

<p>1 Monday, 21 September 2020 2 (10.30 am) 3 Welcome and opening remarks by THE CHAIR 4 THE CHAIR: Good morning, everybody. My name is Alexis Jay, 5 and I'm the chair of the Independent Inquiry into Child 6 Sexual Abuse. 7 With me are the other panel members of the inquiry: 8 Professor Sir Malcolm Evans, Ivor Frank and 9 Drusilla Sharpling. 10 On behalf of the inquiry, I welcome you all to the 11 substantive hearing into the Investigation of 12 the Responses of Institutions to the Sexual Exploitation 13 of Children by Organised Networks. It is the fourth 14 public hearing to be held remotely by this inquiry. 15 As with other recent virtual hearings, the solicitor 16 to the inquiry sought the views of all core participants 17 in this investigation about the possibility of 18 conducting the hearing remotely. Having considered all 19 responses, I ruled, on 6 April, that a remote hearing 20 was both desirable and practicable. 21 I would like to thank the core participants, 22 witnesses and representatives for their co-operation in 23 preparing for and conducting this hearing, and to thank 24 the inquiry staff for their hard work in making the 25 necessary arrangements.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 1</p>	<p>1 This remote hearing will run for ten days, finishing 2 on Friday, 2 October. This investigation will examine 3 the response of institutions within six geographical 4 areas across England and Wales to the sexual 5 exploitation of children by organised networks. The 6 inquiry will focus on eight themes. These themes will 7 be outlined by Ms Henrietta Hill QC in her opening 8 shortly. 9 Before we hear from Ms Hill, some points on timing. 10 We will begin each day from 10.30 am, save for Day 9, 11 when we will begin at 10.00 am. We will take 12 a 15-minute break every hour and will take a one-hour 13 break for lunch at approximately 12.45 pm. We intend to 14 sit no later than 4.00 pm each day. 15 By way of an agenda, we rely on the hearing 16 timetable, which sets out the order in which witnesses 17 will be called, save for where unforeseen circumstances 18 require a change to be made. 19 A simultaneous hearing transcript will be produced, 20 and is available to those taking part in this hearing 21 via a web browser. The transcript will be published at 22 the end of each day on the inquiry website. Any 23 directions arising from the day's hearing will also be 24 published on the website. 25 Participants are asked to mute their microphones and</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 2</p>
<p>1 turn off their camera unless they are speaking. If 2 microphones pick up noise, such as typing, it will place 3 the person on screen as if they were speaking, and 4 turning off cameras will keep the screen from becoming 5 distracting by looking too busy for those using the 6 gallery view. 7 I have made a restriction order protecting the 8 identity of complainant core participants and covering 9 the redactions and ciphers applied in this 10 investigation. For technical reasons, it will not be 11 possible to broadcast this hearing with the usual 12 three-minute delay. All witnesses and core participants 13 have been reminded of these restriction orders and of 14 the need to take great care in giving evidence or 15 addressing the inquiry to avoid any inadvertent breach 16 of these orders. If there is an inadvertent breach of 17 a restriction order, I will make an immediate further 18 order over the evidence incorrectly given. Members of 19 the public and the press will be prohibited from 20 publishing that evidence. 21 The evidence of those anonymous witnesses whose 22 identities are protected by restriction orders will not 23 be live streamed, but a transcript of their evidence 24 will be uploaded to the inquiry's website as soon as 25 possible thereafter, together with an audio file of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 3</p>	<p>1 the evidence, where appropriate. 2 Please go ahead, Ms Hill. 3 Introductions 4 MS HILL: Good morning, chair and panel. I appear today 5 with junior counsel for the inquiry, and I would like to 6 introduce first of all, please, Paul Livingston. 7 MR LIVINGSTON: Good morning, chair. 8 MS HILL: Antonia Benfield. 9 MS BENFIELD: Good morning, chair. 10 MS HILL: And Ben Fullbrook. 11 MR FULLBROOK: Good morning, chair. 12 MS HILL: Chair, as you have indicated, this is the public 13 hearing in the Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised 14 Networks Investigation. Preliminary hearings were held 15 on 2 May 2019 and 15 January of this year. As you know, 16 chair, this public hearing was due to take place 17 in April, but was postponed in light of the COVID-19 18 pandemic. 19 This investigation will consider the nature and 20 extent of, and institutional responses to, sexual 21 exploitation of children by networks. It will consider 22 the experiences of victims and survivors, it will look 23 at a review of previously available information, and it 24 will look at specific cases. 25 Chair, first of all, I would like to introduce the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 4</p>

<p>1 19 core participants who are represented in this 2 investigation. Each representative only appears on 3 screen if they speak, so, as I introduce everybody, 4 could I ask you to unmute your microphone and video and 5 indicate whom you represent. 6 First of all, chair, could I introduce, on behalf of 7 CS-A2, Kim Harrison. 8 MS HARRISON: Good morning, chair. Myself and 9 Richard Scorer represent CS-A2. 10 MS HILL: Thank you. On behalf of Parents Against Child 11 Exploitation or PACE, Mr David Greenwood. 12 MR GREENWOOD: Good morning, chair. I represent PACE, an 13 organisation which assists parents of those exploited. 14 MS HILL: Mr Greenwood, we can't see your video at the 15 moment. Do you want to try to put it on? 16 MR GREENWOOD: I can't seem to get it on, but I will keep 17 playing with it later. Thank you. 18 MS HILL: Thank you. On behalf of Margaret Oliver and 19 Jon Wedger, Chris Jacobs, please. 20 MR JACOBS: Good morning. I am Chris Jacobs. I appear for 21 Jon Wedger and Maggie Oliver with David Enright from 22 Howe & Co. 23 MS HILL: For the Centre for Women's Justice, 24 Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC. 25 MS GALLAGHER: Good morning, chair and panel. I appear for</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 5</p>	<p>1 the Centre for Women's Justice with Mary-Rachel McCabe 2 and instructed by Harriet Wistrich. 3 MS HILL: For Sarah Champion MP, Haafiz Suleman. 4 MR SULEMAN: Good morning, chair and panel. I act for 5 Sarah Champion, the MP for Rotherham. 6 MS HILL: On behalf of Durham Police, Alan Payne QC. 7 MR PAYNE: Good morning, chair and panel. I am instructed 8 on behalf of Durham Constabulary. 9 MS HILL: For Durham County Council, Steven Ford QC. 10 MR FORD: Good morning, chair. 11 MS HILL: Thank you, Mr Ford. For South Wales Police, do we 12 have Ms Hewitt? Alison Hewitt? Chair, I know that 13 Ms Hewitt was having some technical difficulties in 14 joining the hearing. I am sure that efforts are being 15 made to resolve those. Can I just check again, is there 16 somebody here for South Wales Police? 17 MS EMMITT: Yes, chair, Louise Emmitt for South Wales 18 Police. Ms Hewitt is having those difficulties, my 19 apologies. 20 MS HILL: For Warwickshire Police, Samantha Leek QC, please. 21 MS LEEK: Good morning, chair and panel. I represent the 22 Chief Constable of Warwickshire, together with 23 Molly Joyce. 24 MS HILL: Warwickshire County Council, Andrew Sharland QC. 25 MR SHARLAND: Good morning, chair and members of the panel.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 6</p>
<p>1 I act for Warwickshire County Council. I'm assisted by 2 Ms Naomi Bentley-Lawson, solicitor at the council. 3 MS HILL: For St Helens Council, Rory Dunlop QC. 4 MR DUNLOP: Good morning, chair and panel. I represent 5 St Helens Council. 6 MS HILL: For the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis, 7 Christopher Butterfield. 8 MR BUTTERFIELD: Good morning, chair and panel. I represent 9 the Metropolitan Police Service. 10 MS HILL: The London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 11 Cleo Perry QC. 12 MS PERRY: Good morning, chair and panel. I represent 13 Tower Hamlets, along with Mr Powell and Mr Langford, 14 instructed by Sarah Williams. 15 MS HILL: For Avon and Somerset Police, Elliot Gold? 16 MR GOLD: Good morning. I represent the Chief Constable of 17 the Avon and Somerset Police. 18 MS HILL: For Bristol City Council, Jane Rayson? 19 MS RAYSON: Good morning, chair and panel. I represent 20 Bristol City Council, together with Charlotte Baker. 21 MS HILL: The National Police Chiefs' Council, James Berry. 22 MR BERRY: Good morning, chair. Good morning, panel. 23 MS HILL: On behalf of the Home Office in its core 24 participant status, but representing the interests of 25 the government more widely, Sian Reeves.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 7</p>	<p>1 MS REEVES: Good morning, chair and panel. I'm Sian Reeves. 2 I represent the Home Office core participant on behalf 3 of the government. 4 MS HILL: On behalf of Ofsted, Mathew Gullick. 5 MR GULLICK: Good morning, chair and panel. I appear on 6 behalf of Ofsted, together with Mr Gabriel Adejebi. 7 Opening statement by MS HILL 8 MS HILL: Chair, I'd like to turn now to some preliminary 9 observations about the scope of the investigation, some 10 definitions that have been used and about the overall 11 methodology of the investigation. Chair, by way of 12 background, from the outset, it was apparent that 13 a great deal of analysis and learning had already been 14 done about the issue of child sexual exploitation by 15 networks. That included high-profile criminal 16 prosecutions, Serious Case Reviews and, of course, 17 chair, your own Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual 18 Exploitation in Rotherham. 19 The National Working Group has compiled a report 20 listing 451 recommendations that have been made by 21 previous investigations, inquiries, research and 22 reports, and all of this activity involved, by 23 necessity, looking at past failings and trying to learn 24 for the future. However, chair, it was clear to the 25 investigation that there was more to learn about whether</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 8</p>

<p>1 this learning had, in fact, been embedded, and about 2 what was happening in different parts of the country. 3 The inquiry was keen to ensure that this 4 investigation is forward looking and contemporary and 5 tries to understand whether or not those historic 6 failings have been learnt from and lessons have been 7 taken on board. 8 Chair, you may find that the broad issues to be 9 considered in this investigation are perhaps along these 10 lines: is the sexual exploitation of children by 11 networks being prevented or at least reduced? Are 12 children now being better protected by institutions from 13 the perpetrators of sexual exploitation? And are those 14 perpetrators who associate with others to exploit 15 children being identified, disrupted and brought to 16 justice? 17 Chair, as you and the core participants will be 18 aware, the term "CSE" is sometimes used by practitioners 19 as an abbreviation for child sexual exploitation. Over 20 the next two weeks, you will hear that abbreviation used 21 on occasion, as well as "CSEN", child sexual 22 exploitation by networks. Chair, we make clear that no 23 disrespect whatsoever is intended to the victims and 24 survivors, and we are fully conscious that the use of 25 these abbreviations should not take away from the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 9</p>	<p>1 reality that we are talking about the sexual 2 exploitation of children. 3 Chair, the definition of the scope of this 4 investigation has been published on the inquiry's 5 website, and it looks to examine, very broadly, whether 6 children subject to CSE were known to relevant 7 authorities, whether the risk of CSE was properly 8 identified by those authorities, whether action was 9 taken to prevent it, the response of the criminal 10 justice system, previous reports' recommendations, and 11 effective strategies to try to prevent CSE in the 12 future, as well as the relevant statutory and regulatory 13 framework. 14 The definitions that have been used in this 15 investigation, chair, were set out in the update note 16 that was published by the inquiry in March 2019. 17 First, child sexual exploitation is a form of child 18 sexual abuse. It involves exploitative situations, 19 contexts and relationships, where a child receives 20 something as a result of them performing and/or another 21 or others performing on them sexual activities, and it 22 can, of course, occur through the use of technology. 23 An organised network has been defined by the 24 inquiry, chair, in this way, that it is characterised by 25 two or more individuals, whether identified or not, who</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 10</p>
<p>1 are known to, or who associate with, one another and who 2 are known to be involved in or to facilitate the sexual 3 exploitation of children. Being involved in the sexual 4 exploitation of children includes, according to the 5 inquiry's definition, introducing them to other 6 individuals for the purpose of exploitation, trafficking 7 a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation, taking 8 payment for sexual activities with a child or allowing 9 their property to be used for sexual activities with 10 a child. 11 Chair, you and the panel will note that the 12 inquiry's definition of an organised network focuses on 13 sexual exploitation of children where two or more people 14 are associated or involved. This is not the same as 15 what is sometimes referred to in the media as 16 a "grooming gang". The inquiry's definition means any 17 circumstance where two or more people associate with one 18 another to bring about the sexual exploitation of 19 a child. The inquiry will hear evidence about models of 20 sexual and other forms of child exploitation, including 21 abuse by associated perpetrators. 22 Some observations now, chair, about the broad 23 structure of this investigation. Chair, as you've 24 indicated, this inquiry's intention in the investigation 25 was to be thematic, that is to say, to identify from the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 11</p>	<p>1 recommendations that have been made in previous reviews 2 a series of themes and, having done a significant amount 3 of scoping work, chair, the investigation settled on 4 eight themes, which I will come to in due course. 5 As you've indicated, chair, the inquiry was keen to 6 ensure that this investigation gathers evidence about 7 contemporary practice, focusing on good practice as well 8 as areas for improvement. Again, having conducted some 9 scoping work, the inquiry sampled several geographical 10 areas and then selected the six areas reflected in the 11 core participant list in which to examine the operation 12 of these themes. 13 Finally, chair, the inquiry has selected, from 14 within those geographical areas, a small number of 15 individual children's cases which it will look at in 16 more detail and which it's hoped will illuminate the 17 themes in practice. 18 Turning now, chair, if I may, to the issue of 19 the nature and scale of child sexual exploitation by 20 networks in England and Wales. The sexual exploitation 21 of children is, by its very nature, a hidden problem. 22 Its exact nature and scale are the subject of ongoing 23 discussion and debate, as you will hear over the next 24 fortnight. 25 As far as the nature of this exploitation is</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 12</p>

<p>1 concerned, chair, you will hear tomorrow directly from 2 two complainants: CS-A371, who will describe her 3 experiences of child sexual exploitation between 2003 4 and 2011; and CS-A12, who will describe being repeatedly 5 sexually exploited while in the care of a local 6 authority. 7 Later in the week, chair, you will hear from CS-A2, 8 who will describe her experiences as the mother of 9 a sexually-exploited child. 10 The inquiry has received written statements from 11 some further complainants. Chair, I would like to now 12 turn, please, to junior counsel, who will read some of 13 that evidence to the chair and panel, and I will ask, 14 please, first of all, Mr Livingston to begin. 15 Summary of witness statement of WITNESS CS-A317 (read) 16 MR LIVINGSTON: Thank you, Ms Hill. CS-A317 was in care for 17 much of her childhood and was accommodated in a number 18 of children's homes. She describes being sexually 19 abused and exploited from the age of 14. She says that 20 the staff within the children's homes were aware that 21 she was having sex with an older male. She was given 22 alcohol and drugs and made to have sex with other men. 23 CS-A317 reports that staff were dismissive and no 24 action was taken. She believes that the care home staff 25 colluded with her abusers by suggesting they collect her</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 13</p>	<p>1 by car near to the children's home rather than directly 2 outside it. The abuse continued until CS-A317 was 3 18 years old. At this time, she was violently raped by 4 the main perpetrator of her abuse. She reported this to 5 police, but says that no action was taken. She says 6 that the police took the view that, because she had been 7 associated with the perpetrator for a long time and had 8 been in contact with him through text messages, she had 9 consented. CS-A317 had a breakdown and attempted 10 suicide. 11 She was subsequently contacted by the National Crime 12 Agency, the NCA, regarding the abuse she suffered as 13 a teenager. She reported that the NCA recognised that 14 at the time of her abuse she was a vulnerable child who 15 had been exploited, rather than a willing participant. 16 As a result of the NCA investigation, the perpetrator 17 was convicted of sexual activity with a child and 18 sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. CS-A317 19 considers that the earlier police investigation was 20 "completely flawed" and that inaction led to further 21 abuse. She feels that, "It was easier for the police to 22 criminalise the children rather than go after the 23 abusing adults", and says that she was given "poor care 24 and lack of safeguarding" by the council who badly 25 failed her. She considers that her overall experience</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 14</p>
<p>1 with the NCA team was very positive. However, she 2 identifies various learning points on her experiences in 3 the course of the prosecution, including the impact to 4 her of a female officer who had been involved during 5 evidence gathering but was taken off the case just 6 before trial. She further describes how, at the 7 sentencing hearing, she was not provided with special 8 measures, but was instead left to sit in the public 9 gallery. She describes that, as she left the sentencing 10 hearing, she was confronted by the defendant's family, 11 who verbally attacked and threatened her. She feels 12 that steps could have been taken by the NCA to avoid 13 this. I now pass over to Mr Fullbrook. 14 Summary of witness statement of WITNESS CS-A372 (read) 15 MR FULLBROOK: Thank you, Mr Livingston. CS-A372 grew up in 16 a family where there was neglect and domestic violence. 17 She has pieced together events in her childhood through 18 her social care records. She was first raped at the age 19 of 12 by a 16-year-old boy. Her mother reported this to 20 the police and the perpetrator was prosecuted and 21 convicted of rape. 22 At this time, CS-A372 reports suffering from 23 parental neglect, being bullied at school and describes 24 herself as being desperate for affection. She was 25 introduced to a male, who was around 30 years old, whom</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 15</p>	<p>1 she believes was involved in drug dealing and 2 prostitution. He gave her gifts and was kind to her. 3 However, he expected her to have sex with him and later 4 demanded that she have sex with other men. CS-A372 was 5 missing from home frequently. She was self-harming and 6 being supplied with alcohol and cannabis, having sex 7 with other teenagers and had a history of taking 8 overdoses. When she turned 13 in 2008, her home life 9 was increasingly violent and chaotic. She reports being 10 assaulted by her father, who also threatened to 11 prostitute her. Her case was closed by Social Services, 12 despite knowledge of a history of overdose, repeat 13 missing episodes, chaotic and crowded domestic 14 conditions and sexual exploitation. Her records show 15 that she was supported by a local service in 2009 and 16 made disclosures of sexual exploitation to a health 17 professional, who made a further referral to 18 Social Services. Social Services again closed her case 19 on the basis that she was "putting herself at risk". 20 This decision was later reversed. 21 During missing episodes, CS-A372 was regularly 22 picked up by the police to whom she reported the sexual 23 abuse. She was interviewed about a rape (by an 24 associate of her main abuser), but was too traumatised 25 to make a disclosure. She does not consider that</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 16</p>

