missing and Return 9 Home Interviews? 10 A. Yes. 11 Q. And reaches a series of recommendations for further work 12 to be done? 13 A. Yes. 14 Q. My understanding is that, if one looks at internal 15 page 2, the figures given under the preliminary report 16 recap heading were that there were 921 missing incidents 17 between 1 January and 18 June of this year, of which 18 744, or 81 per cent, related to Durham addresses. Does 19 that sound right to you? Does that feel about the right 20 figure? 21 A. Yeah, that feels about the right figure, yes. 22 Q. The bullet points below suggests that, of those 921, 302 23 Sleuth reports were created and this led to 111 Return 24 Home Interviews received back to the force. Can you 25 comment on those figures?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 146</p>
<p>1 A. This was part of the challenge that HMIC identified, in 2 that the system auto-generates reports and emails to 3 children's services when a young person runs away. So 4 if it doesn't go onto the Sleuth system, that wasn't 5 being actioned, even though in the ERASE team there is 6 a missing from home coordinator, and this is part of 7 that extra net that we are putting in place until the 8 final aspect of Red Sigma is implemented, where checks 9 of the incident logging system are also checked and 10 correlated against, and it may be that a manual referral 11 has gone on later and activity has still been undertaken 12 because we have checked, because we know the gap in that 13 system has been identified. But a pure analyst who is 14 just checking spreadsheets against spreadsheets would 15 see that gap, and we know about that gap from that 16 perspective, which is why we have put more manual 17 intervention later down in the process. 18 Q. Should every child who goes missing have a Return Home 19 Interview? 20 A. If you are being clear about a Safe & Well visit from 21 the police, which is what we undertake, and a Return 22 Home Interview by an independent social worker, then, 23 yes, it should apply in both situations. 24 Q. We can see over the page there is a breakdown of how 25 long those children have been missing for by time -- top</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 147</p>	<p>1 of internal page 3. You can see there's a cascading 2 series of bullet points, that the child has been missing 3 for a certain number of minutes or hours. The final 4 bullet point has 80 of those children being missing for 5 over 24 hours, and in only 38 per cent of those cases 6 was a Return Home Interview linked. How confident can 7 you be that that figure will increase? 8 A. I think part of the challenge also in that space is 9 where the child may be housed by an external body to 10 County Durham and where that return interview goes in 11 relation to the different processes that might occur 12 cross border. This is that ongoing challenge that we 13 have, which is why the actual percentages will not 14 always absolutely apply to County Durham. 15 So once our systems and our ability to analyse them 16 improves with better data quality, we are better able to 17 then take the actual children who are being worked with 18 with our Social Services in Durham and who are housed in 19 Durham and who go missing in Durham and are found in 20 Durham. Because that can be different for different 21 children in different places. 22 Q. Another report has been prepared, I think possibly by 23 the same person. DHP000528. This is an evaluation 24 report of the -- I'm going to get this wrong -- CEVT, 25 the child exploitation vulnerability tracker that you</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 148</p>

1 have described. What are the headlines that emerge from
 2 the analysis of this new tracker?
 3 **A. It is early days, but what it's identified is, it helps**
 4 **identify gaps in the information picture around a young**
 5 **person that better inform that professional --**
 6 Q. I'm going to help you out. I have got it on one page,
 7 DHP000522 has got a pictorial representation --
 8 **A. I think it is the last document in my pack.**
 9 Q. I think that's right. If we scroll in, it's got the
 10 benefits of the new tracker on one side and
 11 opportunities -- benefits and opportunities in green,
 12 and then it's got recommendations and concerns in peach.
 13 **A. Yes.**
 14 Q. So there are questions, as set out on the peach side of
 15 this document, about, for example, medium risk
 16 information still needs to be recorded; is the question
 17 set a little rigid? Things of that nature.
 18 **A. Yes.**
 19 Q. So it is not yet a perfect system. Is that fair?
 20 **A. That's absolutely fair. This was -- we are introducing**
 21 **this, as I said, from lessons from the county lines**
 22 **space, where they use a similar approach. It is trying**
 23 **to find that balance between the box-ticking approach to**
 24 **risk assessment and the professional discussions and**
 25 **availability of information.**

