

Witness Name:
Statement No.: 1
Exhibits:
Dated:

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Witness Statement of Shehla Khan, Chairperson of EYST

I, Shehla Khan, Chairperson of EYST will say as follows:-

1. I will comment on the experience of EYST, which focuses on ethnic minority people. Ethnic minority people make up around 6% of the population, and around 10% of school age children in Swansea. EYST has provided a culturally sensitive and appropriate space for young people for the last 15 years. During the Resilience project of EYST (a project focusing on Extremism & Exploitation including CSE, operating in Swansea, Cardiff and South Wales, funded between 2016-19), it was noted that there were relatively higher incidences of CSE in Swansea, compared to Cardiff, with cases reported in Hafod and some in Sandfields in relation to central mosque.
2. But we are confident that there are many more in the community which are under reported. The shame and guilt factors stops families and BAME girls from coming forward. The BAME Females don't have enough safe spaces where they feel confident to go and report and discuss these issues. There is a lack of BAME female representation in workplaces and also in schools of other BAME females who the girls could feel comfortable to talk about it with.
3. EYST is an all Wales organisation working to support ethnic minority people across Wales including specific focus on BAME young people, BAME families, Refugees, Asylum Seekers & Migrants, and supporting Community Groups. EYST was set up in 2005, initially in Swansea, therefore, our experience is based on the last 15 years of work, predominantly in this geographical area. From 2016 to 2019 EYST delivered the Resilience project, which was a project focusing on supporting young people who may be vulnerable to Extremism & Exploitation including CSE.
4. Through this project, we delivered one to one support to young people who were vulnerable to exploitation, through mentoring, signposting, advice and guidance to young people, and did support a few young females who had been victims of CSE in Swansea We also delivered group based workshops including a programme of awareness raising focused around relationships and consent, to both young BAME

females and young BAME males. We partnered with schools and statutory agencies including social services and police to identify and support young people appropriately.

5. While generic services exist, such as those run by NSPCC, there is insufficient targeting and focus on the BAME community, and current services are not culturally appropriate. BAWSO's services are effective in supporting adult victims of domestic abuse, but they are not so accessible for younger people or children. Overall, there is little focus on males either as potential victims or potential perpetrators.
6. There is a huge need for greater awareness raising, particularly amongst BAME communities, especially South Asian communities who make up the greatest proportion of the BAME community in Swansea. While some work with young females has taken place, there is hardly any education on this topic for young males. Similarly within families, females are hearing messages from their families regarding dressing appropriately and cultural behaviour norms, however this is not the same more males. So there is a need to upskill and educate parents on how to talk about these topics, and the importance of doing so. In terms of services there isn't enough preventative and educational work, done with young males or potential perpetrators to stop CSE from happening.
7. There needs to be more discussion around this topic with young people as the whole area of sexual relationships is considered a taboo topic amongst certain minority ethnic groups. Sex, sexual relationships or sexual exploitation is not discussed in religious places like mosques, gurdwaras and temples, and there is generally little discussion on this topic within families in their own homes. There is denial and parents not equipped to deal and so need spaces to have discussion around boundaries and consent. There needs to more forward-thinking male leaders such as imams to start these discussions with young people and families.
8. We know that sexual exploitation is less talked about with and by young males, and that BAME males are less likely to report if they are sexually exploited. This has to do with their generally poor relationships with authority figures such as police, teachers, parents and social workers. Many BME young males also feel lonely, isolated and sometimes bullied. To protect this vulnerable group, Youth centres, Mosques and Schools must create a safe space where males can discuss their feelings and not be judged. They should be supported to have mentors as trusted adults to discuss sensitive matters that maybe cannot be discussed in their homes. Awareness training of CSE will help this group. Professionals supporting this client group need to adopt a Rights- Based Approach to practice and promote equality, inclusivity and social justice. They must respect the rights and dignity of this vulnerable group; aim to remove the barriers that prevent them from reporting CSE in a non-discriminatory environment.
9. In relation to Data recording and analysis, and profiling of potential/suspected CSE offenders by the local authority/police; and (ii) disruption of potential/suspected CSE offenders , EYST did not have any specific responsibility in this regard. While we had limited experience, I am aware of one case where we supported a young female victim to come forward, however she was then interviewed by a male police officer who made the victim feel very uncomfortable and guilty. She did put in a complaint about his

behaviour. Even though we were told he had received training on grooming, this training did not reflect in his behaviour or working practices. This poor experience had a negative domino effect on other clients who then did not feeling comfortable to come forward. Our proposal for improvement would therefore be to increase the quality and maybe quantity of training for police officers dealing with CSE complainants and victims. Also to ensure that same gender police officers are always used to carry out initial interviews with complainants.

10. In relation to ensuring child victims are treated with empathy, concern and respect, addressing victim-blaming language and ensuring specific provision for BME and/or LGBTQ complainants or victims of child sexual exploitation, we did not have a specific role, beyond our voluntary young person's support role for victims of CSE during the funded project period of 2016 to 2019 . As above, our experience was limited, however on the few occasions we did support complainants, we often found the behaviour of police officers wanting in terms of their sensitivity to the needs of BME young people, in particular. I would recommend that training is increased to all police officers, and ideally that a CSE advocacy team be created which includes ethnically and culturally diverse and sensitive staff.
11. In relation to Risk assessment, protection from harm and the outcomes experienced by children who have been sexually exploited; we did not have a specific role, beyond our generic role to risk assess all children and young people we work with, and support them for as long as they wish. In our experience, risk assessment practices are generally carried out robustly and thoroughly by professionals working in the local authority and police, although sometimes there were delays and barriers to sharing that information effectively with other agencies. I would recommend that such training on risk assessment procedures is shared with and made available to voluntary sector organisations, to enable more effective joint working.
12. In relation to Missing children, Return Home Interviews and Looked after children (including any issues relating to placement outside their own local authority area). EYST does not have any specific responsibilities, although we did on occasion provide additional support for looked after children from BAME backgrounds. We had limited interactions in this area of work, although very broadly, it became obvious that staff working within statutory organisations were insufficiently ethnically diverse, and so lacked cultural diversity understanding. I would recommend that increased ethnic minority staff representation in statutory organisations be prioritised as a means of providing a more accessible and effective service to all children and young people in Swansea.
13. In relation to Male Victims, EYST did not have a specific role beyond the role of supporting potential victims during our Resilience project between 2016 and 2019. In this time, we did not identify or support any male victims of CSE, therefore our ability to comment is limited. However, more broadly, we are aware that services which effectively engage with and support young BAME males are insufficient.
14. In relation to Children with a disability, EYST does not have any specific remit or role. I cannot comment on the effectiveness of the steps taken by the local authority and