<p>1 meaningful steps were taken to protect her.</p> <p>2 In June 2009, she was forced to give oral sex to</p> <p>3 over 20 men. This was filmed and CS-A372 was forced to</p> <p>4 drink alcohol and take drugs. She explained this to</p> <p>5 police, and a number of men were charged, although the</p> <p>6 charges were later dropped. CS-A372 continued to be</p> <p>7 sexually exploited with repeat missing episodes.</p> <p>8 In September 2009, CS-A372 was abducted by a group</p> <p>9 of men and was forced to have oral sex with 23 men while</p> <p>10 a gun was held to her head. She was raped. She was</p> <p>11 placed back in care, having earlier returned to live</p> <p>12 with her mother. She tried to co-operate with police</p> <p>13 investigations, but felt very conflicted and was</p> <p>14 repeatedly self-harming. She considers that she was</p> <p>15 failed by Social Services and by the police. She also</p> <p>16 considers that there was a lack of co-ordination between</p> <p>17 agencies tasked with protecting her. I now pass over to</p> <p>18 Ms Benfield.</p> <p>19 Summary of witness statement of WITNESS CS-A373 (read)</p> <p>20 MS BENFIELD: CS-A373 experienced domestic violence as</p> <p>21 a young child and felt rejected at home. She started to</p> <p>22 associate with older girls and men in the area. She</p> <p>23 repeatedly went missing from home, but was found by the</p> <p>24 police and returned to her mother. When she was 12, an</p> <p>25 adult in the group gave her cannabis, forced her to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 17</p>	<p>1 perform oral sex and raped her. Six months later, she</p> <p>2 disclosed the rape and the police were informed, but</p> <p>3 reports that no charges were brought. Her home life</p> <p>4 became increasingly difficult. She was repeatedly going</p> <p>5 missing and being taken home by police. At age 13,</p> <p>6 CS-A373 was given drugs by a local man and had a severe</p> <p>7 reaction, requiring hospitalisation. Social Services</p> <p>8 intervened and CS-A373 was placed in temporary care.</p> <p>9 She was moved to several different foster placements but</p> <p>10 was desperate to return home and kept running away. She</p> <p>11 was using both alcohol and cannabis. CS-A373 was moved</p> <p>12 out of area and placed in a care home between the ages</p> <p>13 of 14 and 16.</p> <p>14 In February 2011, she absconded from the care home</p> <p>15 and started to meet a man of 26 years old. She told the</p> <p>16 care home staff that he was 18 and was permitted to meet</p> <p>17 him. She then met another adult male, who gave her</p> <p>18 alcohol and cannabis before raping her. She managed to</p> <p>19 run away and went to the police. The perpetrator was</p> <p>20 cautioned for having sex with a child under 16. CS-A373</p> <p>21 took an overdose. She reports that she was not provided</p> <p>22 with support or counselling following the rape.</p> <p>23 CS-A373 considers that the police took little action</p> <p>24 to investigate the abuse that she was subjected to, and</p> <p>25 failed to assess the risk that perpetrators posed in the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 18</p>
<p>1 local community. She considers that both police and</p> <p>2 Social Services had very little or no empathy for her</p> <p>3 and made no real attempt to understand her experiences.</p> <p>4 She feels that she was returned home from multiple</p> <p>5 missing episodes without any enquiry as to why she was</p> <p>6 running away. She considers that she was never risk</p> <p>7 assessed so that she could be properly protected.</p> <p>8 Summary of transcript of "File on 4 - Groomed, abused and</p> <p>9 put in prison: Rochdale's untold story" (read)</p> <p>10 MS BENFIELD: Chair, finally, the inquiry has been provided</p> <p>11 with a transcript entitled "Groomed, abused and put in</p> <p>12 prison: Rochdale's untold story" by File on 4. That</p> <p>13 transcript is at CWJ000001. It was a programme</p> <p>14 broadcast on 14 July 2020. The transcript details</p> <p>15 a reporter's discussion with a woman referred to as</p> <p>16 "Daisy", to protect her identity.</p> <p>17 Daisy describes a happy childhood until, at age 12,</p> <p>18 she made friends with a girl whose mother took drugs and</p> <p>19 was involved in prostitution. Daisy explains that she</p> <p>20 then started to drink and would go missing. She was</p> <p>21 introduced to a group of men and would drink heavily</p> <p>22 with them in a flat. She explains that she first saw</p> <p>23 this as friendship, but when aged 13, the sexual abuse</p> <p>24 started.</p> <p>25 Men, 10 or 12 years older than her, told her that</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 19</p>	<p>1 they were her boyfriends and that they were in love.</p> <p>2 Daisy was too young to know better, but despite there</p> <p>3 being warning signs that she was at risk, no action was</p> <p>4 taken. From age 13, Daisy was well known to the police.</p> <p>5 She was arrested and charged on a number of occasions,</p> <p>6 often connected to the abuse that she was suffering.</p> <p>7 Daisy explains, "It was always like drunk and</p> <p>8 disorderly, assault, racial abuse. It was always when</p> <p>9 I was out with Asian men. Never once was anyone ever</p> <p>10 arrested, only me". Daisy told police officers that she</p> <p>11 was forced into sex and physically abused, but no action</p> <p>12 was taken against any perpetrator.</p> <p>13 At age 14, Daisy became pregnant and had an</p> <p>14 abortion. She describes being passed around for sex by</p> <p>15 anywhere between 100 and 150 men. At the same time, she</p> <p>16 became a regular at the Youth Offenders' Court in</p> <p>17 Rochdale. Her solicitor tried to explain the abuse that</p> <p>18 Daisy was suffering, but no investigation was conducted.</p> <p>19 Instead, Daisy was sentenced to four months in a Young</p> <p>20 Offenders' Institution at age 15.</p> <p>21 On her release, she describes that the cycle of</p> <p>22 abuse continued, as did her repeated arrest and reported</p> <p>23 lack of investigation.</p> <p>24 In 2008, Greater Manchester Police initiated</p> <p>25 Operation Span, the investigation that led to the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 20</p>

<p>1 Rochdale grooming trial. The investigation had a list 2 of well over two dozen girls, of which Daisy was one. 3 In 2011, Daisy was approached by officers investigating 4 the case, and she agreed to assist. She explains that 5 the officers were interested primarily in the abuse 6 suffered by another girl, and not in the abuse that she 7 herself had suffered. Daisy explains that the trial 8 commenced in 2012 and she attended as a witness. The 9 trial lasted for ten weeks and, on 8 May 2012, nine of 10 the 11 men were convicted of child sex offences. Daisy 11 reports that she was left feeling overwhelmed, 12 struggling to cope and on her own. Following the trial, 13 Daisy reported to the police that she had been 14 threatened and harassed and her home broken into, but 15 states that she was provided with no support. 16 Thank you, chair, that concludes the summaries of 17 the complainant evidence. I will pass back to Ms Hill. 18 MS HILL: Thank you. Simply to assist the CPs and for the 19 record, can I just indicate that the evidence of CS-A317 20 is to be found at INQ005278; for CS-A372 at INQ005943; 21 and for CS-A373 at INQ005838. 22 Opening statement of MS HILL (continued) 23 MS HILL: Chair, turning now to the issue of the scale of 24 child sexual exploitation by networks. Chair, you are 25 going to hear evidence from national-level witnesses</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 21</p>	<p>1 about the difficulties of accurately measuring this 2 problem. You are also going to hear from local 3 institutions about the scale of the problem in their 4 area, about how good their intelligence is, whether 5 there are any gaps in their intelligence, whether they 6 have accurate and up-to-date profiles of the problem. 7 What seems clear, chair, is that cases of child 8 sexual exploitation are under-reported and that the 9 numbers of children affected are much higher than 10 official records would report or suggest. We know from 11 research that the big picture is that many thousands of 12 children are sexually exploited each year. 13 You will hear evidence from national-level witnesses 14 about why the national figures may not be reliable and 15 the possible reasons for this. You will also hear that 16 recorded cases of child sexual exploitation by networks 17 are dropping in some areas. A recent Department of 18 Health report commented on the unreliability of counts 19 of CSE cases and reporting bias and says that CSE is 20 almost always likely to be unreported and there is 21 a need for public health input to address the issue. 22 Nationally, we do not know much about how child 23 sexual exploitation is carried out by perpetrators 24 associated with one another. In 2016, regional 25 organised crime units received funding to produce</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 22</p>
<p>1 regional CSE profiles and you will hear evidence from 2 HMICFRS and other witnesses about the current state of 3 CSE profiling and whether further improvements are 4 needed. 5 Perhaps there, chair, I can give you some statistics 6 that may assist you in getting a broad understanding of 7 this issue. In 2016, a report produced by 8 Sheffield University to assist professionals dealing 9 with CSE reviewed the research and government statistics 10 on Children in Need assessments, and concluded this: 11 "In total, therefore, a very rough estimate is that 12 CSE is a notable concern for close to 40,000 13 children/young people in England currently in contact 14 with children's social care." 15 The report went on to say that there is additionally 16 likely to be other children and young people who are not 17 known to children's social care for whom CSE is 18 a notable concern over and above this estimate. 19 Further research has indicated wide variations 20 between different local authorities, and we have 21 evidence from the ONS that in 2018 to 2019 there were 22 18,720 assessments carried out in England which 23 identified sexual exploitation as a factor contributing 24 to concerns around the child. This had reduced from 25 20,000 the previous year.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 23</p>	<p>1 Welsh Government guidance from March of this year 2 will require this data to be collected in Wales as well. 3 We know from criminal statistics, chair, that in 4 2018 and 2019, police recorded 1,012 offences of abuse 5 of children through sexual exploitation and 5,900 6 offences of sexual grooming, but this does not take into 7 account various other sexual offences, such as rape and 8 sexual assault, which can be committed as part of sexual 9 exploitation. 10 There is evidence before the inquiry, chair, that, 11 as at February of this year, there were over 90 police 12 investigations into group-based child sexual 13 exploitation in operation. 14 Chair, turning now to the harmful effects of sexual 15 exploitation of children. You will hear evidence this 16 week, chair, from many witnesses, including 17 complainants, about the harmful effects of sexual 18 exploitation on children and the devastating impact this 19 has on their young lives. We know from the evidence 20 that the effects last into adulthood and, for some 21 victims, into old age. 22 The inquiry's own Truth Project has amassed a body 23 of evidence from witness accounts which attest to the 24 harm children and adults suffer as a result of sexual 25 abuse and exploitation, and research has documented</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 24</p>

<p>1 a series of harms caused by the perpetrators of CSE, and 2 child abuse more generally, as including mental health 3 effects, being subject to sexual abuse, include anxiety, 4 conduct disorder, depression, eating disorders, low 5 self-esteem, post-traumatic stress disorder, self-harm 6 and suicide attempts. There are potential impacts on 7 future behaviour and development, including 8 age-inappropriate sexual activity, alcohol and drug 9 misuse, an inability to trust others and build 10 relationships and involvement in the sexual 11 victimisation of others. There are physical health 12 implications, including contracting sexually-transmitted 13 diseases, unplanned pregnancies and possible 14 terminations, physical injury and genital injury.</p> <p>15 It is also documented that there is a significant 16 link between exposure to sexual abuse as a child or 17 young person and the likelihood of experiencing 18 behavioural problems, poor physical health and poor 19 mental health as an adult.</p> <p>20 Not all children and young people subject to sexual 21 abuse will exhibit all of these issues. Some of 22 the effects may also take time to manifest themselves 23 after exposure to the abuse has ended. The severity of 24 the effects of CSE may be influenced by a range of 25 factors relating to the child or young person</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 25</p>	<p>1 themselves, to the nature of the abuse and the duration 2 and severity of it, and to the level of support they 3 receive. But, chair, I hope that gives you and the 4 panel a broad understanding of the nature, scale and 5 effects of child sexual exploitation of networks.</p> <p>6 Before the break, I would like to turn to a further 7 topic now, which is to try and draw out for you, chair 8 and panel, a little bit of the history, the legal and 9 historical context.</p> <p>10 I will try and just do that as briefly and concisely 11 as I can, but perhaps just to give you and the panel 12 some of the headlines that we have identified from some 13 of the history.</p> <p>14 The evidence suggests that before 2009, there was 15 recognition of what were then called child prostitutes, 16 and, chair, there is research and work that has been 17 done in the period before 2009 that gradually led to 18 a recognition of the vulnerability of the children that 19 were often involved in this. There was a recognition 20 that absconding was a link in particular for teenage 21 girls being absent from home, absconding and then 22 becoming involved in prostitution. This was reporting 23 on by Nottingham Social Services in 1991 and was the 24 focus of the Coalition for the Removal of Pimping, now 25 known as Parents Against Child Exploitation, which was</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 26</p>
<p>1 founded in Yorkshire in 1996.</p> <p>2 In 2000, the Department for Health issued 3 supplementary guidance to Working Together entitled 4 "Safeguarding children involved in prostitution". But 5 during this period, children involved in commercial 6 sexual exploitation could still be subject to 7 prosecution. In December 2000, the Home Office 8 announced funding under its crime reduction programme 9 for 11 multi-agency projects which aimed to reduce the 10 number of young people and women involved in 11 prostitution. This project was evaluated in 2004 and it 12 made recommendations around the greater involvement of 13 the police and the Crown Prosecution Service to address 14 the lack of prosecutions of men for abusing young people 15 and worked to encourage the early identification of 16 children at risk so as to allow preventative and 17 diversionary work to take place.</p> <p>18 The Sexual Offences Act of 2003 built on this work 19 by stipulating that a child under 13 is unable to 20 consent to sexual intercourse by redefining sexual 21 assault and making provision for Sexual Offences 22 Protection Orders, now Sexual Harm Prevention Orders, 23 and Sexual Harm Orders. Specific sexual exploitation 24 offences were included within the legislation, including 25 arranging or facilitating the commission of a child sex</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 27</p>	<p>1 offence, paying for the sexual service of a child, 2 causing or inciting the sexual exploitation of a child, 3 and others.</p> <p>4 There were various other reports in the early 2000s, 5 and one can see a growing recognition of 6 the vulnerability of these children.</p> <p>7 Between 2010 and 2016, there were a number of 8 high-profile prosecutions, criminal cases, involving 9 child sexual exploitation. These included the various 10 operations in Telford, in Rochdale, in Oldham, in Oxford 11 and in Peterborough.</p> <p>12 At the same time, there was a growing interest and 13 awareness of the issue that led to the publication of 14 a number of key reports. These included, 15 in August 2009, the Department for Children, Schools and 16 Families' statutory guidance entitled "Safeguarding 17 children and young people from sexual exploitation". 18 This guidance provided a definition of CSE for the first 19 time. Key guiding principles were set out for how 20 public bodies and other organisations should approach 21 the issue of CSE, by having a child-centred approach, 22 being proactive in tackling the problem and having an 23 integrated approach. There was significant work done by 24 Barnardo's in this field, and in 2011, the Department 25 for Education published "Tackling child sexual</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 28</p>

<p>1 exploitation: an action plan", which focused on events 2 and recognitions in the wake of two of the criminal 3 operations in particular. 4 An important part of the action plan was to educate 5 children and young people and their parents on the risks 6 of CSE and what to do to combat them. The report 7 considered the link between children going missing and 8 running away and CSE, about which you will hear more. 9 In June 2013, the Home Affairs Select Committee 10 issued a report: "Child sexual exploitation and the 11 response to localised grooming". There was significant 12 work done in this period as well by the Office of 13 the Children's Commissioner, who conducted an enquiry 14 into CSE in gangs and groups and, in 2013, work was done 15 by the Crown Prosecution Service to agree an approach 16 for prosecutors to take when tackling cases of child 17 sexual abuse. 18 In August 2014, chair, of course, you produced your 19 report on the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual 20 Exploitation in Rotherham, and in October 2014, 21 Ann Coffey MP, produced an independent report around 22 child sexual exploitation in Greater Manchester, in 23 particular looking to examine the work that had been 24 undertaken to disrupt and respond to CSE since the 25 events of Rochdale.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 29</p>	<p>1 Since 2016, chair, it's perhaps fair to say there's 2 been a renewed focus on redefining and tackling CSE. 3 You will hear that there has been further non-statutory 4 guidance issued in 2017 by the Department for Education, 5 entitled "Child sexual exploitation: Definition and 6 guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision 7 makers working to protect children from child sexual 8 exploitation". 9 In 2019, the Home Office produced its child 10 exploitation disruption toolkit. Work has been done on 11 this issue by Public Health England, and you will hear 12 in particular about the consideration of RHIs, or Return 13 Home Interviews, for missing children that have been 14 looked at with care by the Children's Society and the 15 NSPCC. 16 In December 2019, there was the publication of 17 part 1 of the Independent Assurance Review of 18 the effectiveness of multi-agency responses to child 19 sexual exploitation in Greater Manchester. This 20 examined the local agencies' response to the systemic 21 sexual exploitation of young girls in the Rochdale area 22 in 2004 to 2005, Operation Augusta. 23 In September last year, the Children's Commissioner 24 for England called for the use of unregulated 25 accommodation to be banned for all under 18s in care,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 30</p>
<p>1 and that is an issue about which you will hear more, 2 chair. 3 Very recently, in March of this year a triennial 4 review of Serious Case Reviews was published, which 5 noted that child sexual exploitation was a persistent 6 theme being noted in as many as 9 per cent of 7 the reports. The review concluded that, despite many 8 public documents related to the issue and previous 9 Serious Case Reviews, there is evidence that 10 practitioners were still slow to recognise 11 vulnerabilities to CSE and respond to risks, 12 particularly if the child was male. 13 Chair, I will deal briefly now with some of 14 the historical framework as far as Wales is concerned, 15 because provisions are slightly different. In 2005, 16 Barnardo's published a report "Out of sight, out of 17 mind", which noted that there was, at that stage, no 18 service provision for CSE in Wales. Building on that 19 report, Barnardo's conducted a pilot study into the use 20 of sexual exploitation risk assessment frameworks, which 21 you will hear more about in due course, chair, in 22 Newport. 23 There was work done to extend that trial into 24 different local authority areas, and there has been the 25 production of a consistent "all Wales" protocol. The</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 31</p>	<p>1 Welsh Government has provided guidance, and you will 2 hear that in 2011 the all Wales protocol for missing 3 children was produced. In November 2013, the all Wales 4 protocol on children at risk of abuse through sexual 5 exploitation was published. 6 You will hear about the work done on the national 7 action plan to tackle child sexual exploitation in 8 Wales. There is a national child sexual abuse and 9 exploitation prevention strategy for Wales, and there 10 has been research work done by Cardiff University very 11 recently on -- the title of the report is "Keeping safe: 12 an analysis of the outcomes of work with 13 sexually-exploited young people in Wales". 14 You will hear, in due course, chair, finally, that 15 in July 2019, the Welsh Government produced its national 16 action plan on preventing and responding to child sexual 17 abuse, and you will hear evidence about the Safeguarding 18 Children's Board arrangements that have now been made in 19 Wales. 20 Chair, before the break, I will turn now to the next 21 part of the opening observations, which I hope, chair, 22 will take you and the panel through each of the eight 23 themes in a little more detail. This will not conclude 24 before the break, but I will try now to address some of 25 the first few themes in our group of eight.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 32</p>

<p>1 By way of background, chair, the starting point for 2 the investigation, as I have indicated, was a review of 3 recommendations made by national reports, local SCRs, 4 reviews and enquiries, and this built on the work done 5 by the National Working Group in 2015. Those 6 recommendations assisted the inquiry in selecting its 7 themes. 8 The themes have been set out in the update note, but 9 I will now read them out. First, CSE problem profiling, 10 including gender and ethnicity and disruption of 11 offenders. Second, empathy and concern for child 12 victims. Third, risk assessment and protection from 13 harm. Fourth, missing children, Return Home Interviews 14 or RHIs, and looked-after children, including those 15 children who are looked after out of area. Fifth, male 16 victims. Sixth, children with a disability. Seventh, 17 partnership working on CSE. And eighth, audit, review 18 and performance improvement. 19 Turning first to the first theme, chair, that 20 includes two elements, both profiling and disruption. 21 Profiling looks at the extent to which local authorities 22 and police forces understand and have reliable 23 information about the nature and extent of CSE in their 24 area, including the gender and ethnicity of those at 25 risk.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 33</p>	<p>1 The issues which will it will help to explore are 2 along these lines: do police forces and local 3 authorities have comprehensive and up-to-date 4 information about local patterns of CSE in their area, 5 about the movements of individuals suspected of 6 involvement in CSE in their area, and about the national 7 level information about patterns and trends relating to 8 CSE by networks; is that information effective and 9 reliable? 10 At a national level, there appears to be recognition 11 that there is more work to be done in understanding the 12 scale and prevalence of CSE, and you may wish to 13 consider whether the same is true at a local level. 14 Chair, over the last decade, many successful CSE 15 prosecutions that have hit the headlines have involved 16 networks of associated males with the same ethnic 17 origin. The debate that has followed is often 18 polarised. The issue of race was covered in some detail 19 in the 2013 House of Commons Home Affairs Select 20 Committee report to which I have already referred. The 21 committee heard about the difficulties of raising 22 concerns about local patterns of child sexual 23 exploitation for fear of being labelled racist. Around 24 the same time, the Children's Commissioner highlighted 25 the under-reporting of sexual violence and exploitation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 34</p>
<p>1 of children within minority ethnic communities. 2 Your own report in Rotherham identified several 3 issues, not least an over-reliance on traditional 4 community leaders and lack of engagement with women's 5 groups and other voices in minority ethnic communities. 6 If heard, these would have alerted institutions to 7 concerns about CSE. 8 Very recently, this inquiry has heard evidence in 9 the CPIROS public hearing that is directly relevant to 10 these matters and, in May 2020, the inquiry published 11 a research report on child sexual abuse in ethnic 12 minority communities. This cited research which 13 suggested that unhelpful stereotypes, which assume that 14 CSE is perpetrated by Asian men against white girls, 15 have led some professionals to believe that children 16 from ethnic minorities are unlikely to be the victims of 17 CSE and that, on balance, a lack of awareness of 18 the risks to these children, and especially boys, has 19 led to failings. Additionally, the literature review 20 highlighted that there is a notable lack of research 21 available on the experience of boys and men from ethnic 22 minority communities in relation to child sexual abuse 23 and exploitation. 24 In this investigation, ethnicity is dealt with under 25 the theme of profiling. We will ask national and local</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 35</p>	<p>1 witnesses about the extent to which intelligence about 2 the ethnicity of victims and perpetrators is collected 3 and analysed. The profiles may suggest that the picture 4 is patchy. You may wish to consider whether profiling 5 does allow an evidence-based approach to be taken to 6 responding to these problems. 7 The second part of theme 1 is around disruption of 8 offenders, and this looks at the extent to which 9 institutions, particularly the police, are using 10 legislative and other tools to target and disrupt those 11 who pose a risk of child sexual exploitation to 12 children. This includes the use of early investigative 13 advice and the prosecution of suspected offenders. 14 The broad issue under this heading is, to what 15 extent is disruption of offenders based on the local 16 profile information and/or national level information 17 and, more generally, effective? Chair, you and the 18 panel may wish to consider whether there are significant 19 variations in standards around disruption and whether, 20 as some inspectorate evidence suggests, when a victim is 21 not willing to make a statement, some police forces are 22 not sufficiently proactive in looking at other means of 23 disruption. 24 Theme 2 is empathy and concern for child victims. 25 The issues under this theme are as follows: do child</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 36</p>