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1 **exploited group, and that morphing into the child**
 2 **exploitation group, but running in parallel with that**
 3 **was created a separate scrutiny group to examine and**
 4 **better examine how we deal with things on a longer-term**
 5 **basis, and some of the key findings there, certainly in**
 6 **relation to missing children, we removed any aspect in**
 7 **relation to them being absent because that also could**
 8 **skew officers in relation to their approach in relation**
 9 **to risk, because it was absolutely key that the earlier**
 10 **that risk assessment is carried out and is correct, the**
 11 **better the chance to protect that child.**
 12 Q. Finally on this topic, positive findings, please, by the
 13 inspectorate around the Philomena Protocol. Can I bring
 14 that up, please. It is INQ005331_031, final bullet
 15 point, where I think the findings of the inspectorate
 16 was that the Philomena Protocol, which I think was
 17 launched in the autumn of 2018, involved the police
 18 working alongside partners and local authority. It is
 19 a joint approach intended to reduce missing episodes.
 20 I think in fairness, this has been commended by the
 21 NPCC, just to give the chair the reference there --
 22 NAP000016_025-026. So this has been recognised beyond
 23 the positive comments by the inspectorate. Is that
 24 correct?
 25 **A. Yes, it's absolutely fantastic, and, as part of that**

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1 **Very often, I think it can be very easy to let the**
 2 **matrix and the box ticking give the answers, whereas the**
 3 **vulnerability tracker pushes staff to potentially have**
 4 **more inquisitive discussions about particular areas, and**
 5 **it is slightly wider than the initial CSE matrix**
 6 **assessment at risk.**
 7 Q. Another document, please, that looks at responding to
 8 the inspectorate's findings: DHP000521. That is the
 9 deep dive that I think has been carried out. I must
 10 have given the wrong reference. It's DHP000529. This
 11 is a deep dive that was done in May of this year into
 12 some case files to test progress against the themes
 13 identified by the inspectorate around missing children,
 14 child protection and so on. The bold heading "Key
 15 findings" at the top is that progress has been made in
 16 certain respects. But then the middle paragraph says:
 17 "The audit, however, found that there are still
 18 areas for improvement in relation to the management of
 19 missing children investigations."
 20 And sets out several ways in which it was felt there
 21 was still improvement needed. Is this, again, still
 22 very much a work in progress?
 23 **A. It is, but it also evidences the enhanced scrutiny**
 24 **aspect that we have changed. So the inquiry may have**
 25 **heard previous evidence relating to missing and**

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1 **timeline back to the documents you referenced earlier,**
 2 **back in 2016, where we were lifting the lid on a number**
 3 **of areas, this also has been stimulated and generated**
 4 **from the staff whom we brought in over this period of**
 5 **time, and part of that longer analysis. So back in**
 6 **2016/17, we had an incomplete picture in this space, and**
 7 **we learned and developed. The Philomena Protocol,**
 8 **I visited care homes with my beat officers out on patrol**
 9 **and have spoken to managers who have said to my own face**
 10 **what a difference this has made to let them view the**
 11 **world slightly differently than they had previously.**
 12 **So, yeah, we are quite proud of it, but, equally, it**
 13 **does evidence that when we have a gap that we have**
 14 **identified, it might take time for appropriate methods**
 15 **and approaches to be identified and put in place.**
 16 Q. Just a few more questions for you, please, Mr Orford.
 17 You have been asked to give some written evidence, as
 18 you have done, about the issue of male victims, which is
 19 a specific theme the inquiry is looking at. Can I ask
 20 you to deal with one particular aspect here. In your
 21 witness statement, you have indicated that the profile,
 22 force profile, recognises the heightened risk associated
 23 with some male victims and sets out the policies and
 24 campaigns and training that the force have put in place
 25 around that.