<p>1 victims and adults who were abused as children feel that 2 they have been treated with empathy and respect by the 3 local authorities and police and support services when 4 they disclose sexual exploitation? What action do these 5 authorities take to ensure that victims are treated with 6 empathy and respect? What action do they take to 7 prevent and/or respond to negative stereotyping of 8 victims? 9 Chair, you will hear evidence to suggest that, at 10 a national level, public authorities have taken steps to 11 ensure victims receive greater empathy and support. You 12 will hear about the adoption of victim-centred criminal 13 justice, the provision of special measures to protect 14 vulnerable witnesses in court, attempts to improve the 15 court environment more generally. There is 16 a recognition that there are specific issues around 17 access to support for ethnic minority groups, LGBTQI+ 18 victims, and some additional funding has been made 19 available under the Violence Against Women and Girls 20 Strategy, although this is not CSE specific. 21 Chair, you may also hear evidence that inspectorates 22 still find that cases are closed prematurely because 23 children have been reluctant to engage with 24 professionals, and you may see further evidence of 25 the continued use of inappropriate language around the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 37</p>	<p>1 victims and survivors of CSE. You will hear reference 2 to stereotyping and victim-blaming narratives. 3 Theme 3 is risk assessment and protection from harm, 4 and this will look at the ways in which institutions 5 assess and monitor the extent to which children are at 6 risk of CSE, whether by tools or otherwise. It will 7 also look at whether children are adequately protected 8 from harm and the outcomes for those children who are 9 subject to, or at risk of, sexual exploitation. The 10 issues that you may wish to consider are along these 11 lines: are risks to sexually-exploited children, 12 including those who are placed out of area in 13 cross-boundary placements, understood, documented and 14 managed effectively? Do local multi-agency meetings 15 take appropriate action to safeguard children from the 16 threat of sexual exploitation? 17 You may wish to consider whether template risk 18 assessments inhibit the use of professional judgment to 19 the detriment of the assessment overall. Research has 20 found a wide range of tools and check lists with 21 differences as to how those tools are completed, who 22 completes them, whether the tool is being used for 23 screening or assessment of risk, a potential conflation 24 of risk and actual harm, perhaps too much emphasis in 25 some on scoring, insufficient accommodation for</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 38</p>
<p>1 narrative information. You may hear evidence that it's 2 preferable to take narrative information as a precedence 3 over scoring, and you will hear about the changes that 4 have taken place within the Welsh Government's framework 5 around risk assessment. 6 Chair, that completes my summary of the first three 7 of our eight themes. I see the time, chair. It is just 8 before 11.30 am. Theme 4 has several different parts to 9 it, so it is perhaps an appropriate point to take 10 a break. 11 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Hill. We will return at 11.45 am. 12 (11.27 am) 13 (A short break) 14 (11.45 am) 15 MS HILL: Thank you, chair. Chair, for the next part of 16 the opening statement, I would like to continue by 17 summarising the remaining elements of the themes that 18 this investigation is looking at. Then I will turn to 19 some observations about each of the six geographical 20 areas, then talk a little bit about some of 21 the child-specific evidence that the inquiry has 22 obtained, and finally conclude with some logistical 23 matters. My hope, chair, if it will assist you, is that 24 I will complete the opening statement on behalf of 25 the inquiry before the lunchtime adjournment.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 39</p>	<p>1 Turning now, chair, if I may, to the fourth of 2 the themes that the inquiry has identified for this 3 investigation, that is a theme that embraces several 4 sub-issues. It includes these three elements: missing 5 children; Return Home Interviews; and looked-after 6 children. 7 Taking the first of those, chair, missing children. 8 The links between CSE and children going missing from 9 home have been increasingly recognised and the research 10 suggests that up to 70 per cent of sexually-exploited 11 children go missing from home. As a result, the main 12 issue we anticipate you will wish to consider under this 13 theme is, what is being done to prevent children from 14 going missing and to protect those children from the 15 threat of child sexual exploitation? 16 The evidence that you will hear will look at issues 17 such as the use of interventions, understanding the 18 number of children going missing, understanding whether 19 missing episodes are seen in isolation from the bigger 20 picture, and looking at the response once children, 21 particularly those at risk of sexual exploitation, do go 22 missing. 23 At a national level, the Department for Education is 24 currently in the process of reviewing its 2014 statutory 25 guidance on children who run away or go missing from</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 40</p>

<p>1 home. Two areas for improvement which have already 2 emerged are: reshaping the narrative to promote building 3 stronger, trusting relationships with children and young 4 people to empower them to disclose the causes of missing 5 episodes; and strengthening multi-partnership 6 arrangements so that placements for looked-after 7 children are appropriately assessed for suitability and 8 agencies work effectively together. You will hear more 9 about that, chair, on Day 9.</p> <p>10 The second subelement in theme 3 is that of Return 11 Home Interviews, sometimes referred to as debriefs in 12 Wales. This is a generic term used to refer to an 13 interview carried out with a child following their 14 return from a period of having gone missing from home. 15 It includes consideration of these two issues: are 16 Return Home Interviews carried out as and when they 17 should be; what use is made of the data from those 18 interviews?</p> <p>19 You and the panel, chair, may wish to consider 20 whether the data that is collected in those interviews 21 is acted on to protect the child from danger and prevent 22 the child going missing again; whether the data informs 23 CSE intelligence; whether it results in action by the 24 police and other local agencies, such as hotel and taxi 25 licensing, to disrupt perpetrators and protect other</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 41</p>	<p>1 children from home.</p> <p>2 As I have indicated, at present the Department for 3 Education's statutory guidance is under review. It 4 currently requires that all children who go missing be 5 given the opportunity of having a Return Home Interview 6 within 72 hours of being located. But you will hear 7 inspectorate evidence that some local authorities are 8 still not offering RHIs to enough children. You may 9 think that the evidence suggests significant variation 10 in the extent to which the contents of these interviews 11 are processed and shared and used for the disruption of 12 offenders and the better protection of children.</p> <p>13 Finally in theme 4, we look at the issue of 14 looked-after children. Children in care have been 15 described as some of the most vulnerable in society, due 16 to the experiences and situations that led to them being 17 looked after in the first place, and due to some factors 18 associated with being in care. This theme will look at 19 these issues: to what extent do looked-after children go 20 missing; how are children placed in foster care 21 placements and residential homes, whether privately or 22 local-authority run and whether regulated or not, 23 including in areas other than their home areas, how are 24 those children protected from sexual exploitation by 25 networks?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 42</p>
<p>1 The profile of children in care has changed 2 dramatically over the past five years, with a fifth aged 3 16 or over and two-fifths aged 10 to 15. Recent 4 research indicates, chair, that, compared to younger 5 children, teenagers in care are six times more likely to 6 be victims of child sexual exploitation, seven times 7 more likely to go missing from home and 12 times more 8 likely to be victims of trafficking.</p> <p>9 Many witnesses have raised issues about the CSE 10 threats to looked-after adolescents, including supported 11 accommodation being targeted by perpetrators, the 12 dangers when children are placed in unsuitable locations 13 in hostels and bed and breakfast accommodation, and the 14 variability of support provided to care leavers. Some 15 of the complainants who will give evidence to the 16 inquiry describe adverse experiences in this regard.</p> <p>17 A related issue, chair, is that the inquiry has 18 received a considerable amount of evidence in relation 19 to the use of unregulated placements for children. The 20 DfE reports that, as of March 2019, 8 per cent of 21 looked-after children were placed in such accommodation. 22 It suggests that unregulated placements can be 23 appropriate for older children, a view which is 24 supported by the Association of Directors of Children's 25 Services. However, the DfE suggests that it will not be</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 43</p>	<p>1 appropriate for children under 16 and vulnerable 2 children.</p> <p>3 There is evidence that in March 2019, over 100 4 under 16s were placed in such accommodation, and that it 5 is disproportionately used for minority ethnic children 6 and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. This month, 7 the Children's Commissioner for England has called for 8 the use of unregulated accommodation to be banned for 9 all under 18s in care.</p> <p>10 Chair, the inquiry has also received evidence in 11 this topic about the use of out-of-area placements. 12 There is evidence that between 2018 and 2019 the 13 proportion of children placed out of area rose from 14 37 per cent to 41 per cent, with 20 per cent of children 15 living in distant placements. Two-thirds of children 16 living in children's homes now live out of area, that's 17 64 per cent, up from 46 per cent in 2012. There are 18 questions about the extent to which placing authorities 19 do thorough risk assessments of out-of-area placements 20 or notify and consult with the local authority, police 21 force and health agencies when a child is being placed 22 out of area.</p> <p>23 The Association of Directors of Children's Services 24 has provided evidence to the inquiry that the use of 25 such placements is largely unavoidable as a consequence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 44</p>

<p>1 of insufficient provision overall and a concentration of 2 residential homes in the north of England. Chair, those 3 are all the issues and themes that we hope you will 4 consider or find helpful when looking at theme 4. 5 The fifth theme for this investigation is that of 6 male victims. Male victims appear to be 7 underrepresented in statistics on child sexual 8 exploitation due, it seems, to a combination of 9 under-reporting and professionals failing to recognise 10 the signs of exploitation in boys and young men. 11 Despite frequently only accounting for around 12 10 per cent of CSE referrals, research from Barnardo's 13 in 2014 suggested that almost a third of victims are 14 males. 15 You might find it helpful, chair, under this theme, 16 to consider these issues: what is the threat of sexual 17 exploitation by networks to boys and young men? What 18 are the barriers to the identification of males as 19 victims and the disruption of perpetrators of sexual 20 exploitation in respect of boys and young men? What is 21 being done to safeguard boys and young men who are at 22 risk of sexual exploitation by networks? Is there any 23 regional variation in identifying and protecting male 24 victims of sexual exploitation by networks? 25 You may hear evidence, chair, about research</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 45</p>	<p>1 suggesting that there are different routes into 2 exploitative relationships for young men and they may 3 respond differently to the experiences of exploitation. 4 Studies emphasise the importance of understanding the 5 role of masculinity and sexual identity in supporting 6 boys and young men who have been sexually exploited. 7 Gender appears relevant in understanding risk and 8 vulnerability impacting on behaviour and ability to 9 disclose. There is some evidence that boys are more 10 likely to come to child exploitation services via the 11 criminal justice system. 12 The sixth theme, chair, is children with 13 disabilities. Those children are disproportionately at 14 risk of being victims or at risk of sexual exploitation. 15 Evidence suggests they are three times more likely to be 16 abused than children without a disability. Within this 17 group, children with behaviour or conduct disorders are 18 particularly vulnerable. Evidence given to the inquiry 19 by the NWG Network, about which you will hear more 20 tomorrow in person, suggests that children with ADHD and 21 other autistic spectrum disorders may have increased 22 vulnerability, and research suggests that the abuse of 23 young people with disabilities has been largely 24 invisible for much of history and that disabled young 25 people in residential care are particularly at risk of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 46</p>
<p>1 all types of abuse. 2 The impact of sexual exploitation on, and the 3 vulnerability of, children with disabilities has been 4 covered by several reports which you will be taken to in 5 due course, including reports from Barnardo's in 2016, 6 the National Working Group in 2016 and the CSAE 7 Prevention Programme toolkit from 2018. That latter 8 project looked in particular at working with deaf and 9 physically disabled children in relation to CSE issues. 10 So you may wish to consider under this theme: what 11 is the threat of sexual exploitation by networks to 12 children with learning and other disabilities? Again, 13 what are the barriers to identifying those children as 14 victims and to the disruption of the perpetrators? What 15 is being done to safeguard disabled children who are at 16 risk of sexual exploitation by networks? Again, is 17 there regional variation in identifying those children? 18 The final two themes, chair, are theme 7, 19 partnership working, and theme 8, audit, review and 20 performance improvement. Under partnership working, you 21 and the panel may wish to consider how well partnerships 22 share information in relation to child victims and 23 perpetrators; does effective partnership working prevent 24 victimisation and support children? 25 You will hear evidence from several police forces</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 47</p>	<p>1 and local authorities and other agencies about how they 2 work together. Chair, of course, at a national level, 3 the Children and Social Work Act 2017 imposes a duty on 4 three safeguarding partners -- the local authorities, 5 police and CCGs -- to work together with relevant 6 agencies for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting 7 the welfare of children in the area. 8 In this vein, the Home Office is working with the 9 NHS to roll out a national child protection information 10 sharing system, and you will hear evidence about joint 11 inspections carried out by the inspectorates. 12 Under theme 8, finally, chair, audit, review and 13 performance improvement, you will no doubt be looking at 14 issues around how institutions audit and review their 15 own practice, and how they respond to external 16 inspections and audits. The issues that you may wish to 17 consider are: to what extent has audit activity driven 18 improvements in professional practice? Is there, in 19 fact, regional variation between different areas or 20 other forms of variation as to the level of attention 21 given to auditing practice? 22 There is evidence that the degree of scrutiny of CSE 23 work has increased significantly over the years, and you 24 will hear evidence about HMICFRS's rolling national 25 child protection inspection programme and about Ofsted's</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 48</p>

<p>1 joint targeted area inspections on the theme of CSE, and 2 you will hear evidence directly from the inspectorates 3 on Day 9. 4 Chair, that concludes my summary, for opening 5 purposes, of the themes. So I will turn now, please, to 6 deal with the six areas that form the structure of this 7 investigation. Chair, there are 178 local authority 8 areas in England and Wales and 43 police force areas. 9 Plainly, it would not have been possible for the inquiry 10 to consider the issue of sexual exploitation by 11 organised networks across that range of areas and 12 forces. 13 The inquiry, therefore, considered publicly 14 available data and chose a sample of local authority 15 areas. Questionnaires were sent and material was 16 gathered from those areas. 17 Having considered that material, the inquiry decided 18 to focus on six particular areas in order to provide 19 a range of features, including size, demography, 20 geography and social characteristics, as well as being 21 likely to illustrate contrasting practice and 22 performance on those themes. 23 The chosen areas, as you are aware, are: one, 24 Durham; two, Swansea; three, Warwickshire; four, 25 St Helens; five, Tower Hamlets; and, six, Bristol.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 49</p>	<p>1 The inquiry carefully considered the extent to 2 which, if at all, it should focus on areas such as 3 Rochdale, Rotherham and Oxford, all of which have 4 attracted public attention because of high-profile 5 prosecutions and other reviews. But the inquiry 6 considered that it was more appropriate to focus on 7 different areas, not least because it was intended that 8 this was a forward-looking investigation building on 9 analysis that's already been done, but also because it 10 seemed clear that the sexual exploitation of children by 11 networks is not a rare problem faced by a small number 12 of areas with high-profile criminal cases. 13 The March 2019 update note made clear that, while 14 the inquiry is likely to obtain evidence from a range of 15 institutions, a significant focus of the investigation 16 would be on the role of the police and local authorities 17 in those geographical areas. 18 I will now give a brief summary in relation to each 19 of those areas, chair, if I may. First of all, Durham. 20 Durham has a population of around 530,000 people. As 21 at March 2019, there were 840 looked-after children in 22 Durham, a rate of 83 per 10,000 children, considerably 23 higher than the national figure of 65 per 10,000. 24 County Durham is ranked as the 38th most deprived local 25 authority in England.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 50</p>
<p>1 Durham Constabulary polices the area of 2 County Durham and Darlington and, since 2016, they have 3 led a multi-agency group called ERASE -- Educate and 4 Raise Awareness of Sexual Exploitation. 5 There is no clear picture of the scale of child 6 sexual exploitation in Durham. In 2018-19, 7 Durham Constabulary recorded 14 allegations of children 8 abused through sexual exploitation and 112 allegations 9 of sexual grooming. This likely does not capture 10 anything close to the full scale, as there are 11 a considerable number of other sexual offences, as 12 I have already indicated, such as rape and sexual 13 assault, which are not CSE-specific offences. 14 Looking at the issue of scale in another way, we 15 know from DfE statistics that, in 2018 to 2019, there 16 were 133 assessments carried out by Durham Council which 17 identified sexual exploitation as a factor contributing 18 to concerns about the child. 19 You will hear evidence about the profile in Durham. 20 We have no evidence of the number of convictions for 21 child sexual exploitation in recent years, but the 22 Durham child exploitation vulnerability tracker lists 23 35 children as being at risk of exploitation. 24 From April 2019 to March 2020, the council report 25 that there were 106 new cases where a child was</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 51</p>	<p>1 considered to be at risk or a victim of sexual 2 exploitation. You will hear more evidence, chair, about 3 what I have just touched upon, the child exploitation 4 vulnerability tracker, in Durham, you will hear about 5 the use of the Philomena Protocol for missing and 6 looked-after children and the approach to Return Home 7 Interviews. 8 Swansea. The City and County of Swansea has 9 a population of around 247,000, the second highest in 10 Wales. In March 2019, there were 565 looked-after 11 children in Swansea, 117 per 10,000 children, so 12 slightly above -- Swansea is also slightly above average 13 levels of deprivation in Wales. 14 South Wales Police polices the City and County of 15 Swansea and police evidence is that, in 2018 to 2019, 16 there were four incidents of child sexual exploitation 17 reported in Swansea. 18 In the calendar year of 2019, there were 19 74 incidents of CSE reported in Swansea. The reason for 20 this steep increase is unclear, although it may be due 21 to a different approach to recording incidents. 22 As at March 2019, there were 15 children considered 23 to be at risk of, or subject to, sexual exploitation, 24 a figure which rose to 17 in 2019 and decreased to 7 or 25 8 in November 2019. Figures for children's assessments</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 52</p>

<p>1 where sexual exploitation has been identified as 2 a factor are not yet collected in Wales, although they 3 will be going forward. 4 In relation to Swansea, some of the issues that you 5 may wish to consider are the extent to which problem 6 profiling is used to understand the scale of CSEN in the 7 area, the development of a contextualised safeguarding 8 approach, about which you will hear more from two 9 academic witnesses tomorrow, the extent to which Return 10 Home Interviews are carried out and passed on to the 11 local authority, the approach to out-of-area children 12 placed in Swansea, the extent of auditing practice, 13 support given to care leavers and the extent to which 14 disability is taken into account. 15 Warwickshire. The County of Warwickshire has 16 a population of around 570,000 people. Over 120,000 17 children live in the Warwickshire County. From 2013 18 to April 2020, Warwickshire Police operated in an 19 alliance with West Mercia Police before transitioning to 20 single-force structures. 21 A few statistics, if I may, in relation to 22 Warwickshire. As at March 2019, there were 111 23 looked-after children who were either victims of CSE or 24 at risk of sexual exploitation. DfE statistics suggest 25 that in 2018 to 2019 there were 173 assessments carried</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 53</p>	<p>1 out by Warwickshire Council which identified child 2 sexual exploitation as a factor contributing to concerns 3 about the child. 58 per cent of all CSE assessments 4 conducted during the year identified vulnerability to 5 CSE as the outcome. Between April 2019 and March 2020, 6 Warwickshire Police recorded 245 CSE crimes. 7 Between April 2019 and March 2020, 49 Warwickshire 8 children were placed out of county where a CSE concern 9 was noted at some stage in their contact with the 10 council. 11 Finally, in terms of policing evidence, we 12 understand that as at March 2019, there were three 13 ongoing CSE operations, namely, Operation Jive, 14 Operation Voltage and an emerging case in the Rugby 15 area. 16 Some of the issues that you may wish to consider in 17 relation to Warwickshire include the use of disruption 18 techniques and CSE analysis to inform disruption, the 19 conduct of risk assessments of children at risk of CSE, 20 the placement of looked-after children, including those 21 placed in Warwickshire by other local authorities and 22 the effectiveness of partnership working. 23 St Helens. It has a population of over 180,000 24 residents, of which 32,200 are children between the ages 25 of 0 to 15. St Helens is the 26th most deprived of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 54</p>
<p>1 the 317 local authorities across England and the eighth 2 most deprived in terms of health deprivation and 3 disability. 4 There are over 480 children currently in care in 5 St Helens, significantly above the national average. In 6 2018 to 2019, 287 children and young people in care were 7 placed outside of St Helens' geographical area. 8 In December 2019, four children looked after by 9 St Helens were placed out of borough who had been 10 assessed as at risk of CSE, including two assessed as 11 being at high risk. 12 Merseyside Police is responsible for policing in the 13 areas of the Wirral, St Helens, Sefton, Knowsley and 14 Liverpool. Catch22 is commissioned in St Helens to 15 provide a missing from home service and you will hear 16 directly from a witness in relation to Catch22 services. 17 From 1 May 2019, child sexual exploitation is within the 18 remit of the Children at Risk of Exploitation, or CARE, 19 group. 20 As to the scale of CSE in St Helens, the council has 21 provided evidence which confirm that there are currently 22 63 children open to the MACE process, including 20 girls 23 and three boys. Of those, 20 are looked after by 24 St Helens council. There are an additional 42 young 25 people reported as living within St Helens, placed by</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 55</p>	<p>1 another authority, who have been identified as 2 vulnerable to exploitation. 3 DfE statistics show that in 2018 to 2019, there were 4 59 assessments carried out by St Helens Council which 5 identified sexual exploitation as a factor contributing 6 to concerns about the child. 7 In December 2019, the local authority was not aware 8 of any live investigations into child sexual 9 exploitation by organised networks. The police indicate 10 that there were three live investigations in the 11 Merseyside area. 12 The police indicate that, between 2017 and 2019, 13 there were 342 criminal offences amounting to child 14 sexual exploitation. But the force does not hold 15 conviction data of those involved in abuse by organised 16 networks. 17 You may wish to consider, in relation to St Helens, 18 the effectiveness of risk assessments, the scale of 19 children going missing from home or care, including 20 children placed outside of St Helens, the suitability of 21 placements for children at risk of CSE, the collection 22 of data on CSE that informs both the profiling and the 23 disruption in the area. 24 Tower Hamlets. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets 25 has a population of over 300,000 and is the tenth most</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 56</p>

<p>1 populous of the 32 London Boroughs. In 2018, it was the 2 fastest-growing local authority in the UK in terms of 3 population and the second most densely populated local 4 authority in the UK. The population is ethnically 5 diverse, with 55 per cent of the population made up of 6 BME groups. Tower Hamlets is one of the most socially 7 deprived boroughs in the UK, with 57 per cent of 8 children living in poverty.</p> <p>9 The Metropolitan Police Service is responsible for 10 policing all 32 London boroughs, excluding the 11 City of London. The Central East Basic Command Unit 12 territorially covers the London Boroughs of 13 Tower Hamlets and Hackney, and this affects police 14 analysis which on occasion aggregates Tower Hamlets and 15 Hackney. The Children's Society is contracted to 16 undertake Return Home Interviews for children who go 17 missing within Tower Hamlets.</p> <p>18 In response to the critical Ofsted inspection in 19 2017, Tower Hamlets launched their child exploitation 20 team in March 2018 as part of an improvement strategy. 21 It is a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary team combining 22 staff from the police force and children's social care 23 to provide support and guidance and training to social 24 workers and other professionals and has included an 25 analyst since December 2019.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 57</p>	<p>1 A few statistics, if I may, on Tower Hamlets. In 2 2018 to 2019, 296 risk assessments found CSE concerns 3 substantiated. There were 374 CSE episodes that led to 4 the convening of a CSE child protection strategy meeting 5 in the period.</p> <p>6 In 2018 to 2019, there were 69 children looked after 7 by Tower Hamlets who were assessed as at risk of CSE, 8 comprising 61 girls and 8 boys.</p> <p>9 There is evidence that, in that timeframe, 294 10 Tower Hamlets children went missing, including those 11 placed out of Borough, of which 35 per cent identified 12 as Bangladeshi. There were a total of 1,319 missing 13 episodes.</p> <p>14 In March 2020, the council reported 161 children 15 were in the care of the local authority, where there 16 were substantiated concerns of exploitation, both 17 criminal and sexual, and of those children, 31 were 18 placed in Tower Hamlets and 130 were placed out of 19 borough. The evidence provided to the inquiry from the 20 police indicates that, as at June 2019, there were two 21 named operations that were linked to open CSE cases but 22 no live investigations in relation to organised 23 networks.</p> <p>24 You may wish to consider, in relation to 25 Tower Hamlets, the conduct of risk assessments, the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 58</p>
<p>1 number of children placed outside of borough, and the 2 proportion of children going missing, as well as the 3 effectiveness of profiling and intelligence and how that 4 informs disruption strategies.</p> <p>5 The final area for consideration, chair, is Bristol. 6 The City of Bristol has a population of 463,000 and is 7 the largest city in the south west. 69 per cent [sic] 8 of the population identify as black or from a minority 9 ethnic group. As at March 2019, there were 617 10 looked-after children in Bristol, a rate of 68 per 11 10,000 children. Bristol is the 82nd most deprived 12 local authority in England.</p> <p>13 Avon and Somerset Constabulary polices the area and 14 we have been provided with evidence from the 15 Police Foundation that 52 per cent of the 371 alleged 16 and convicted perpetrators of CSE who had been flagged 17 in data from 2013 to 2014 were linked to a network. The 18 briefing found that there were 43 groups in total with 19 an average of five perpetrators in each, but only six of 20 those 43 groups had been formally recognised and mapped 21 by the police force, four of which had been the target 22 of large-scale police operations in Bristol.</p> <p>23 Chair, you will hear evidence that, following 24 a Serious Case Review into a CSE case in Bristol, 25 Avon and Somerset Police piloted Operation Topaz in</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 59</p>	<p>1 2016. This is a specialist team focused on the 2 disruption of perpetrators of CSE which has since been 3 embedded as a core part of the force's approach to CSE.</p> <p>4 You will also hear evidence, chair, about predictive 5 analytics carried out in this area and there is evidence 6 that, in June 2020, predictive analytics identified over 7 1,000 children in Avon and Somerset as being at risk of 8 sexual exploitation based on risk factors, of which 479 9 children were identified as actually being at specific 10 risk of sexual exploitation. However, the police 11 recorded only 276 reported offences during this period, 12 and, therefore, noted that there was likely 13 a considerable number which were not reported.</p> <p>14 By January 2020, there were 444 children across 15 Avon and Somerset considered to be at heightened risk of 16 child sexual exploitation and, of that figure, 181 were 17 flagged to Operation Topaz as being at risk of CSE, 132 18 of whom were in Bristol. In 2019 to 2020, 65 child 19 sexual exploitation offences were reported by police in 20 Bristol. We have been provided with evidence about 21 arrests and to the effect that, since March 2017, there 22 has been one prosecution of four individuals for child 23 sexual exploitation by an organised network, and there 24 are three live investigations.</p> <p>25 Chair, you may wish to consider the use of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 60</p>

<p>1 predictive analytics or algorithms in identifying 2 children at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and 3 potential perpetrators, the focus on disruption, the use 4 of engagement officers for those at risk, practice in 5 relation to Bristol looked-after children placed out of 6 area and the extent of auditing of practice. You will 7 hear in detail about Operation Topaz.</p> <p>8 Chair, moving now to a different topic, which is 9 that, in addition to the eight themes and the six 10 geographical areas, the inquiry has selected, as 11 I indicated in opening, a series of particular cases of 12 children in each of those areas because the inquiry's 13 view was that child-specific evidence of this nature 14 would be of assistance in understanding how the various 15 themes are operating in practice or on the ground.</p> <p>16 The inquiry dip sampled a selection of children's 17 cases across the six areas and chose a small number of 18 cases in each area on which to focus more closely, and 19 very detailed evidence was provided by the police forces 20 and local authorities about these children. I have 21 already indicated at the preliminary hearing, chair, 22 that the cases of the children were chosen with these 23 criteria in mind: there was evidence that the child had 24 been sexually exploited by a network within the 25 inquiry's definition; the case was recent because of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 61</p>	<p>1 sexual exploitation concerns raised by 2018 and onwards; 2 it was considered that the case would illustrate one or 3 more of the themes selected by this investigation. The 4 inquiry has also aimed to ensure that at least one male 5 child was included in the sample of cases for each area.</p> <p>6 Chair, it is hoped that by looking at some of those 7 cases in the context of the wider themes, you and the 8 panel will gain an insight into the threats and dangers 9 these children have faced and how the relevant agencies 10 have responded to them.</p> <p>11 Housekeeping</p> <p>12 MS HILL: Turning now, chair, to some matters of 13 housekeeping and timetabling. As far as the evidence is 14 concerned, chair, tomorrow, as I have indicated, you 15 will hear from two individual complainants, from CS-A12 16 and CS-A371. You will also hear from Dr Helen Beckett 17 and Dr Sophie Hallett, both academics working on the 18 child sexual exploitation issues, and also from 19 Sheila Taylor MBE of the National Working Group.</p> <p>20 There will then follow, chair, six days. Broadly, 21 each day is given over to one of the areas under 22 consideration. For each of those areas, you will hear 23 in detail from the local authority and the police force. 24 In some of those areas, you will also hear from another 25 agency, such as Catch22 or Barnardo's, and in one of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 62</p>
<p>1 those areas, Durham, you will hear from the relevant 2 Safeguarding Children's Partnership.</p> <p>3 Finally, on Day 9, and hence our slightly earlier 4 start time, chair, for which we are grateful, you will 5 hear some more national-level evidence. So on that day 6 you will hear from representatives of the Home Office 7 and the Department for Education and the Welsh 8 Government concurrently. You will then hear evidence 9 from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and HMICFRS, 10 again concurrently. You will then hear also from the 11 Crown Prosecution Service.</p> <p>12 In addition to all those in-person witnesses, at the 13 end of the hearings we will provide a list of further 14 evidence from witnesses that we have not been able to 15 call in person, but whose evidence you may wish to take 16 into account.</p> <p>17 We will also provide lists of evidence for those 18 witnesses who have been called who have provided 19 documents that have not been referred to in their 20 evidence that you may nevertheless wish to consider in 21 due course.</p> <p>22 We have been providing throughout the investigation 23 lists of reports, and we will provide an updated version 24 of that at the end of the hearing.</p> <p>25 But generally, chair, we are hoping that the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 63</p>	<p>1 evidence will be as up to date and as practical and as 2 forward looking as possible. Our hope is that you will 3 receive a broad but robust evidential platform for your 4 important task of making, as appropriate, effective 5 forward-looking recommendations for change.</p> <p>6 Finally, chair, a few matters of logistics. Of 7 course, chair, as is usual, the very large amount of 8 material obtained in this investigation has been 9 redacted and ciphers applied, where the inquiry 10 considers it appropriate, in accordance with the 11 inquiry's protocol and the redaction of documents. You 12 have already indicated, chair, that there are 13 restriction orders in place that protect the identities, 14 names, addresses and images of any complainant core 15 participants, and also the identities of any individual 16 whose identity has been redacted or ciphered by the 17 inquiry, and any information redacted as sensitive or 18 irrelevant.</p> <p>19 You have ruled that these hearings will be held 20 virtually and you have already reminded everybody that, 21 because of the particular technology, it is not possible 22 to have the usual three-minute delay. Therefore, in 23 order to reduce the risk of a breach of any restriction 24 order, those anonymous witnesses who give evidence 25 tomorrow and later in the week will not have their</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 64</p>

<p>1 evidence live streamed. As you have already indicated, 2 a transcript of their evidence and, if appropriate, an 3 audio file will be uploaded to the inquiry's website 4 when they have completed their evidence. 5 Chair, we do ask all core participants whose 6 witnesses are giving evidence to remind witnesses of 7 the meaning and effect of any restriction order. The 8 inquiry's legal team will also do that before witnesses 9 give evidence. And of the need to refer to ciphers for 10 those covered by them. 11 We do ask for the assistance of all concerned in 12 respecting the processes in place and we ask all 13 concerned to draw our attention promptly to any issues 14 that have arisen in respect of the breach of restriction 15 order. It is particularly important given the virtual 16 nature of this hearing. 17 Chair, a reminder, of course, that if there is an 18 issue with a breach of a restriction order drawn to our 19 attention, I will invite you immediately to terminate 20 the live stream so that the matter can be resolved. 21 Core participants have been given advice about how to 22 raise matters with us during this remote hearing and, if 23 there are any issues at all, we ask that those be 24 directed to the solicitors to the investigation so that 25 all core participants know how to flag any concerns, and</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 65</p>	<p>1 if there is an apparent breach of the restriction order, 2 as you are familiar, chair, I will say the following: 3 "An issue has arisen as a result of which I invite 4 you to terminate the live stream link." 5 I will invite you at that point, chair, to make an 6 immediate further restriction order over the evidence 7 incorrectly given. We will then take a short break 8 while the issue is explained to the witness. 9 Chair, I simply repeat those matters for those core 10 participants who have not yet participated in a virtual 11 hearing and because there is a particular need to 12 protect identities, especially where we have, in this 13 case, quite a lot of children's cases that are being 14 looked at. 15 So, chair, those are all the matters I wish to raise 16 in opening. That concludes what I wish to say. You 17 will be aware, chair, there is a list of core 18 participants who wish to address you in opening. It is 19 a matter for you, of course, chair, but you may wish to 20 take an earlier lunch and resume, perhaps, at 1.30 pm. 21 I have taken slightly less time in opening than 22 I anticipated, so I think the core participants were all 23 expecting to address you this afternoon. 24 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Ms Hill. We will take an 25 early break and return at 1.30 pm. Thank you.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 66</p>
<p>1 (12.22 pm) 2 (The short adjournment) 3 (1.30 pm) 4 THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, everyone. We will now hear from 5 core participants who wish to make an opening statement. 6 We begin with Ms Harrison. 7 Opening statement by MS HARRISON 8 MS HARRISON: Chair and panel, in this investigation, myself 9 and Mr Scorer represent CS-A2. CS-A2 is the mother of 10 CS-A1, who has been a victim of CSE in Warwickshire. 11 Our client has given a detailed statement to the inquiry 12 regarding her daughter's sexual exploitation. In this 13 opening statement, I want to set out for you the key 14 ways in which our client believes the system let her 15 daughter down, as well as highlighting some good 16 practice, and to offer advice from a parent's 17 perspective about what should be changed in the future 18 to make things better for sexually-exploited children 19 like CS-A1. 20 I want to stress that the matters I am describing 21 are recent; not issues from 10 or 15 years ago, but from 22 the last three or four years. I start with 23 Social Services. The issues here included inadequate 24 early risk assessments. CS-A2 says that Social Services 25 identified her daughter as being at high risk of CSE far</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 67</p>	<p>1 too late in the day, and once she was already a CSE 2 victim, to make the work that they tried to do with her 3 effective. By September 2016, CS-A2 was voicing real 4 concerns that her daughter was at high risk of CSE, and 5 yet the risk of CSE was not considered formally by 6 Social Services until nine months later, in May 2017. 7 This delay had catastrophic consequences for CS-A1. 8 Had the local authority recognised the risk of CSE at an 9 earlier stage, then their intervention work would have 10 been more effective. CS-A1 would have been more likely 11 to engage in it and could have avoided some of 12 the serious abuse that she went on to suffer. 13 In his written evidence regarding CS-A1, Nigel Minns 14 for Warwickshire County Council acknowledges that the 15 initial risk assessment relating to child sexual 16 exploitation was wrong. He says, and I quote: 17 "This was the wrong decision and there was a lack of 18 management, oversight and challenge regarding this 19 decision. There should have been a multi-agency meeting 20 rather than the social worker completing this in 21 isolation." 22 He goes on to say that, in hindsight, the focus of 23 the significant intervention in relation to CS-A1 24 focused on her [REDACTED], rather than upon the 25 behaviour and risks presented.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 68</p>

<p>1 The second issue I highlight is the instability and 2 chaos caused to CS-A1 by the number of changes of staff. 3 CS-A1 has had eight social workers in four years, 4 several CSE workers, which Nigel Minns also acknowledges 5 in his evidence, and 14 placements since May 2016. Some 6 of these placements have also been completely unsuitable 7 to meet her complex needs. On one occasion, due to 8 a lack of placement, she was forced to sleep in the 9 office of Social Services for a night with a social 10 worker. All of this instability increased both CS-A1's 11 emotional distress and her vulnerability to CSE. 12 In some of these unsuitable placements, her daughter 13 was placed with foster carers who simply did not 14 understand CS-A1's complex needs and risk of child 15 sexual exploitation. One of the placements was in the 16 very geographical location where she was being exploited 17 and Social Services placed her there against the very 18 strong wishes of her parents. 19 During this placement, which lasted 84 days, CS-A1 20 went missing 48 times. At this point, both the local 21 authority and the police strongly suspected for a large 22 part of that time that she was staying with an adult 23 male, CS-F119, who was already known to Social Services. 24 Things eventually got so bad with this placement that 25 the police had to put her in police protection. This</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 69</p>	<p>1 was the wrong placement for CS-A1 and Social Services 2 did not act upon her parents' concerns. 3 On this we echo and quote the view of 4 Dr Helen Beckett, that there were particular challenges 5 of responding to nonfamilial sexual exploitation of 6 adolescents that is often the case in organised network 7 CSE within a child protection system that is constructed 8 around responding to familial harm against younger 9 children. As she says, we need to develop effective, 10 nonjudgmental ways of working with non-abusing parents 11 and carers when the source of harm is outside of 12 the family environment. 13 Most of the time, the local authority worked well 14 with CS-A2 and her husband, but there were times when 15 CS-A2 felt that she and her husband were being portrayed 16 in a negative light for no apparent purpose and CS-A2 17 deemed this was counterproductive to keeping CS-A1 safe. 18 We ask Social Services to reflect on this. 19 CS-A2 also wants to acknowledge the positive things 20 that the local authority have done for CS-A1. CS-A1 has 21 had some good, constructive social workers who have made 22 a positive impact. Her residential placement, which she 23 was eventually placed in after a series of disastrous 24 foster placements, was positive and reduced the number 25 of absconding incidents. It also re-introduced</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 70</p>
<p>1 structure and boundaries into CS-A1's life. 2 [REDACTED] has also been very good for CS-A1 and she 3 had been able to achieve a number of qualifications, 4 something that never seemed possible at one time. 5 Turning to Warwickshire Police and their actions, 6 despite efforts by the police, there is clear evidence 7 of her daughter being exploited by multiple perpetrators 8 on many occasions. The attempted disruption tactics did 9 not work and no charges were made. This left CS-A1 10 unsafe and continuing to be sexually exploited over 11 several years. 12 As Peter Hill's second witness statement confirms, 13 CS-A1 has been recorded missing by both Warwickshire and 14 West Midlands 165 times since 2015. During her worst 15 period of sexual exploitation, when she had just turned 16 14, CS-A2 was told by Deborah Young of 17 Warwickshire Police that they believed CS-A1 was staying 18 at an undesirable address, which was the address of 19 CS-F119, and a third party also confirmed this address. 20 Despite this, the exploitation of CS-A1 continued 21 from CS-F119 over an extended period until a 999 call 22 was made by CS-A2 and CS-F119 was arrested. 23 We note from Peter Hill's statement of 24 8 September 2020 that, and I quote: 25 "There was a lack of knowledge by officers regarding</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 71</p>	<p>1 CAWN notices and that they were issuing them in 2017 2 without a protocol having been developed until 2018." 3 CS-A2 recalls being given conflicting advice by 4 different police officers on the issuing of CAWNs, their 5 use and their enforceability. In addition, CS-A2's 6 perception is that the police were focusing too much on 7 perpetrators, where charges could be made, rather than 8 being proactive in protecting CS-A1 from CSE and harm. 9 Our client also noticed poor intercounty 10 communication between police forces at critical times 11 when CS-A1 was reported missing and it seemed that the 12 police had antiquated systems, which meant that 13 sometimes they were unable to locate important 14 information quickly. 15 I now move on to partnership working between the 16 local authority and the police, which has not always 17 been effective. We note that Peter Hill in his first 18 statement acknowledges there are still problems with 19 partnership working. The problems I have listed here 20 have meant that, despite the efforts of both 21 Social Services and the police and multi-agency working, 22 adult males were still able to continue to abuse CS-A1 23 with little effective intervention from those statutory 24 services and with very few consequences for those 25 abusers.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 72</p>