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1 The question is this: how will you ensure that the
 2 effectiveness of those plans is reviewed on an ongoing
 3 basis?
 4 **A. Well, this is part of the benefit from introducing
 5 better data quality, like with the tracker, because we
 6 will hopefully then, over time, be able to track back
 7 challenges and interventions and risk better over our
 8 demographic picture.**
 9 **So whilst the focus there is on male victims, there
 10 will also be challenges in relation to other
 11 characteristics that children will have as a consequence
 12 of it.**
 13 **So I have seen this across many years of policing in
 14 relation to how male victims in a number of areas often
 15 have particular challenges and are reluctant to come
 16 forward. So we have identified it, we are improving our
 17 data and analysis of it over time and we will certainly
 18 be working closer with the partners we have got now in
 19 the child exploitation team to better learn in that
 20 space as well.**
 21 **Q. Just bear with me a second. I'm sorry to go offscreen
 22 for a second.**
 23 **Can I check one more reference and see if I have got
 24 this correct. I am sorry if it is not. It is
 25 DHP000814_004. I think these should be some minutes**

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1 one more to put on your list, please, which is CS-A43,
 2 as a male victim. In reflecting on that child's case,
 3 could you please look at the quality and timeliness of
 4 the response to that male victim. It does appear from
 5 the paperwork seen by the inquiry that there was
 6 sensitivity shown to that young man and an appropriate
 7 referral to LGBT specialist support services, but we
 8 would be very grateful for your view on that case,
 9 having looked at it?
 10 **A. Yes.**
 11 **MS HILL: Mr Orford, those are all the questions I have for
 12 you. Thank you very much.**
 13 **A. Thank you.**
 14 **THE CHAIR: Thank you. I have no questions, but I will ask
 15 my colleagues if there are any questions. Ms Sharpling?**
 16 **Questions from THE PANEL**
 17 **MS SHARPLING: Yes, please. Thank you, chair.**
 18 **Thank you, Mr Orford. Just a couple of questions
 19 for me for clarification purposes. I want to make sure
 20 that I understand properly the issue of recording child
 21 sexual exploitation. Am I right in thinking that, from
 22 what you have said, in order to flag up a CSE matter,
 23 there must be some understanding of the context in which
 24 an offence may have occurred? So to give you an
 25 example, an alleged indecent assault may be a matter of**

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1 from June of this year. Do you want me to give that
 2 reference again? I think it is DUC000814_005. Can we
 3 scroll in, please, at the bottom of that. In fact,
 4 let's see if we can look a bit more closely. There is
 5 reference on this page to work around male victims
 6 from June of this year. I'm not sure -- can we just
 7 scroll in on the whole page, please, Danny, and try to
 8 find the right reference. It is between pages 4 and 5.
 9 This is bringing us right up to date, Mr Orford. Can we
 10 look here on what is happening on this page in June of
 11 this year.
 12 **A. These are minutes of the CEG meeting. What you are
 13 seeing there is, as I have just explained there, actual
 14 operational impact of the tracker and that evidence case
 15 in relation to our victims. So that is a narrative
 16 about what's happened live over the last few months,
 17 obviously within the operating environment that we are
 18 having to operate at the moment.**
 19 **Q. I think I may have one more question for you, Mr Orford.**
 20 **Just bear with me a second, please. I had some
 21 questions on the topics list around audit and review,
 22 but I have taken enough time, I think, dealing with the
 23 HMIC report, and so on, so I won't go to that in any
 24 further detail. You have kindly agreed to provide some
 25 further analysis of some of the cases. There is just**