<p>1 Turning to accountability and lessons learned, 2 firstly, with the local authority. CS-A2 has sought 3 a Serious Case Review of her daughter's case so that 4 lessons are learned. Despite meeting the criteria, 5 which has also been confirmed by the local authority, 6 the request for a Serious Case Review was rejected. 7 That said, CS-A2 recognises that the local authority 8 audit into CS-A1's case concluded, amongst other things, 9 that risk assessments required improvements, that 10 implementation of plans required improvements, that 11 there had been a delay in meetings taking place, that 12 the case would have benefited from an earlier mapping 13 exercise of potential perpetrators, which would have 14 strengthened the decision making. The audit also said 15 that multi-agency working required improvements, that 16 the social worker was responding to crisis after crisis 17 with multiple placement changes, and that collective 18 decision making regarding CSE was not robust enough. 19 Finally, it stated that supervision required 20 improvement and this did not take place often enough. 21 Turning to police accountability and oversight, 22 a complaint was made to the IOPC by CS-A2 on 23 31 July 2017. She is yet to receive a response to the 24 IOPC complaint other than acknowledgements of receipt 25 and a follow-up call shortly after the complaint was</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 73</p>	<p>1 made to obtain some further information. CS-A2 2 acknowledges that the IOPC is separate to the police, 3 but the lack of response to her complaint for over three 4 years questions its fitness for purpose. 5 To finish, CS-A2 has asked me to say something to 6 you about her daughter, CS-A1, whom she and her family 7 love and cherish very much. CS-A1 has been the victim 8 of child sexual exploitation since a very young age and 9 has been robbed of a large part of her childhood. CS-A1 10 is still not at a stage in her life where she is able to 11 fully recognise and accept that she's a victim of CSE, 12 although this realisation process has now started. 13 CS-A2 firmly believes that her attachment disorder, 14 her shame, her fear of a number of these males, her 15 distance from family and education at the time have all 16 contributed to her daughter's inability to speak out. 17 Despite CS-A2 and her family working continuously 18 and being proactive and providing enormous amounts of 19 intelligence, and despite the core procedures and 20 policies in place with multi-agency working, all of this 21 has still not prevented her daughter from being a victim 22 of CSE on multiple occasions over a sustained period of 23 time. Something is clearly wrong. 24 CS-A2 does not want this dreadful experience to 25 happen to anyone else's child. She hopes the inquiry</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 74</p>
<p>1 will make meaningful recommendations to better protect 2 other children in the future. Thank you, chair, those 3 are our submissions. 4 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Harrison. Mr Greenwood? 5 Opening statement by MR GREENWOOD 6 MR GREENWOOD: Good afternoon, chair and panel: I represent 7 a third-sector organisation called PACE UK. This is 8 Parents Against Child Exploitation. It is a charity 9 whose main aims are: to enable parents and carers to 10 safeguard and stop their children being exploited; to 11 provide evidence and specialist advice to demonstrate to 12 councils and the police that parents and carers have an 13 essential role in safeguarding; PACE works with parents 14 and partners to disrupt and bring perpetrators to 15 justice; PACE influences national and local policy and 16 practice to reflect the active safeguarding role of 17 parents and the impact on families of child 18 exploitation. 19 PACE advocates that parents are a major part of 20 the solution and should be central to the system of 21 tackling exploitation. 22 PACE recognises that, just as every child is unique, 23 every family's situation requires an individual 24 response. Consequently, PACE offers one-to-one 25 telephone support for parents whose children are</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 75</p>	<p>1 exploited or for those who are concerned that their 2 child may be being exploited. 3 The organisation's parent support workers provide 4 independent, nonjudgmental and confidential support, 5 which fully recognises the rights of parents in 6 decisions on how to reduce the risk of harm to their 7 children. PACE listens to parents' concerns, gives 8 information on statutory agencies, procedures, and 9 passes on advice from other affected parents, should it 10 be required. 11 PACE never blames parents for what is happening to 12 their child. 13 Many local authorities and police and crime 14 commissioning officers fund PACE to provide dedicated 15 support to parents of sexually and criminally exploited 16 children. PACE works in multi-agency teams tackling 17 child exploitation. This enables parents to gain the 18 understanding and support they need about what is 19 happening to their child, to share information that they 20 have, to assist with the police investigation and to 21 strengthen the ability to cope and to reduce risks to 22 a child. PACE is currently commissioned in seven areas: 23 Blackburn and Darwen, Rochdale, North Yorkshire, 24 Calderdale, Kirklees, Wakefield and Liverpool. 25 Evidence shows that where PACE is embedded in</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 76</p>

<p>1 a system, safeguarding outcomes are much improved, with 2 a reduction in missing from home episodes, a reduction 3 in children going into care. This means parents' 4 ability to cope is strengthened.</p> <p>5 A report commissioned by PACE UK and research by 6 academics Nancy Pike, Maria Langham and Sarah Lloyd was 7 published on 24 January 2020. The report is published 8 on the PACE website. It involved two parent focus 9 groups of 11 parents and one grandparent, who had 10 previously received support from PACE, and they 11 underwent in-depth interviews and 20 individual parents 12 were involved. All participants had received support 13 from PACE in the past, between April 2016 14 and March 2018. The key findings are set out here.</p> <p>15 Parents initially contacted child social care for 16 help when they realised that their child was being 17 exploited. The responses they encountered led them to 18 believe that child social care services were 19 ill-equipped to deal with this form of exploitation.</p> <p>20 Parents reported a lack of understanding of child sexual 21 exploitation among children's social care staff and 22 a failure to address the risks and harms that their 23 child was facing.</p> <p>24 They frequently described the following issues. 25 There were often considerable delays between parents</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 77</p>	<p>1 raising their concerns with children's social care and 2 receiving any response. Delays ranged from one month to 3 two years, with many families waiting over three months 4 for an initial assessment. There was a lack of 5 understanding of CSE amongst social care staff, who 6 often minimised or dismissed the risks of harm that 7 a child was facing. Interventions usually only focused 8 on either the exploited child or the parents. There was 9 little focus on the disruption of, or prosecution of, 10 perpetrators and, consequently, abuse was able to 11 continue.</p> <p>12 Parents frequently felt alone in managing the 13 threats to their child and putting safety measures in 14 place. Even when exploitation and abuse escalated and 15 a child's distress manifested in violent outbursts, 16 depression, self-harm or even suicide attempts, parents 17 were mostly left to cope alone. Parents describe being 18 treated as inadequate or being seen as in some way to 19 blame for the child's exploitation. Some had been 20 offered generic parenting courses, but none were offered 21 training relating to sexual violence or support of 22 victims of CSE.</p> <p>23 There was rarely much attempt by social care staff 24 to engage meaningfully for the exploited child or build 25 a trusting relationship with them. Social care staff</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 78</p>
<p>1 displayed little trauma awareness, either in terms of 2 understanding a child's behaviour or understanding the 3 impact of secondary trauma on other family members.</p> <p>4 In some instances, parental distress has been 5 interpreted as evidence of an inability to be a good 6 parent.</p> <p>7 Parents' difficult relationships with children's 8 social care depleted their energy and sometimes 9 exacerbated already challenging situations, putting 10 their child at even greater risk. Some parents reported 11 having a supportive relationship with an individual 12 member of social care staff, but even where this was the 13 case, they did not feel supported by the social care 14 system as a whole.</p> <p>15 But the scene is not entirely negative. By way of 16 positive examples, PACE views Alexis Jay's Rotherham 17 report as serving as a catalyst. Her report on the 18 extent of CSE in Rotherham, published six years ago, 19 in August 2014, they view as a turning point for many 20 working in the field of CSE. The report laid bare the 21 institutional bias and hostile culture against victims 22 and their families and vindicated everything that PACE 23 had been saying since its inception in 1996.</p> <p>24 In terms of the government response to Rotherham and 25 other investigations, local children's safeguarding</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 79</p>	<p>1 boards have been given mandatory duties to tackle CSE. 2 Child sexual abuse has been given the status of national 3 threat in the strategic policing requirement, so it is 4 now prioritised by every police force. Yet PACE's 5 experience shows that, in practice, these changes have 6 not translated into good coalface practice. Many 7 practitioners struggle to get their heads around the 8 complexity of CSE and how best to respond.</p> <p>9 In the opinion of PACE, social care is still working 10 to a child protection model based on young children and 11 not teenagers; abuse within the home and not outside; 12 children are seen in isolation and as not part of 13 a family and, by implication, only professionals 14 providing a solution to CSE. PACE see parents who are 15 traumatised by seeing their child victimised and abused. 16 They want do everything in their power to help, yet 17 still they are treated as part of the problem.</p> <p>18 PACE wants parents recognised as a central resource 19 in the fight against exploitation. Thank you, chair and 20 panel.</p> <p>21 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Greenwood. Mr Jacobs? 22 Opening statement by MR JACOBS 23 MR JACOBS: Chair, I appear for Maggie Oliver and 24 Jon Wedger. Maggie Oliver may need no introduction. 25 Her campaigning work on child sexual exploitation is</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 80</p>

<p>1 nationally recognised. She is a high-profile police 2 detective turned whistleblower who resigned from 3 Greater Manchester Police in late 2012 in order to 4 expose the Rochdale grooming scandal. 5 Maggie Oliver has recently been appointed to the CSA 6 and CSE Parliamentary Commission chaired by the former 7 Home Secretary, Sajid Javid MP. She is a constructive 8 and challenging voice and is uniquely placed to inform 9 this inquiry of police and CPS failures to detect and 10 respond to CSE and the effects of those failures on the 11 many victims with whom Ms Oliver continues to work and 12 support through her foundation. 13 Ms Oliver played a central role in speaking out and 14 exposing the abandonment by Greater Manchester Police of 15 Operation Augusta which had uncovered a grooming network 16 of 97 paedophiles and 26 victims. 17 On 14 January this year, the Mayor of Manchester 18 published an independent report authored by 19 Malcolm Newsam CBE and Gary Ridgeway which confirmed 20 that the Greater Manchester Police Operation Augusta was 21 abandoned by senior officers of the GMP for one reason, 22 and that reason is to save money. This left a near 23 100-strong gang of suspected paedophiles free to prey on 24 vulnerable children across the Manchester area. 25 Ms Oliver's input led to the establishment of this</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 81</p>	<p>1 review and her evidence and assistance was central to 2 its findings. 3 Ms Oliver has been disappointed with the inquiry 4 process. To put it simply, she feels that the inquiry 5 has omitted a crucial part of the evidence, and failed 6 to call crucial witnesses and failed to call witnesses 7 to counterpoint the evidence of the institutions. 8 Chair, CSE came into the public consciousness 9 because of the revelations -- including by you, chair, 10 in the Rotherham August 2014 report -- of widespread 11 organised networks of abusers in the cities and towns of 12 Yorkshire and across the north of England. 13 The examples of Rochdale and Manchester and other 14 northern cities are important and engage much of 15 the investigation's scope. The scale of the grooming 16 and exploitation of children by organised networks of 17 paedophiles and the inadequate police and CPS responses 18 in those places should provide the starting point for 19 this investigation's exploration of the issue. 20 Despite this, the northern cities where CSE has 21 been, and is, rampant have been excluded from this 22 investigation, and we have no explanation for this. 23 Similarly, in these areas, in these same areas, there 24 are deep-rooted cultural problems in the police and CPS. 25 Ms Oliver provides evidence of her first-hand experience</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 82</p>
<p>1 of the culture of silence, the classification of victims 2 as criminals with chaotic lifestyles, or willing 3 participants in their abuse; and the old boys' network 4 which tried to bully and belittle her when she attempted 5 to speak out on behalf of children at risk. 6 Chair, the evidence before this inquiry shows that 7 this culture has not gone away and neither is the 8 problem confined to Manchester. Through her foundation, 9 Ms Oliver today sees the same patterns of police 10 failures to deal with organised networks throughout the 11 country. 12 Chair, victim blaming and, crucially, distrust by 13 victims of those in authority have not gone away. 14 Ms Oliver's evidence shows that senior police 15 management and prosecutors have been too far removed 16 from the issues to see exploited children as the victims 17 of serious crimes. They don't see CSE through the lens 18 of the exploited child, but through the prism of budgets 19 and spreadsheets. There is no better illustration of 20 this cruel detachment than the police treatment of 21 the girl known nationally, through the BBC "Three Girls" 22 documentary drama, as "Amber". 23 Amber was one of the victims in the Rochdale 24 grooming cases. She was interviewed by the police as 25 a victim of repeated exploitation by organised</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 83</p>	<p>1 paedophiles, but told that she would not be called to 2 give evidence at the trial of her abusers. 3 Astonishingly, instead, the police and CPS chose to 4 add her to the indictment as a member of the Rochdale 5 grooming gang. This was a cynical action done in secret 6 as a tactical way of bringing her evidence into the 7 trial, but it betrayed a fundamental lack of empathy and 8 understanding. We say that, without exception, every 9 exploited child is a victim of serious crime. 10 Amber was never told that she'd been added to the 11 indictment, and not only was she hugely traumatised when 12 she eventually found out, but she nearly lost her own 13 children to Social Services care as a result. Ms Oliver 14 is aware that Amber is not an isolated example of this 15 practice. We also heard this morning the account of 16 "Daisy", who is another Rochdale victim with whom 17 Ms Oliver has worked extensively. 18 The role of the CPS is an important matter for the 19 inquiry to consider. The inquiry has declined to hear 20 evidence from Nazir Afzal, who we say is the most widely 21 recognised CPS CSE prosecutor. My client's concern is 22 that the inquiry has excluded the most significant 23 evidence and one of the most important and significant 24 witnesses. But there are other reasons why these 25 matters should form part of the inquiry's investigation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 84</p>

<p>1 Ms Oliver says that there is an uncomfortable truth: 2 the gangs in the north are mainly comprised of men of 3 Pakistani heritage, a view shared by the former 4 Home Secretary, Sajid Javid. Ms Oliver's view is that 5 child abuse can never be a racial issue. However, she 6 says that if this inquiry does not tackle the difficult 7 and sensitive community-based issues surrounding CSE in 8 the north, a vacuum will emerge which will be filled by 9 unsavoury far-right groups who are already seeking to 10 hijack this issue to serve a racist agenda aimed at 11 damaging the Pakistani and other communities in the 12 north.</p> <p>13 Turning to my other client, Jon Wedger, he is 14 a retired police detective with over 25 years' 15 experience in the Metropolitan Police in the 16 investigation of child abuse and exploitation. He is 17 a prominent and outspoken whistleblower, and he 18 campaigns and raises funds to provide support to victims 19 and survivors of such abuse and provides on-the-ground 20 support, including the provision of food parcels to 21 victims.</p> <p>22 His uncompromising voice is widely heard and my 23 client has more than one million followers on social 24 media, a medium that he uses to constantly raise and 25 highlight the plight of children at risk.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 85</p>	<p>1 My client's evidence is that child exploitation is 2 happening in plain sight. In his police career, he 3 found that care homes in London are easy targets for 4 organised paedophiles.</p> <p>5 By way of example, as a police officer, he dealt 6 with the phenomenon of abusers targeting and grooming 7 children in care and routinely taking them away for 8 weekends. Care home managers were powerless to prevent 9 the children in their care from being taken away in this 10 fashion.</p> <p>11 My client's evidence is supported by that of CS-A12. 12 She says -- you will hear from her tomorrow -- that when 13 abusers collected her from her care home, staff members 14 would chat to them or wave to them as they walked past 15 their parked cars. Members of staff who sought to 16 prevent children getting into cars of abusers were 17 disciplined. This morning, Mr Livingston read out 18 similar evidence from A317.</p> <p>19 Neither were the agencies interested in the obvious 20 and widespread abuse that my client reported. In 2006, 21 he submitted a list of 50 exploited children to 22 a multi-agency meeting, including details such as car 23 registration numbers of abusers who regularly collected 24 children from care homes. But he was rebuked by 25 Haringey Social Services and Barnardo's, who said that</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 86</p>
<p>1 my client was creating an extra workload, treading on 2 other people's toes and that he should back down and be 3 quiet.</p> <p>4 Chair, this state of affairs continues today. My 5 client says that the police and Social Services are well 6 aware of the scale of sexual exploitation of vulnerable 7 children by organised networks, but they don't actively 8 look for CSE because they don't want to make more work 9 for themselves. Neither, sadly, do they see so-called 10 child prostitutes -- that is a term I must say that my 11 clients reject -- as worthy of extensive police time and 12 resources.</p> <p>13 My client also faced threats and harassment from 14 high-ranking officers when he sought to expose police 15 corruption and incompetence in this area. He was told 16 by a deputy chief superintendent to "shut up", and was 17 threatened with losing his home and his children.</p> <p>18 Officers must be free to speak out against 19 institutional incompetence and corruption. Currently, 20 police officers cannot speak out on failures to 21 investigate child exploitation. If they do, they put 22 their careers and livelihoods at risk. Police are Crown 23 servants; they are not employees in the traditional 24 sense and do not enjoy the same employment rights as 25 others.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 87</p>	<p>1 My client proposes that there should be an 2 independent ombudsman to investigate concerns raised by 3 police officers. This would give officers the 4 confidence to speak out on these important issues 5 without being pressured to back down.</p> <p>6 My client is an important voice in this 7 investigation and believes that the meticulously 8 prepared institutional statements from police witnesses 9 do not reflect the situation on the ground. In 10 particular, he says that CSE is widespread in all 11 communities in London.</p> <p>12 Chair, unlike the institutional witnesses you will 13 hear from, my clients have put before you 15 initial 14 proposals they have developed for this investigation, 15 which they will refine once they have heard the 16 evidence.</p> <p>17 We hope that this inquiry, having heard these 18 submissions and having read my clients' proposals, will 19 now accede to my clients' repeated requests that they be 20 called to give evidence so that they may provide 21 a constructive and honest counterpoint to the 22 institutional witnesses.</p> <p>23 Chair, at the very least, we ask that significant 24 extracts from their evidence be read into the record. 25 There is ample time in the timetable for this to be</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 88</p>

1 done -- the morning of Day 10, for example.
 2 We heard this morning that Day 9 will be devoted to
 3 national-level core participants. Our clients are also
 4 national-level core participants, and the inquiry should
 5 hear from them as well in order to complete the
 6 evidential picture.
 7 Chair, I will conclude in this way: both my clients
 8 maintain that organised networks are becoming ever-more
 9 prolific and sophisticated in their methods. They say
 10 that changes, even well-meaning changes, to policy will
 11 not provide a safe environment for children vulnerable
 12 to exploitation.
 13 The simple fact is that victims of child sexual
 14 exploitation are often difficult to deal with. Life for
 15 them has almost always broken down, but it is not their
 16 fault.
 17 My clients call for a profound cultural shift across
 18 law enforcement agencies in which, irrespective of their
 19 individual behaviours or antisocial attitudes or poor
 20 levels of co-operation with the police, all exploited
 21 children must be treated as highly vulnerable members of
 22 the wider communal family who are in need of urgent care
 23 and protection.
 24 Chair, those are my submissions. Thank you.
 25 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Jacobs. Ms Gallagher?

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1 risk, rather than the perpetrators being the risk to
 2 children. You similarly heard that this morning from
 3 Mr Fullbrook, reading from CS-A372, and you hear that
 4 from Harriet Wistrich, the founder and director of
 5 the Centre for Women's Justice, in her statement. She
 6 describes "judgmental language where young people feel
 7 they are being held accountable for the safeguarding
 8 themselves: 'She has put herself at risk'".
 9 Now, that 2013 report also raised grave concerns
 10 regarding children being invisible to agencies. In
 11 multiple Serious Case Reviews, whether examining sexual
 12 exploitation or the death of a child following sexual
 13 exploitation, they were told the same thing: no-one
 14 spoke to the child, no-one attended to the child,
 15 agencies failed to share information.
 16 Now, many children, like CS-A373, who Ms Benfield
 17 read about this morning, have been sexually exploited
 18 and raped when living in their family home -- not risk
 19 assessed, not removed, not protected. The Centre for
 20 Women's Justice has made clear, chair, in its previous
 21 submissions to this inquiry its concern regarding the
 22 methodology for selecting the fixed geographical areas
 23 which are being scrutinised in this investigation. We,
 24 of course, do not repeat those concerns now. We
 25 recognise that we are where we are. CWJ is committed to

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1 Opening statement by MS GALLAGHER
 2 MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, chair. Madam chair, panel, I make
 3 this statement on behalf of the Centre for Women's
 4 Justice. Seven years ago, in November 2013, the office
 5 of the Children's Commissioner published its final
 6 report following an inquiry into CSE in gangs and
 7 groups. You heard reference to this this morning from
 8 Ms Hill. Entitled "If only someone had listened", it is
 9 a deeply concerning document to read, and a clarion call
 10 to action.
 11 The report analysed the scale of sexual exploitation
 12 and violence that children and young people were
 13 suffering from perpetrators operating in gangs and
 14 groups, and its principal finding was that, despite
 15 increased awareness and a heightened state of alert
 16 regarding child sexual exploitation, children are still
 17 slipping through the net and falling prey to sexual
 18 predators. Serious gaps remain in the knowledge,
 19 practice and services required to tackle this problem.
 20 The Centre for Women's Justice's view is that,
 21 regrettably, although seven years have passed, this
 22 criticism remains accurate. That 2013 report also
 23 highlighted the language of victim blaming, describing
 24 repeatedly hearing from local authorities and police
 25 forces references to children putting themselves at

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1 doing everything it can to ensure that this
 2 investigation is as robust and meaningful as possible
 3 within the parameters which have been fixed.
 4 I am asked to say that we are grateful for the
 5 substantial efforts made by your team, particularly
 6 since the January hearing, to take account of CWJ's
 7 concerns regarding the need to hear from victims and
 8 survivors, and, in particular, to take account of
 9 suggested additional evidence to inform the picture
 10 before you, including new witness statements. We are
 11 particularly grateful for the evidence gathered in
 12 relation to BME specific issues, including the lack of
 13 culturally appropriate services and challenging the
 14 white victim/Asian perpetrator narrative. We commend to
 15 you in particular the statements of the Angelou Centre,
 16 Apna Haq and SWAN.
 17 However, that said, CWJ suggest it is critical that
 18 you, chair and panel, recognise over the next fortnight
 19 that, by fixing the six areas to be scrutinised and
 20 making the decision, as you have heard, based on
 21 publicly available data and disclosure made to the
 22 inquiry by institutions, primarily local authorities and
 23 police forces, prior to receiving applications for core
 24 participant status from victims, survivors or
 25 third-sector organisations, this necessarily means that

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<p>1 the decision was made based primarily on material from 2 the very institutions which you're scrutinising and not 3 based on the experiences of victims and survivors. This 4 gives rise to three particular matters of serious 5 concern to CWJ which we ask you to bear in mind during 6 this hearing and to mitigate against. 7 First, there is the risk that the experiences of 8 many invisible children who never went into local 9 authority care, were returned home despite obvious red 10 flags, do not appear on local authority books, may 11 remain invisible and unaddressed in this strand. 12 Secondly, there's the fact of serious concern to CWJ 13 that, within the six local authority areas selected, 14 you're not hearing from victims and survivors directly. 15 Not one of the victims who will give evidence to you or 16 whose account has been read falls into these 17 geographical areas. The two individuals from whom you 18 will hear tomorrow -- very important evidence -- are not 19 linked to those six areas. We acknowledge you will hear 20 important evidence from Ms Harrison's client, the mother 21 of a victim in one of the areas, but in the other five 22 areas, you will not be assisted by this evidence. The 23 dip sampling and gathering of information about 24 particular children which has taken place is 25 a commendable effort to plug this gap, and CWJ thanks</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 93</p>	<p>1 your team for that work, but CWJ submit that there 2 remains a fundamental gap. Those children's cases will 3 be scrutinised based on a paper exercise, using 4 primarily documents from the agencies whose conduct you 5 are probing. 6 Thirdly, and related, all too often in this inquiry, 7 chair and panel, in other strands you have heard 8 evidence from institutional witnesses about their 9 policies or practices, how victim-centred they are, how 10 effective their systems are, only for those claims to 11 fall apart when confronted with real-life cases and 12 witnesses who say, "This description on paper bears no 13 relation to my experience in practice". We ask you to 14 bear in mind that, as you do not have the benefit of 15 such witnesses or represented CPs in the geographical 16 areas under scrutiny, we ask that you raise a judicial 17 or inquisitorial eyebrow when probing the institutional 18 evidence, bearing that restriction in mind. 19 We note that this gap between theory and practice is 20 highlighted in Harriet Wistrich's statement, 21 particularly paragraph 125, and it was also highlighted 22 in that 2013 Children's Commissioner report. That 23 report found that, although, on paper, public bodies 24 have been taking the issue of child sexual exploitation 25 in networks seriously since at least 2009, there was</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 94</p>
<p>1 a fundamental mismatch between what the guidance and 2 policies said on paper and what was happening in 3 practice. They reported that, whilst 98 per cent of 4 LSCBs told the inquiry that CSE was a strategic 5 priority, half were unable to tell them how many victims 6 had been identified during 2012 in their local area. 7 (Interference) CWJ acts in multiple cases for female 8 victims of abuse up and down the country including 9 acting in and working on cases involving girls and young 10 women victims of CSEN who are invisible to those public 11 bodies tasked with protecting them, but on many 12 occasions, the child was, in fact, visible and the child 13 was seen, but public bodies considered them 14 troublemakers or promiscuous or perpetrators rather than 15 victims. As you have heard, in many cases, the victims 16 themselves were criminalised. These are cases in which 17 the child was failed by the state, not only by the state 18 failing to protect, failing to risk assess, failing to 19 take action against the perpetrators; the state had 20 criminalised the victims themselves. 21 You heard this morning about CS-A317 saying it was 22 easier for the police to criminalise the children rather 23 than go after the abusing adults. You heard also about 24 CWJ's client "Daisy" in Rochdale, from the File on 4 25 programme, arrested and charged repeatedly, often</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 95</p>	<p>1 directly connected to the abuse she was suffering. This 2 is not a historical story. This is recent. Daisy's 3 abuse and exploitation is recent, similar to the point 4 Ms Harrison made. The authorities utterly failing her 5 is recent. And the impact is ongoing, not only in the 6 sense of the psychological and physical damage CTI 7 referred to this morning. Daisy told File on 4: 8 "The police need to be accountable for their 9 fuckups, but why should I be held accountable? Why have 10 I still got a criminal record? Why has nothing happened 11 to the police? Why has nothing happened to these men? 12 Why is it me that suffers still? They messed up, not 13 me. If they did what they were meant to at the 14 beginning, we wouldn't be sat here today. There would 15 have been no prison, there would be no abortion, there 16 would be no scars on my arms where I have been burnt. 17 There would have been no hurt. It's mind-boggling." 18 We also commend to you the case, also mind-boggling, 19 of the woman known as "Amber", abused in Rochdale. We 20 entirely support what Mr Jacobs, on behalf of 21 Maggie Oliver, has said in relation to her. This is 22 a key issue for CWJ: the issue of criminalisation and 23 the willingness of the CPS to take tactical decisions 24 which sacrifice the rights of individual victims and 25 criminalise them, despite the public interest test and</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 96</p>

<p>1 the CPS's publicly stated commitment on paper. 2 These are not outlier, extreme stories. CWJ's 3 experience is echoed by Maggie Oliver in her work with 4 her new foundation, echoed by the work of Sarah Champion 5 and reflected in the academic research you will hear 6 about tomorrow. 7 CWJ suggest, chair and panel, that the evidence 8 before you in this strand reveals a number of patterns, 9 including multiple ways in which victims and survivors 10 of CSE are failed by the state. Harriet Wistrich has 11 summarised key themes in her witness statement, noting 12 in particular that criminalisation of victims continues 13 into adulthood. Many victims, failed in the past, 14 continue to have criminal records hanging like 15 millstones around their necks into adulthood. 16 Today in opening, we want you to address three 17 particular things concerning the criminal justice 18 system, because much of what you have heard so far 19 concerns local authorities and initial responses by the 20 police, and we ask you to consider the criminal justice 21 system as a whole. There are three points we draw to 22 your attention. 23 First, as is made clear in Harriet Wistrich's 24 statement, one consistent issue her centre hears about 25 is how children have an initial positive response from</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 97</p>	<p>1 the police when reporting their experiences of CSE, but 2 then the cases are subsequently NFAed by the CPS or by 3 the police following negative advice from the CPS and 4 the cases are closed, leaving children without the 5 source of support and with the feeling they haven't been 6 believed. So you need to look through not only at the 7 initial response, but at what happens next. 8 Secondly, when there is a prosecution, as we heard 9 this morning in relation to CS-A317 from your counsel, 10 there is a lack of through-victim care, and there are 11 failures in how victims are supported during the trial 12 process. 13 Thirdly, and critically, is the very low number of 14 prosecutions. In this regard, chair and panel, CWJ is 15 extremely concerned regarding the evidence Gregor McGill 16 of the CPS provided to the inquiry on 10 July in the 17 Lambeth hearing in respect of current CPS practice in 18 the prosecution of sexual offences. CWJ has written to 19 the inquiry to make clear its concern about the evidence 20 was, and I quote, "so selective as to provide 21 a misleading picture. See their letter dated 24 July". 22 Now, Mr McGill's evidence was to the effect that the 23 CPS is doing better than ever. He says "My experience 24 is we are more successful in prosecuting these cases 25 than we have ever been". CWJ submits there has, in</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 98</p>
<p>1 fact, been a precipitous decline in rape prosecutions. 2 The CPS, as CWJ have explained in their letter, have 3 adopted a cherry-picking approach, only prosecuting 4 a very small number of cases. This means their 5 conviction rates have improved, but at what cost? More 6 victims than ever before have been abandoned. This, CWJ 7 suggests, is due to the CPS stopping its previous 8 merits-based approach and moving instead to 9 a bookmaker's approach, prosecuting only those cases 10 which are sure bets. 11 We have set out in the letter that there has been 12 a drop of 52 per cent in two years, in terms of 13 the volume of cases charged by the CPS, and that 14 shocking statistic must also be viewed against 15 a substantial increase in the number of rape cases 16 actually being reported to the police, a 173 per cent 17 increase in reports made to the police between 2014 and 18 2018. 19 So more victims than ever before in relation to 20 gender-based violence, including CSE in organised 21 networks, are coming forward. So more are coming 22 forward and fewer are being prosecuted. We ask you to 23 probe very carefully assertions from the CPS regarding 24 them being better than ever, because that is, we say, 25 a misleading picture. We are particularly concerned in</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 99</p>	<p>1 relation to the timetabling on Day 9. Gregor McGill's 2 evidence is at the tail end of a long day and adding 3 30 minutes in the morning does not assuage my client's 4 concerns. You will have limited time to probe his 5 evidence. 6 In conclusion, chair and panel, we say this. In 7 some strands of the inquiry there have been clear policy 8 or statutory gaps and you are, in considering your 9 recommendations, often focusing on whether there is 10 a need for new guidance and new statute, new policies on 11 paper. This strand is very different. There are some 12 specific gaps, as you hear, but, overall, the story is 13 a different one. As Harriet Wistrich describes it at 14 paragraph 125 of her statement, there is a mismatch 15 between policy and practice. It's critical you bear 16 that in mind and probe the evidence as fully as 17 possible. 18 The foreword to the 2013 Children's Commissioner 19 report we have referred to concluded: 20 "Never again should a traumatised child have to say, 21 'If only someone had listened to me, perhaps I would 22 have been okay'. 23 For seven years, traumatised children and adults who 24 were abused as children continue to say, with good 25 reason, "If only someone had listened to me, I would</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 100</p>

<p>1 have been okay". We ask you in this strand, above all 2 else, chair, to listen. Thank you. 3 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Gallagher. Mr Suleman? 4 Opening statement by MR SULEMAN 5 MR SULEMAN: Good afternoon. Thank you, chair. As you 6 know, I appear on behalf of Sarah Champion, the MP for 7 Rotherham. Over her eight years in public office, 8 Sarah Champion has worked tirelessly with and on behalf 9 of survivors to investigate, challenge and improve 10 institutional responses to child sexual exploitation. 11 In November 2013, together with the charity 12 Barnardo's, she launched a cross-party enquiry to 13 determine whether existing CSE legislation was fit for 14 purpose. Now, that inquiry was important because it had 15 practical outcomes. For example, it was directly 16 responsible for a change in the law, so for someone to 17 be arrested for the offence of meeting a child following 18 sexual grooming with the intent of abusing that child, 19 there need only be one incidence of contact before the 20 meeting takes place. 21 It also led to the removal of the victim-blaming 22 term "child prostitute" from existing legislation. 23 It is crucial that this investigation also yield 24 practical outcomes on a national level; outcomes that 25 change the experience of both the survivors who come</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 101</p>	<p>1 forward and those who remain silent. 2 So, when hearing the evidence, the panel should, in 3 our submission, turn its mind to three overarching 4 systemic issues. These three issues must be addressed 5 so that survivors can be confident that this inquiry 6 will ultimately lead to change. 7 The first is the tendency by institutions to be 8 reactive rather than proactive. Reacting to and 9 resolving incidents of CSE once they have happened, 10 however efficiently that may be done, cannot repair the 11 damage that has already been caused and does little to 12 recognise and reduce risks or vulnerabilities. Indeed, 13 being reactive is the enemy of joined-up thinking and 14 prevents institutions from drawing meaningful 15 conclusions by forcing them to deal with incidents of 16 CSE in isolation. We want to be entirely clear on this 17 point. Reactive approaches ruin lives. 18 So when listening to the evidence, the panel should 19 consider to what extent institutional responses 20 demonstrate proactive safeguarding protection and 21 disruption. The panel should look for, first, effective 22 data collection and analysis to identify trends; second, 23 an active rather than demand-driven approach towards 24 disruption; third, the big picture, and not particular 25 incidents of CSE in isolation; and, fourth, consistent</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 102</p>
<p>1 delivery on the ground and not just box ticking. 2 Now, most importantly, we submit, proactivity 3 requires institutional curiosity about what more can be 4 done to root out CSE and protect potential victims. The 5 onus shouldn't be on victims to come forward and give 6 psychologically damaging witness evidence, but on 7 police, local authorities and schools to disrupt CSE in 8 a proactive manner. CSE is a crime. 9 What the panel needs to recognise is this: 10 describing children as vulnerable to CSE is to put the 11 cart before the horse. All children are vulnerable. It 12 is the organised networks who exploit them. 13 So the panel should be troubled when it hears 14 evidence that data isn't consistently recorded or is 15 missing or that analyses are not conducted. This 16 actively prevents institutions from identifying trends 17 that allow them to take proactive action. The panel 18 should be wary when institutional witnesses refer to 19 policies to meet safeguarding objectives such as the 20 policies to conduct Return Home Interviews for every 21 missing child. What is important is whether that 22 safeguarding is consistently delivered by those on the 23 ground. 24 Another overarching issue is preconception. The 25 inquiry will, over the next fortnight, hear evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 103</p>	<p>1 breaking down historic notions of CSE. Victims aren't 2 always white females, perpetrators aren't always older 3 males, CSE isn't always heterosexual. However, whilst 4 the recognition of these points is important, the panel 5 needs to go deeper. When those giving evidence say that 6 they recognise that boys, minority ethnic children, 7 LGBTQ+ children and disabled children all face risk, and 8 perhaps even a greater risk, of CSE, the panel should 9 ask itself why, then, charities report that these 10 children remain disproportionately underrepresented in 11 referrals for support. It should question why, in 12 certain areas, there is still no targeted approach to 13 improving accessibility to CSE services within BAME 14 communities. It should challenge the status quo. It 15 should ask why, if policies and training programmes 16 exist to prevent the use of victim-blaming language, 17 charities continue to see children described by public 18 institutions as putting themselves at risk or 19 demonstrating normal teenage behaviour. 20 Organised networks capitalise on opportunities to 21 convince institutions that children have made poor life 22 choices. However, the truth is that the exercise of 23 agency by children doesn't make them complicit in their 24 own abuse. 25 The third overarching issue is collaboration: the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 104</p>

<p>1 importance of cross-agency, multi-regional partnership. 2 This cuts across each of the eight themes of this 3 investigation. It doesn't simply apply to collaboration 4 between the police and local authorities. In 5 Sarah Champion's view, schools are especially important. 6 Schools are, in many respects, one of the few constants 7 in a child's life. In normal times, five days a week, 8 children spend up to seven or eight hours a day at 9 school. Teachers are therefore ideally placed for 10 children to reach out to. They are also well placed to 11 judge any potential behavioural changes or red flags 12 that may arise. In Sarah's experience, however, many 13 schools are unwilling to consider the risk of CSE to 14 their pupils if it takes place outside the school gates. 15 Care homes are also important. Sarah Champion is 16 aware of instances where gangs have sought to isolate 17 a child from his or her parents with a view to having 18 the child put into care where he or she would be easier 19 to exploit. In Sarah Champion's experience, private 20 care homes often do not see the monitoring of a child's 21 activities outside the home as their responsibility. 22 This leaves children open to risk and to meeting with 23 the perpetrators who exploit and abuse them. 24 So when considering the evidence, the panel should, 25 in our submission, look for the cracks that might be</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 105</p>	<p>1 exploited by organised networks seeking to groom 2 a child, and it should also look to identify the 3 opportunities available to listen to that child. 4 Where there is said to be effective collaboration, 5 the panel should look deeper and ask if agreements exist 6 for the escalation of issues between institutions or 7 across county lines. 8 I said at the start of this submission that the 9 panel should consider three overarching issues at play. 10 However, the panel should also bear in mind that behind 11 each of those issues, and behind each of the eight 12 themes being examined, is a survivor's voice asking 13 a simple question: why didn't you see how vulnerable 14 I was? Why didn't you stop them before it was too late? 15 Why was I punished for being a victim of abuse? Why did 16 you ignore me? Those survivors who have come forward 17 demand an answer and those who remain silent demand 18 a voice. This is a rare opportunity for change. Please 19 take it and restore survivors' faith in the institutions 20 that are charged with their protection and care. Thank 21 you, chair, those are our submissions. 22 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Suleman. We will now take our 23 mid-afternoon break and return at 2.45 pm. Thank you. 24 (2.26 pm) 25 (A short break)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 106</p>
<p>1 (2.45 pm) 2 THE CHAIR: We will now move on to Ms Leek. 3 Opening statement by MS LEEK 4 MS LEEK: Chair, panel members, in this investigation, 5 together with Molly Joyce, I appear on behalf of 6 the Chief Constable of Warwickshire Police. The chief 7 constable welcomes the public scrutiny of 8 the institutional responses to allegations relating to 9 the sexual exploitation of children. The purpose of 10 this investigation, in addition to giving public voice 11 to those who have been exploited, must be to learn 12 lessons for the future. 13 This investigation must draw upon both the good and 14 poor institutional practices about which it has heard 15 evidence over the last two years, and will hear over the 16 next two weeks, and make practical and achievable 17 recommendations for how the risk of exploitation can be 18 minimised and how it can best be addressed by 19 institutions when it happens. 20 The Warwickshire case study centres upon the 21 experiences of CS-A1 and a number of other children. As 22 you will hear, CS-A1 was [REDACTED]. Throughout her 23 childhood, CS-A1 demonstrated complex behavioural 24 issues, compounded by an attachment disorder. Chair, it 25 is fair to say that CS-A1 has been the most challenging</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 107</p>	<p>1 and complex child the Warwickshire Police team has had 2 to deal with. [REDACTED] CS-A2, will be giving evidence. 3 Senior officers at Warwickshire would like to 4 acknowledge the extraordinary difficulties that CS-A2 5 and her husband have faced in attempting to care for 6 CS-A1 and the efforts to which they have gone to try to 7 keep her safe. 8 Superintendent Pete Hill, who will be giving 9 evidence on Friday, notes the acknowledgement in CS-A2's 10 statement that officers, in the main, tried their best, 11 cared about what happened to CS-A1, demonstrated empathy 12 and concern and did not use victim-blaming language. 13 Superintendent Hill will clarify a number of issues 14 for you and put others into context, including the 15 following: he will explain that Warwickshire Police 16 never record a missing child as low risk. Once a child 17 comes to the attention of the police, they are always 18 medium or high. Every single day, there is a meeting at 19 which every missing child is discussed. It should be 20 noted that risk assessments do not downgrade repeat 21 missing children. Repeat missing children are 22 identified as being at higher risk than a first-time 23 missing child because, as CS-A2 recognises, they are 24 probably not as aware of the risk situation they are in. 25 They become, and I quote, "immune to being around drugs,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 108</p>