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1 child sexual exploitation, but it is not known whether
 2 it is until a proper understanding of the context is
 3 forthcoming. Am I right in my description?
 4 **A. I think that's a very good way of describing it, that
 5 the less information you have in relation to the motive,
 6 the more subjective a decision you're making at an early
 7 stage, and so you may be able to record the act that has
 8 been carried out, but the actual dynamic and the power
 9 dynamic that has occurred within that act may take
 10 further investigation and may not appear until a later
 11 date down the line.**
 12 **MS SHARPLING: Is there then a problem of amending the
 13 record to show or flagging up that record to show CSE?**
 14 **A. That certainly would be one of the issues, that at
 15 a later date -- this is one of the challenges the
 16 analysts had, was that they had to do that trawl at
 17 a manual level in order to ensure they captured the
 18 entire journey of that case, because it could start
 19 being recorded in one way, but at a later date you could
 20 identify the exploitative aspect and then it would give
 21 rise to that being an exploitation case.**
 22 **MS SHARPLING: I see. Thank you. Could you help with this,
 23 that when you come to problem profiling, which, in my
 24 understanding is, from the opening given by counsel to
 25 the inquiry, "do the police and local authorities have**

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1 comprehensive and up-to-date information about local
 2 patterns of child sexual exploitation in their area",
 3 for example, how far do you think that the data in
 4 relation to missing children has actually contributed to
 5 the problem profile? Because missing children, of
 6 course, is the way in which the possibility of CSE is
 7 identified by those in the police service and local
 8 authority?
 9 **A. Yes. I think it just has to be taken as part of**
 10 **the picture. That's where the analyst has to be able to**
 11 **draw in all the other potential sources, such as online**
 12 **offending and the way that that might expose children to**
 13 **being vulnerable to being exploited, and they may or may**
 14 **not be missing. So I think it is a very complex**
 15 **picture, and if you were just to use missing people as**
 16 **a proxy indicator, if you don't have many children going**
 17 **missing, you don't have much exploitation, you could**
 18 **actually miss that wider perspective.**
 19 MS SHARPLING: Is there room for improvement in the profile?
 20 I'm thinking, for example, that CSE is a strategic
 21 priority for policing, and more sophistication, perhaps,
 22 might be called for in the problem profile that we have
 23 just discussed.
 24 **A. I think that's absolutely correct. Across policing we**
 25 **have a huge demand on our analysts now either from the**

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1 **criminal justice processes where quite detailed**
 2 **analytical pictures are being required to present to**
 3 **courts, and in the intelligence space as well. There is**
 4 **quite a lot of demand put on them for products. So it**
 5 **is certainly something that, operationally, quite senior**
 6 **leaders have to be very careful as to how they**
 7 **commission and request products from analysts.**
 8 MS SHARPLING: One question I should have asked, which is
 9 related to the first question, if I may, but when
 10 officers -- is it officers or non-officers who are
 11 responsible for the recording of crime in your force?
 12 **A. It would be predominantly police officers. So even if**
 13 **that's in person or by telephone, it will be a police**
 14 **officer who is doing the recording.**
 15 Q. Is it therefore important -- we have heard a lot about
 16 the difficulty of definitions. But is it important,
 17 therefore, just to be absolutely clear, that in order
 18 for an officer to record or flag up an incident as child
 19 sexual exploitation, there needs to be a clear and
 20 well-understood definition?
 21 **A. I think that's fair, and I think at the moment, given**
 22 **the uplift in policing, over the next few years the**
 23 **chances are the officer who might attend initial**
 24 **incidents is going to be relatively young in service and**
 25 **quite inexperienced. So the better we can support them**