<p>1 violence and sexual behaviour".</p> <p>2 He will put into context the impact of resourcing</p> <p>3 and police numbers. He will also put into context the</p> <p>4 difference between intelligence and evidence with regard</p> <p>5 to the prosecution of those who exploit children. In</p> <p>6 the context of CS-A1, it was not always possible to</p> <p>7 prove where or from whom messages came, whether the</p> <p>8 messages were truthful or whether there were other</p> <p>9 messages which put them in context. Without in any way</p> <p>10 belittling the texts that CS-A2 has cited in her</p> <p>11 statement, evidential tests and disclosure obligations</p> <p>12 have to be met.</p> <p>13 While CS-A2's desire to have CS-A1 placed out of</p> <p>14 Warwickshire is understood and respected, it remains</p> <p>15 best practice for a number of reasons that children stay</p> <p>16 within the county. It is believed to be safer for them</p> <p>17 to remain where they are known and where they have the</p> <p>18 support of local infrastructure.</p> <p>19 It is important that children's behaviour patterns</p> <p>20 and associates are known to the authorities rather than</p> <p>21 them effectively being able to disappear into a new area</p> <p>22 with new associates and into unknown addresses where</p> <p>23 they are harder to keep track of or to locate if they go</p> <p>24 missing. The term used in the updated Working Together</p> <p>25 is "contextual safeguarding". That is, removing a child</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 109</p>	<p>1 to a new area could remove a number of protective</p> <p>2 factors that the child relies upon to keep themselves</p> <p>3 safe.</p> <p>4 Chair, Superintendent Hill recognises that in</p> <p>5 2016/2017 there were things that Warwickshire Police</p> <p>6 could have done better. The child sexual exploitation</p> <p>7 team had recently been established and was finding its</p> <p>8 feet: parts of the organisation did not yet understand</p> <p>9 the signs and/or impact of child sexual exploitation as</p> <p>10 well as they do now. Considerable progress has been</p> <p>11 made since 2017 as to how the force tackles and</p> <p>12 addresses child exploitation. Teams are more specialist</p> <p>13 with closer links with partner agencies. All are better</p> <p>14 informed and more joined up. The specialist teams are</p> <p>15 more focused on sharing information with partner</p> <p>16 agencies and the general level of awareness across the</p> <p>17 force, at all levels, has been significantly improved as</p> <p>18 a result of work that has been undertaken to train and</p> <p>19 inform all officers and staff.</p> <p>20 Chair, as you know, Warwickshire Police are</p> <p>21 committed to assisting the inquiry in this endeavour.</p> <p>22 As a team, we will listen to all of the evidence over</p> <p>23 the next two weeks, not just that which concerns</p> <p>24 Warwickshire, and will feed back to the force any</p> <p>25 learning about best practice. Thank you.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 110</p>
<p>1 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Leek. Mr Sharland?</p> <p>2 Opening statement by MR SHARLAND</p> <p>3 MR SHARLAND: Good afternoon, chair and panel members.</p> <p>4 Chair, Warwickshire welcomes the fact that IICSA has</p> <p>5 decided to hold an inquiry into institutional responses</p> <p>6 to child sexual exploitation by organised networks. We</p> <p>7 know that such exploitation is unfortunately widespread</p> <p>8 throughout England and no doubt beyond. It is not just</p> <p>9 a problem for a few high-profile cities. Every county</p> <p>10 is touched by it and Warwickshire is no exception.</p> <p>11 Warwickshire is grateful for the opportunity to</p> <p>12 contribute to this strand of IICSA's inquiry.</p> <p>13 The county's approach to this inquiry has been to</p> <p>14 assist it as best it can. To date, the county has</p> <p>15 disclosed hundreds of documents, totalling many</p> <p>16 thousands of pages. Many of these documents have been</p> <p>17 shared with other core participants. The county has</p> <p>18 also attempted, through the witness statements of</p> <p>19 Mr Minns, the county's Strategic Director of Children's</p> <p>20 Services and Adult Social Services, to explain in detail</p> <p>21 the approach that we adopt in relation to children at</p> <p>22 risk of sexual exploitation by organised networks.</p> <p>23 We believe that this evidence is full and frank.</p> <p>24 Whilst detailing substantial good practice, it also</p> <p>25 acknowledges that there are some areas where there's</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 111</p>	<p>1 scope for improvement. Mr Minns' evidence details what</p> <p>2 steps the council is taking to strengthen practice in</p> <p>3 such areas.</p> <p>4 We believe that there are a number of areas where</p> <p>5 the approach adopted in Warwickshire can fairly be</p> <p>6 described as good practice, which would benefit from</p> <p>7 being replicated elsewhere. Warwickshire was one of</p> <p>8 the first areas to adopt multi-agency working and we</p> <p>9 believe that our co-located, multi-agency and integrated</p> <p>10 services, consisting of the county's children's</p> <p>11 services, Warwickshire Police, missing practitioners and</p> <p>12 Barnardo's is an effective model that generally works</p> <p>13 well.</p> <p>14 Mr Minns, when he gives evidence this Friday, will</p> <p>15 expand on such matters.</p> <p>16 At this stage, I just want to briefly highlight</p> <p>17 three areas of such good practice. Firstly, following</p> <p>18 an investigation in 2018 into child sexual exploitation</p> <p>19 by organised networks at a hotel, the county and its</p> <p>20 partners has trained hundreds of staff working for</p> <p>21 hotels and in the night-time economy to spot possible</p> <p>22 child sexual exploitation and what steps to take if such</p> <p>23 exploitation may be taking place.</p> <p>24 Secondly, the county and its partners' "Something's</p> <p>25 Not Right" campaign to raise awareness of CSE in</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 112</p>

<p>1 Warwickshire generally and particularly in relation to 2 boys and men. This campaign has been multifaceted, 3 raising awareness with children, parents and 4 professionals. However, one notable aspect of this 5 campaign is the play "Crashing" which, along with 6 a post-show talk, raised awareness of how CSE can affect 7 boys and young men with over 300 professionals. 8 Thirdly, since 2017, the council and its partners 9 have required all taxi drivers to undertake CSE training 10 before they can receive a licence. To date, over 2,500 11 taxi drivers have taken part in such training and 12 awareness sessions to enable them to identify possible 13 child exploitation. Taxi drivers are licensed by 14 district councils, whom we have worked with in an 15 effective partnership to integrate such training into 16 the licensing process. 17 Chair, in 2017 Ofsted carried out an inspection of 18 the county focusing on children in need of help and 19 protection, looked-after children and care leavers. The 20 report was complimentary of our approach to CSE. Ofsted 21 stated: 22 "Effective partnership arrangements robustly address 23 the needs of young people at risk of child sexual 24 exploitation. These arrangements are working well to 25 keep children safe. They promote the co-ordination of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 113</p>	<p>1 a range of strategic and operational interventions that 2 deliver appropriately focused multi-agency responses to 3 safeguard children. Partners, managers and political 4 leaders work together well to understand the prevalence 5 of child sexual exploitation and to establish effective 6 ways of responding to and reducing risk. Operationally, 7 joint working with the police at the front door ensures 8 early identification of young people who go missing from 9 home or education. Children generally receive 10 appropriate and timely Return Home Interviews by 11 a specialist team which also offers wider assessments of 12 risk and a range of support services. Warwickshire, 13 together with neighbouring authorities and the police, 14 have been successful in achieving prosecutions in 15 a number of cases concerning exploitation." 16 Chair, whilst we know we are doing a lot of things 17 right, the county is not complacent. It knows there are 18 areas that it needs to improve. We are looking forward 19 to hearing how other councils and public sector bodies 20 address the many complex challenges around CSE by 21 organised networks. We are very grateful that some 22 victims and survivors have agreed to give evidence. We 23 appreciate how difficult this is likely to be for them. 24 However, their perspective is crucial. We are here to 25 listen and learn.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 114</p>
<p>1 As a result of being selected as one of the six 2 local authority areas and being asked to submit 3 evidence, we have already identified one area where we 4 can improve. As part of the evidence-gathering process, 5 we noticed that social workers were failing to identify 6 consistently children at risk of sexual exploitation who 7 met the definition of disabled in the Equality Act 2010. 8 Now, whilst social workers were identifying that 9 children have learning difficulties, they weren't 10 consistently applying the definition of disability to 11 such children. 12 Whilst we do not believe that any children were 13 disadvantaged by this failure to record their disability 14 as the county was making reasonable adjustments to 15 accommodate their learning difficulties, we recognise 16 the importance of correctly recording children with 17 a disability. 18 On identifying this issue, we put in place training 19 for social workers with children at risk of CSE to 20 ensure that they better understood the definition of 21 disability in the Equality Act. Whilst the rollout of 22 this training has unfortunately been paused due to the 23 current public health crisis, it will resume as soon as 24 possible. 25 Chair, the county accepts that, in the past, on</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 115</p>	<p>1 occasions, we have unfortunately fallen short and let 2 down a small number of children in our area because we 3 have not identified sufficiently swiftly their risk of 4 CSE. We wholeheartedly apologise for this failure. 5 The inquiry is fortunate to have the benefit of 6 evidence, both written and oral, from CS-A2, the mother 7 of CS-A1, a child who has tragically been subject to 8 sexual exploitation by organised networks. Whilst the 9 county does not accept every criticism made by CS-A2 in 10 her witness statement, it does have considerable 11 sympathy with her and we do accept that, in 2016, we 12 were too slow to identify that CS-A1 was at risk of 13 child sexual exploitation and that during that period 14 she had far too many short-term placements. 15 We have subsequently improved our risk assessment 16 procedures to ensure that the mistakes made in her case 17 are not repeated. Firstly, we have fundamentally 18 changed our risk assessment pro forma. We no longer use 19 a mechanistic scoring approach; instead, professional 20 judgment is implied, informed by a better understanding 21 of protective and aggravating factors. 22 Secondly, we have strengthened our quality assurance 23 practices. Every assessment is now scrutinised by 24 a manager to ensure that it accurately records the risk 25 of CSE.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 116</p>

<p>1 We also recognise the importance of stable 2 placements in protecting children from sexual 3 exploitation. We are glad that since November 2019, 4 CS-A1 has been in a stable placement and has recently 5 started college. 6 The difficulty in finding a suitable long-term 7 placement for CS-A1 during this period raises an 8 important issue that the county hopes the panel 9 considers in its report. In Warwickshire, as elsewhere 10 in the country, there is a profound shortage of foster 11 carers. The county, like many other councils, has 12 simply not been able to recruit as many foster carers as 13 it needs, despite its significant efforts. The lack of 14 suitable foster carers for children at risk of CSE is 15 particularly acute. Such children invariably present 16 significant challenges to those who are caring for them 17 and many foster carers are either unwilling or unable to 18 foster such children. 19 We hope, when the inquiry makes its recommendations, 20 that it considers carefully the need to adequately fund 21 provision in this area. In total, in order to address 22 a reduction in national funding and to meet rising 23 demand, the council has had to deliver savings totalling 24 £117 million since 2010, whilst prior to COVID-19, the 25 council had identified further savings of another</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 117</p>	<p>1 33 million for the period 2020 to 2025. 2 The impact of these savings is compounded by those 3 required of other statutory services and the voluntary 4 and community sector during this period. Over the last 5 couple of years, the county has prioritised children's 6 social care and has invested heavily in this area. For 7 example, we have tripled the number of missing child 8 practitioners. In January 2020, having identified a gap 9 in support for children who have been subject to CSE 10 transitioning into adulthood, we recruited 11 a practitioner to enhance support for such young 12 persons. We have also recruited a CSE nurse. 13 Warwickshire is committed to protecting these 14 services in the face of financial pressures created by 15 COVID-19. Thank you very much, chair and panel, for 16 listening. 17 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Sharland. Mr Dunlop? 18 Opening statement by MR DUNLOP 19 MR DUNLOP: Thank you, chair. I speak for St Helens, and 20 St Helens is also grateful for the opportunity to 21 contribute to the very important work of the panel. In 22 my ten-minute opening, I am going to address the 23 challenges that St Helens has faced, what improvements 24 it has made and what the outcomes have been. 25 Let me say at the outset that St Helens children's</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 118</p>
<p>1 services have, in the past, fallen short, and we 2 recognise that, and we apologise for that. But more 3 recently, and especially in the last year, St Helens has 4 dramatically improved the service that it provides 5 children and young people, and, in particular, taken 6 a number of steps to protect children better in every 7 way, but particularly against the risk of sexual 8 exploitation. 9 That improvement has been recognised and praised in 10 recent reports from Ofsted and the DfE, which I will 11 come to. 12 The challenges. There are two particular challenges 13 that St Helens faces which are important to understand. 14 The first is that St Helens is one of the poorest areas 15 in England. Council to the inquiry has already 16 mentioned that St Helens is the eighth-most deprived, in 17 terms of health and disability. There is a range of 18 deprivation in St Helens, and so, in some ways, it is 19 even worse than that, because there are three or four 20 areas in St Helens which have persistently been in the 21 most deprived 1 per cent of areas nationally. 22 This has presented considerable challenges to 23 St Helens. First, the high levels of poverty and 24 deprivation in certain areas have left some children in 25 St Helens particularly vulnerable to exploitation of all</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 119</p>	<p>1 kinds. Secondly, St Helens does not have the funds that 2 richer boroughs might have to protect those children. 3 Secondly, and no doubt because housing is relatively 4 cheap, St Helens is used by many other local authorities 5 as a location to place children they are looking after. 6 St Helens has only one children's home of its own to 7 accommodate approximately 500 looked-after children. 8 However, there are 30 independent children's homes 9 within its boundaries, and there are, at present, at 10 least 280 CICOLAs, as the acronym is, placed in 11 St Helens by other local authorities. Many of these 12 placing authorities are very far from St Helens. 13 Mr Critchley, the police witness, points out in his 14 fourth statement that St Helens homes the highest number 15 of CICOLAs in Merseyside. This creates problems for 16 St Helens. The social workers who are meant to be 17 taking primary responsibility for these children are 18 often located very far away from St Helens and it can be 19 difficult to get them to attend meetings concerning 20 these children. It is perhaps no coincidence that two 21 of the five children this inquiry is focusing on in 22 relation to St Helens are indeed placed in St Helens by 23 other local authorities. 24 Improvements. I would like to focus on five 25 specific examples of improvements that St Helens have</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 120</p>

<p>1 made which connect to the themes the inquiry is 2 investigating. First, there has been a big increase in 3 investment and recruitment. Funding to children's 4 services has increased by nearly 30 per cent. 5 £28 million have been invested in front-line 6 Social Services. That money has been well spent on 7 recruiting team managers and social workers with 8 expertise and experience in relation to children 9 generally and specifically child exploitation and child 10 sexual exploitation.</p> <p>11 There is no better example of this recruitment drive 12 than Jim Leivers, our witness, who was recruited 13 in March 2020 to act as Director of Children's Services 14 for St Helens. Mr Leivers brings with him 25 years of 15 experience in working with local authorities and 16 children. He has particular expertise and understanding 17 of CSE, having been a Director of Child Services in 18 Oxfordshire from 2010 to 2017 at the time of 19 Operation Bullfinch, a high-profile £8 million 20 prosecution of an organised network that was grooming 21 children.</p> <p>22 Secondly, St Helens has invested significantly in 23 training. You have an example in the papers of training 24 provided in relation to victim-blaming language. 25 Mr Leivers has described in his witness statement</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 121</p>	<p>1 workshops on the use of such language. This training 2 has been effective. When Mr Leivers gives evidence, 3 I hope he will have the opportunity to give you the 4 latest picture based on internal audits which show how 5 the use of victim-blaming language has been almost 6 entirely eliminated and, when it very rarely occurs, it 7 is challenged, whereas in the past it used to be all too 8 common.</p> <p>9 Thirdly, St Helens now conducts far more intensive 10 and frequent audits to maintain consistency of 11 standards. Since January 2020, St Helens has initiated 12 a system of quarterly case file audits, although 13 COVID-19 did interrupt one of those quarters.</p> <p>14 On top of that, St Helens conducts monthly dip 15 sample audits relating to children at risk of CE and 16 CSE. That's how we know the training has worked, for 17 example, in relation to victim-blaming language.</p> <p>18 Fourthly, St Helens has made structural changes to 19 best use its increased expertise. It has created 20 a complex safeguarding team which consists of social 21 workers with expertise in CSE who are available to give 22 specialist advisory support to front-line social 23 workers.</p> <p>24 Fifthly, St Helens has improved its partnership 25 working and partly that involves more integrated</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 122</p>
<p>1 working, so, for example, recruiting designated nurses 2 to be involved in the daily meetings and the MASH 3 meetings. Partly that also involves demanding more from 4 partners. You can see that, for example, in the figures 5 for Return Home Interviews, RHIs. Those RHIs were 6 conducted by Catch22. St Helens receives inconsistent 7 data from Catch22 and it challenged that and challenged 8 the practices behind it, and that appears to have led to 9 an increase in RHIs from 44 per cent in the third 10 quarter of 2018/19 to 81 per cent in the fourth quarter 11 of the same year.</p> <p>12 Similarly, St Helens now has a system to identify 13 concerns in relation to children placed by other local 14 authorities in the area at morning meetings and to raise 15 concerns with, and gather information from, the 16 responsible local authorities.</p> <p>17 Finally, while I'm still on the subject of 18 partnership working and before I turn to the results, 19 I will take this opportunity, if I may, to correct one 20 error from my learned friend, counsel to the inquiry. 21 She said in opening this morning that in December 2019 22 the local authority was not aware of any live 23 investigations into child sexual exploitation by 24 organised networks, but the police indicate that there 25 were three live investigations in the Merseyside area.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 123</p>	<p>1 Now, it is important not to misunderstand that. The 2 information about there being three live investigations 3 came from a witness statement from the police, and 4 St Helens was surprised by this and went back to 5 Merseyside Police to check, and in an email of 6 22 January 2020 to the inquiry, the police confirmed 7 that, in fact, none of the live investigations related 8 to St Helens. They, in fact, related to other areas 9 that the Merseyside Police cover. So you can see this 10 as a further example of St Helens' proactive approach to 11 partnership working. Challenging partners when the data 12 they provide appears inaccurate.</p> <p>13 Finally, results. All of these improvements have 14 had a big impact which has been recognised by 15 independent bodies. Although critical of other aspects 16 of children's services, Ofsted did recognise in their 17 report at the end of 2019 that responses to children who 18 were at risk of sexual exploitation were effective in 19 St Helens, and that such children were identified and 20 responded to appropriately and management oversight in 21 this area was effective. The most recent appraisals 22 this month have been even more positive. There's an 23 Ofsted letter of 2 September 2020 saying: 24 "Leaders have implemented enhanced systems and 25 processes for quality assurance. These changes are</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 124</p>

<p>1 starting to improve the response to most children who 2 have recently come into care. The financial investment 3 has helped to reduce some social workers' case notes, 4 giving them more time to work directly with children, to 5 understand their needs and improve their outcomes." 6 Most recent of all, the DfE has written a letter, 7 dated 14 September, saying: 8 "The overarching theme identified was the commitment 9 and dedication of all staff to improve services for 10 children and young people in St Helens. Despite COVID 11 challenges, staff remain ambitious and highly motivated 12 and have continued to drive forward the improvements. 13 There is a very strong positive culture within 14 St Helens, with staff reporting effective support, 15 training and coaching from all levels. Senior leaders 16 are visible and passionate about driving forward 17 performance and taking care of social workers. Staff 18 who have previously felt overwhelmed are now feeling 19 invigorated. QA and audit work has seen a big shift in 20 culture over the last six months. Managers reported to 21 understand the importance of audit and this is starting 22 to be embedded in practice." 23 They conclude: 24 "To achieve and sustain this positive culture 25 following an 'inadequate' judgment is extremely</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 125</p>	<p>1 difficult and we were extremely impressed with what we 2 heard. Strong political and corporate commitment is 3 evident with political leaders putting children at the 4 forefront of everything the council is doing." 5 Thank you, chair. 6 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Dunlop. Mr Butterfield? 7 Opening statement by MR BUTTERFIELD 8 MR BUTTERFIELD: Good afternoon, chair, good afternoon, 9 panel. As you know, I represent the Metropolitan Police 10 Service, which of course covers the London Borough of 11 Tower Hamlets, one of the six areas that the inquiry 12 will be examining in detail. 13 You will be assisted next week by hearing the 14 evidence from Sue Williams, who, until July 2019, was 15 the Commander of the Central East Basic Command Unit, 16 which covers both Tower Hamlets and Hackney. She 17 subsequently became head of safeguarding for the 18 Metropolitan Police centrally. 19 That position was a post created at commander level 20 as part of the Metropolitan Police Service's response to 21 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies' inspection 22 of child protection services in the Met Police in 2016. 23 While that HMIC report and its 2018 follow-up 24 identifies a number of criticisms of the Metropolitan 25 Police in relation to its safeguarding practices, since</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 126</p>
<p>1 then, the Metropolitan Police Service has striven to 2 improve its safeguarding practice and to enhance both 3 governance and accountability. 4 As part of those improvements, the post of head of 5 safeguarding was introduced to provide central oversight 6 and accountability. 7 Across London, the Basic Command Unit model has been 8 implemented which has established a bespoke safeguarding 9 stand for each policing area across the capital. The 10 Metropolitan Police is also in the process of creating 11 a new public protection plan led by Assistant 12 Commissioner Nick Ephgrave. 13 In October 2019, the Metropolitan Police launched 14 Operation AEGIS in another Basic Command Unit, a pilot 15 funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime to 16 deliver comprehensive improvements around child 17 safeguarding. 18 The Metropolitan Police Service has worked with 19 consultants and with safeguarding mentors to identify 20 areas for targeted interventions and good practice with 21 a focus on child sexual exploitation, missing children, 22 child protection and indecent images of children. 23 The Metropolitan Police is now considering rolling 24 out the learning from that pilot across the force. 25 Within Tower Hamlets specifically, child sexual</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 127</p>	<p>1 exploitation is treated as a priority. In 2018, 2 a proactive exploitation team was created, co-located 3 with Tower Hamlets children's services, and sitting 4 alongside an integrated gangs unit, the youth offending 5 team officers, an analyst and a missing persons 6 coordinator. 7 The establishment of that joined-up team has seen 8 improvements, many of which are noted in evidence 9 provided to the inquiry by third sector partners. 10 Unfortunately, resource implications in the last few 11 months have meant that the exploitation team has 12 temporarily not been fully located with children's 13 services colleagues. The collaborative and joined-up 14 working has continued. 15 Chair, as you read during the internet strand of 16 this inquiry, the Metropolitan Police Service has also 17 set up specialist Borough Command Unit teams to deal 18 specifically with online child sexual exploitation and 19 indecent images of children, driving improvements in 20 those areas. 21 While significant improvements have been made, the 22 Metropolitan Police acknowledges that there is a great 23 deal of work still to be done, and that it needs to 24 continue progressing its safeguarding improvements at 25 pace. The Metropolitan Police Service is committed to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 128</p>

<p>1 achieving that aim by working closely with partners and 2 by achieving the best outcomes in the pursuit of justice 3 and in the support of victims. 4 To that end, the Metropolitan Police is committed to 5 playing a full role in this strand of the inquiry, not 6 only by providing the information that the inquiry has 7 requested, but also by listening to, and learning from, 8 examples of good practice in other areas of the country. 9 Thank you. 10 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Butterfield. Ms Perry? 11 Opening statement by MS PERRY 12 MS PERRY: Thank you. Chair, panel, as you know, 13 I represent the London Borough of Tower Hamlets with 14 Mr Powell and Mr Langford, instructed by Ms Williams. 15 Tower Hamlets welcomes its continued involvement in 16 this inquiry. This has provided an opportunity to 17 reflect on internal practice and improve outcomes. 18 Tower Hamlets continues this process of improvement, 19 and we recognise and restate our duty to do all that we 20 can to prevent or to mitigate the harmful effects of CSE 21 and CSEN. 22 The complex nature of this criminal offence is 23 precisely what makes it a dynamic risk factor, and, as 24 such, there can be no room for complacency. 25 Tower Hamlets is alive to the fact that child sexual</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 129</p>	<p>1 exploitation is a very real threat to our community and 2 our social workers are at the forefront of efforts to 3 combat that threat. 4 In 2019, Ofsted found, and I quote: 5 "Leaders and managers have had a relentless focus to 6 improve practice, to deliver good experiences and 7 progress for children and their families. At all 8 levels, there is effective management oversight and 9 a direct understanding of the quality of significantly 10 improved front-line practice." 11 Effective and well co-ordinated, universal and early 12 help provision means that children and families receive 13 good help when they need it. Children in need, 14 including those in need of protection, benefit from good 15 assessments that inform plans to reduce risk and improve 16 children's circumstances. The workforce reflects the 17 diversity of the local population and staff sensitively 18 take account of and respond to the cultural and 19 religious needs of children and families in 20 Tower Hamlets. 21 The challenge that we must meet expands and evolves. 22 Organised networks deploy ever-changing methods and 23 tactics which require a strong response. For example, 24 as a result of COVID-19, exploitation became more 25 prevalent online.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 130</p>
<p>1 Tower Hamlets is by no means static in its response. 2 We learn from our shortcomings, engage in critical 3 self-reflection and focus on outcomes for children in 4 our care. Our response requires a careful approach, 5 building on our effective practices and systems, and on 6 the skills and experience of our front-line social 7 workers. 8 For example, as chair and panel will be aware from 9 the evidence filed, Tower Hamlets introduced a new 10 exploitation screening tool in March 2020. This tool 11 was developed in order to incorporate social work 12 analysis into that process and to ensure practice-driven 13 analysis of risk. 14 We recognise, however, that the processes underlying 15 any statutory response must be continuously reviewed in 16 order to be sure that they remain fit for purpose. 17 Tower Hamlets benefits from a skilled and committed 18 workforce. We are part of, and reflect, our community. 19 Those strong links enable us to work closely with 20 community leaders, including religious leaders, in order 21 to develop understanding of CSEN. 22 For example, Richard Baldwin, Tower Hamlets Director 23 for Children's Social Care, recently met with leaders 24 from the East London Mosque and the Osmani Trust where 25 it was agreed that the exploitation team would run</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 131</p>	<p>1 a number of groups through the Osmani Trust for young 2 Muslim people vulnerable to exploitation and groups for 3 parents concerned about their young people. 4 Tower Hamlets is proud of its specialist, 5 innovative, multi-agency child exploitation team. This 6 team, in partnership with the Metropolitan Police 7 Service, works closely with the Edge of Care team, 8 children's social care and other partners. The team 9 promotes and develops best practice on the issue of CSE 10 and provides training and support wherever required. 11 Our child exploitation team has recently been 12 nominated for two national awards. 13 Of course, a critical aspect of Tower Hamlets' 14 improvement process is auditing and quality assurance. 15 For example, at least 50 of our exploitation cases are 16 audited each year and, in addition, we dip sample the 17 top 20 high-risk cases twice a year. All Return Home 18 Interviews are now scrutinised by our exploitation team. 19 Over the last six months, we have put in place 20 processes whereby the actions and decisions of 21 the previous multi-agency risk panel are reviewed and 22 checked in order to ensure that all actions have been 23 complied with and completed. 24 An important point to make at the inception of this 25 hearing, we submit, is that CSEN is often an</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 132</p>

<p>1 extrafamilial risk. Our entire child protection system 2 is built around protecting from familial risk. 3 Section 31 of the Children Act 1999 is specifically 4 designed with poor parenting in mind, or -- and this is 5 based on the drafting -- a child being beyond parental 6 control. Potentially, this drafting places agency on 7 the child, and potentially this feeds into 8 a victim-blaming narrative, because, of course, workers 9 collating information to meet those thresholds are 10 collating information based on that wording. 11 We say section 25 of the same Act warrants similar 12 analysis. Tower Hamlets is working hard to promote an 13 alternative approach. For example, training in respect 14 of contextual safeguarding is now available to all 15 social workers. However, effecting cultural change on 16 this issue takes time and requires a coherent national 17 approach. 18 A further point of note, we submit, is that, in 19 Tower Hamlets, and for many, if not all, local 20 authorities nationally, adequacy of resources continues 21 to pose challenge. When working with children and young 22 people, Tower Hamlets builds a therapeutic support plan 23 around the child. We must pragmatically balance the 24 needs, and of course the welfare, of the child with the 25 resources available in the community when possible.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 133</p>	<p>1 However, Tower Hamlets, like many other local 2 authorities, faces a paucity of approved specialist 3 placements. This is a point of urgency and is 4 a national priority requiring urgent government 5 attention. 6 Children are being placed away from their homes and 7 families in an effort to protect them in the absence of 8 suitable placements nearby. We stress the importance of 9 survivors not experiencing child protection work as 10 punitive; for example, when placed in secure 11 accommodation far away from their friends and family. 12 A key improvement to the survivor experience would 13 be for greater state provision of appropriate specialist 14 accommodation and therapeutic support for children and 15 young people who have experienced CSEN. 16 Chair, panel, we look forward to participating in 17 this inquiry and assisting in this important endeavour. 18 Those are my submissions. 19 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Perry. Lastly, Ms Rayson? 20 Opening statement by MS RAYSON 21 MS RAYSON: Thank you, chair. Bristol welcomes this strand 22 of the IICSA inquiry and is pleased to be asked to 23 contribute. 24 We look forward to the findings and the 25 implementation of recommendations that we hope will</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 134</p>
<p>1 continue to develop safeguarding in this area and have 2 a lasting impact for children and young people. 3 We want to recognise the courage of the children and 4 young people in our city who have helped us shape and 5 develop our approach. We acknowledge today the children 6 and adults in our city who live with, and are recovering 7 from, the impact of child sexual abuse and exploitation. 8 We remain committed to reducing abuse and 9 exploitation, ensuring Bristol is a city in which all 10 children are safe and can thrive. 11 All contributing to this inquiry acknowledge the 12 historic national and cross-professional failures to 13 safeguard young people by recognising and addressing 14 child sexual exploitation. Recognition demands 15 education and the clarity of common understanding of 16 the patterns of offending, together with a developing 17 understanding of effective interventions. 18 Addressing the problem requires prioritising the 19 protection and support of victims and potential victims, 20 together with the disruption of offenders. There has 21 not always been a national policy and practice context 22 to enable this work to be done well. 23 A shared commitment by professionals to achieving 24 the best outcome for every child should be the 25 cornerstone of all institutional responses to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 135</p>	<p>1 child abuse. 2 Following the Operation Brooke police investigation 3 into organised CSE in Bristol, in March 2016, Bristol's 4 Serious Case Review into CSE identified the strength and 5 gaps in our multi-agency responses in order to learn and 6 improve. The review contributed significantly to the 7 national body of evidence about the policy and 8 legislative framework for safeguarding children from 9 extrafamilial harm. 10 It also informed BCC's developing practice model, 11 particularly around our arrangements for prosecuting and 12 disrupting CSE. 13 The review included important messages from the 14 children who had been sexually exploited, messages for 15 professionals and messages for other children who may be 16 at risk, many of which are echoed by others in the 17 Truth Project. 18 Bristol City Council today. Bristol has 19 a longstanding commitment to specialist CSE and CSA 20 provision for children and families. Our partnership 21 with Barnardo's in the BASE Project has ensured access 22 to specialist support for children in Bristol over the 23 past 25 years, including access to healthcare through 24 our CSE sexual health service and CSE CAMHS mental 25 health nurse.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 136</p>

<p>1 Since Operation Brooke, we have worked with the PCC 2 and our adjoining local authorities to scale up the 3 service so it is now constabulary wide, helping us to 4 identify organised abuse and recognise trends and 5 patterns of harm. 6 We have committed to transitional safeguarding, 7 protecting young adults impacted by sexual exploitation. 8 Our objective has been to create strong multi-agency 9 partnerships which work collaboratively and operate in 10 a culture where we are not afraid of difficult 11 conversations in pursuit of improving outcomes for 12 children. 13 It is important for our response to organised abuse 14 that we do not stand still. The problem is dynamic and 15 our approach must evolve accordingly. 16 Our written evidence includes details of 17 the following projects and services being developed in 18 Bristol. Operation Topaz. A police-led partnership 19 finding innovative approaches to the prosecution and 20 disruption of perpetrators of CSE, delivering 21 significant benefits to the children who are affected. 22 The contextual safeguarding scaleup project. Our 23 contributions to the national development of our 24 safeguarding practice framework, piloting approaches to 25 peer groups and places, which has enabled us to resource</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 137</p>	<p>1 our responses to organised abuse. 2 The Think Family database. The single view of an 3 individual across agencies helps practitioners to 4 understand the needs of a family and supports 5 professional decision making. The database also flags 6 up the involvement of other professionals for the 7 family, to enable early multi-agency working when risks 8 are emerging. 9 The data warehouse facilitates a development and 10 review of predictive risk models, work which is 11 undertaken jointly by police and BCC analysts. One 12 model looks exclusively at the identification of 13 vulnerability to CSE. 14 While the model is not a measure of likelihood, it 15 does identify the characteristics of an individual in 16 comparison with the characteristics of a target cohort. 17 It is important to emphasise that the results are 18 never a substitute for professional judgment, although 19 they may enhance it. 20 We recognise the risk of bias in such a model, which 21 may lead to less easily identified groups being 22 overlooked. These and other issues are the subject of 23 ongoing consideration, reflection and debate, with 24 Bristol contributing to the national research and 25 ethical considerations on the use of data.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 138</p>
<p>1 The Strengthening Families team. Our 2 multi-disciplinary team has been set up to work 3 intensively with families alongside social workers to 4 ensure there is a full exploration of all options to 5 support a child to remain at home and in their 6 community. The team is part of our investment in early 7 help and prevention, including parenting programmes and 8 city-wide youth services. 9 Relationship-based practice. Bristol takes 10 a relationship-based approach to deliver interventions 11 which support change and we have reduced workloads for 12 our social workers to enable the practice to be 13 implemented. 14 Listening to children. Our developments in this 15 work have been co-constructed with children and are 16 underpinned by their feedback. Strategically, the 17 voices and influences of children are at the heart of 18 our partnership through a well-established network of 19 young advocacy groups which inform and lead our shadow 20 safeguarding board. 21 Bristol BASE ensure we hear the voices of children 22 affected by CSE when we are making decisions for them. 23 What we hope for at the conclusion of the inquiry. 24 Bristol would welcome consideration of the following 25 issues: the national/local interface. Statutory</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 139</p>	<p>1 agencies in Bristol are often seeking to protect 2 children outside our boundaries, either physically, due 3 to trafficking, or in spaces online where we have 4 limited influence. How can we affect local delivery 5 which is place based but with a national overlay, enable 6 the sector to speak with one voice and influence change 7 in multi-national and national corporations? 8 Disproportionately affected and seldom heard groups. 9 Additional analysis and further development of effective 10 interventions are required for children in these groups. 11 For example, children with disabilities, boys and young 12 men. We need to work together to build our 13 understanding and resourcing of flexible and 14 proportionate interventions that reduce dislocation of 15 children from their families, communities and education. 16 The use of language in the definition of "child 17 sexual exploitation". We need to use language that 18 ensures a child's experiences are recognised. Is there 19 any room for the concept of exchange in the existing 20 definition? How can we ensure that the language and 21 recognition of child sexual abuse is not lost when we 22 use the phrase CSE and how do we ensure that any 23 definitions are inclusive of harmful experiences for 24 children so that no child falls between criteria when 25 what they need is support?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 140</p>

<p>1 Placement sufficiency. There is a national shortage 2 of placements for children in care, particularly 3 specialist placements. The sector struggles to meet the 4 needs of a number of children, often those who 5 experience repeat moves, which then impact their ability 6 to recover.</p> <p>7 The problem is compounded by the difficulties in 8 accessing flexible, creative, therapeutic services when 9 a child needs them. There is a challenge in balancing 10 safety by moving a child out of area when that move can 11 itself be exploited by abusers of children.</p> <p>12 Independent placements at distances are a poor use 13 of public funds when they often do not provide positive 14 outcomes for children, despite significant cost.</p> <p>15 Dealing with perpetrators. We hope for an 16 improvement in the criminal justice system for victims, 17 primarily the time taken by criminal processes. There 18 also appears to be little available by way of statutory 19 powers to protect 16- and 17-year-olds.</p> <p>20 Data analytics. A national debate is welcomed on 21 the ethics of data analytics in this field, and on the 22 use of social modelling in understanding and responding 23 to peer networks.</p> <p>24 Health services. Nonintegrated NHS recording 25 systems have a consequent reduction in the capacity of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 141</p>	<p>1 health services to contribute effectively to sharing of 2 information. How can we bring health data into data 3 analytics?</p> <p>4 Specialist support for transition to adulthood. As 5 evidenced by the children and young adults whose 6 information is shared in Bristol's evidence, CSE has 7 a significant impact on the children and families who 8 experience it. Many need specialist support beyond 18, 9 and yet are not always provided for within the 10 parameters of the Care Act. More analysis is required 11 to identify the most effective services and how they are 12 best delivered and resourced.</p> <p>13 Resources. Local authorities and other public 14 agencies have used their best endeavours to develop 15 services during austerity. All have had to make 16 difficult financial decisions. The pandemic has also 17 reduced our resources. Properly funded provision to 18 deal effectively with CSE necessitates additional 19 resources being made available. Thank you, chair.</p> <p>20 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Rayson. Ms Hill, did you wish to 21 address myself and the panel on anything else before we 22 conclude?</p> <p>23 MS HILL: Yes, chair, if I may, just a few matters that have 24 arisen in light of the opening this morning that I would 25 just like to correct.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 142</p>
<p>1 First of all, chair, an issue has been raised about 2 the numbers that we gave of local authority areas in 3 England and Wales. I said in opening that there are 178 4 local authority areas. For the avoidance of doubt, that 5 figure does change slightly over time due to things like 6 boundary changes, and so on, and at the time of 7 the inquiry's initial scoping, we understand there were 8 in fact 172 such areas, but, in any event, clearly far 9 too many areas for the inquiry to look at every single 10 one.</p> <p>11 There is a different model that is used to calculate 12 the deprivation index which I can explain if I need to, 13 but, essentially, there are, in England, 317 local areas 14 that are used to calculate the deprivation index, and we 15 can provide further detail about how they are 16 calculated. It is rather to do with the size of 17 the geographical area being calculated. We understand, 18 for example, that there are metropolitan districts, 19 London boroughs, unitary authorities and things of that 20 nature that form part of that calculation. That 21 explains the disparity in the two figures we gave for 22 local authority areas.</p> <p>23 Secondly, I think I may have been misheard, 24 possibly, or mistranscribed. For the avoidance of 25 doubt, the population in Bristol that identifies as</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 143</p>	<p>1 black and minority ethnic is 16 and not 69, which 2 I understand may have been what is heard. But it is 16 3 that is the correct figure. I think there may have been 4 a further query raised by Bristol which we are looking 5 into.</p> <p>6 Finally, for the avoidance of doubt, my learned 7 friend for St Helens drew attention to the way in which 8 I explained that the local authority was not aware of 9 any live investigations, but that the police force in 10 that area were. He is absolutely correct, that they 11 were live investigations within the Merseyside area, not 12 necessarily St Helens, and I apologise if any confusion 13 was caused in that regard.</p> <p>14 Chair, those are the only matters I wish to correct 15 by way of matters arising from today.</p> <p>16 As far as tomorrow is concerned, as you know, we 17 will begin in the morning hearing from some complainants 18 and then hear open evidence in the afternoon from two 19 academics and from the National Working Group.</p> <p>20 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Hill. That concludes today's 21 hearing. 22 (3.42 pm)</p> <p>23 (The hearing was adjourned to 24 Tuesday, 22 September 2020 at 10.30 am) 25</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 144</p>

<p>1</p> <p>2 I N D E X</p> <p>3</p> <p>4 Welcome and opening remarks by THE1</p> <p>5 CHAIR</p> <p>6 Introductions4</p> <p>7 Opening statement by MS HILL8</p> <p>8 Summary of witness statement of13</p> <p> WITNESS CS-A317 (read)</p> <p>9 Summary of witness statement of15</p> <p>10 WITNESS CS-A372 (read)</p> <p>11 Summary of witness statement of17</p> <p> WITNESS CS-A373 (read)</p> <p>12 Summary of transcript of 'File on 419</p> <p> - Groomed, abused and put in</p> <p> prison: Rochdale's untold</p> <p> story" (read)</p> <p>13 Opening statement of MS HILL21</p> <p> (continued)</p> <p>14</p> <p>15 Housekeeping62</p> <p>16 Opening statement by MS HARRISON67</p> <p>17 Opening statement by MR GREENWOOD75</p> <p>18 Opening statement by MR JACOBS80</p> <p>19 Opening statement by MS GALLAGHER90</p> <p>20 Opening statement by MR SULEMAN101</p> <p>21 Opening statement by MS LEEK107</p> <p>22 Opening statement by MR SHARLAND111</p> <p>23 Opening statement by MR DUNLOP118</p> <p>24 Opening statement by MR BUTTERFIELD126</p> <p>25</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 145</p>	<p>1</p> <p> Opening statement by MS RAYSON134</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 146</p>
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