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1 **by giving them the tools, often when they are at the**
 2 **scene, to make that decision, the better our information**
 3 **and our potential to intervene and protect children will**
 4 **be.**
 5 MS SHARPLING: I'm sorry to prolong you a bit longer,
 6 Mr Orford. One more question. How far does
 7 intelligence gathering, when you're doing some analysis,
 8 rely on the intelligence of local neighbourhood police
 9 officers and response officers in compiling that
 10 profile?
 11 **A. It's absolutely crucial. I think --**
 12 MS SHARPLING: Is there a mechanism for doing that?
 13 **A. Yes. Within our force, we have -- I have mentioned the**
 14 **Red Sigma policing system. It is actually integrated**
 15 **with crime recording and integrating with the**
 16 **vulnerability (overspeaking) --**
 17 MS SHARPLING: I hesitate to interrupt you, Mr Orford. It
 18 is a public inquiry, and there is a tendency for police
 19 officers, on occasion, to use acronyms and shorthand,
 20 and it is important for others to understand. Could you
 21 just repeat that answer in, perhaps, layman's language?
 22 **A. I apologise. Basically, for a beat officer -- and we**
 23 **have maintained our investment in neighbourhood policing**
 24 **and police community support officers -- when they are**
 25 **out and about walking the beat, they have -- and I have**

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1 **got one of them here. It is maybe not appearing against**
 2 **the background of your --**
 3 MS SHARPLING: I can see it.
 4 **A. It is a modern mobile device that gives them full access**
 5 **to all our operational policing system and it is**
 6 **integrated. What that means is that, if they come**
 7 **across an individual for something else in the course of**
 8 **their duties, they can do intelligence reports, they can**
 9 **make referrals through one device and one system. It**
 10 **makes it very, very easy. In my experience of policing**
 11 **over the years, we tended to put things in silos and**
 12 **expect officers to have to access different systems**
 13 **depending on the nature of what they were dealing with.**
 14 **What we have identified, obviously, through working with**
 15 **neighbourhoods is that sometimes individuals would cross**
 16 **the policing threshold for a beat officer on relatively**
 17 **low areas.**
 18 MS SHARPLING: I see. Thank you.
 19 THE CHAIR: Mr Frank?
 20 MR FRANK: No, thank you.
 21 THE CHAIR: Sir Malcolm?
 22 PROF SIR MALCOLM EVANS: No, thank you.
 23 MS HILL: Chair, if there are no further questions for
 24 Mr Orford, perhaps he can be released and I just have
 25 a very short couple of references to read for you in

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1 relation to Durham.
 2 THE CHAIR: Mr Orford, we are aware you have taken time out
 3 of your lead role on COVID-19 dealing with the outbreak
 4 in the north-east, so we appreciate you giving oral
 5 evidence to the inquiry today. Thank you very much.
 6 **A. Thank you.**
 7 MS HILL: Thank you, Mr Orford.
 8 **A. Thank you.**
 9 **(The witness withdrew)**
 10 MS HILL: Chair and panel members, as I did yesterday,
 11 I have some more evidence I would like to seek your
 12 evidence formally to adduce. These are from additional
 13 witnesses in relation to the Durham area. You have
 14 heard me reference both of those statements briefly.
 15 First of all, we have evidence from Laura Seebohm from
 16 Changing Lives. She is a north-east-based charity
 17 providing support to people during challenging times
 18 including women in the criminal justice system and women
 19 who sell sex and/or experience sexual exploitation.
 20 During their work in Durham between 2015 and 2018 they
 21 found some of the women they worked with had experience
 22 of child sexual exploitation and this continued into
 23 adulthood.
 24 There is, secondly, evidence from Amanda Quinn of
 25 Pebbles Care, a provider of children's residential care

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1 homes, including one multi-bedded home in Durham and six
 2 solo provisions in St Helens.
 3 Chair, that concludes the evidence that we propose
 4 to place before you today and we have obviously further
 5 evidence to hear tomorrow about a different geographical
 6 area. Thank you very much.
 7 THE CHAIR: Just before we finish, on a separate matter,
 8 those watching today may have spotted the occasional
 9 dropout of Ms Hill's sound connection. We apologise for
 10 this, and are working to resolve the issue as soon as
 11 possible, and hope it is fully fixed for tomorrow.
 12 Thank you very much.
 13 MS HILL: Thank you, chair.
 14 (4.12 pm)
 15 (The hearing was adjourned to
 16 Thursday, 24 September 2020 at 10.00 am)
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