

Witness Name: John Pearce  
Statement No: 5  
Exhibits: -  
Dated: 23 October 2020

## THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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### WITNESS STATEMENT OF JOHN PEARCE

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I, John Pearce of Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UL, will say as follows:

1. I am the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service within Durham County Council. I make this supplementary statement in accordance with the request of IICSA dated 14 October 2020 and further to my oral to the Inquiry on 23 September 2020.
2. There are three areas of questioning which I have been asked to comment on and I will deal with each in turn below.
3. *Henrietta Hill QC asked Mr Pearce about CS-A29 and in particular the language used in relation to this child by various professionals, and whether the concerns about such language had been drawn to the attention of these professionals.*

I can confirm that the professionals involved with CS-A29 are no longer working within Durham Children and Young People's Service. The concerns regarding language used have not been brought to the attention of those professionals. From our participation in the Inquiry and this case study in particular, we will as part of our training use the language recorded as examples of victim blaming language. This will be used as an opportunity to raise awareness across all of children's services and across the Partnership through the Strategic Child Exploitation Group.

4. *Henrietta Hill QC asked Mr Pearce about the meetings of the criminal exploitation subgroup of the Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Darlington and Durham Return Home Interviews. Mr Pearce referred to an audit taking place at the moment that will look at both the number and content of Return Home Interviews. Mr Pearce confirmed that a copy of this audit would be provided to the Inquiry.*

The audit considered five examples of Return to Home Interviews. The audit findings have not been published and the recommendations have not yet been agreed by the Partnership. I can confirm that once the audit has been agreed by the Partnership a copy of the audit can be made available to the Inquiry, this is anticipated to be completed before the end of 2020.

5. *The Chair asked Mr Pearce about the involvement of youth workers in the child sexual exploitation agenda and in particular to provide some information about the kind of work with which such youth workers are engaged.*

Durham County Council moved from a universal youth service to targeted youth support service in 2017 as part of the early help offer delivered by Durham Children's services. The service offers intensive support to children, young people and currently offers a range of targeted support to all children who are screened as low-level risk of CSE via child vulnerability exploitation tracker (CVET) process. This also includes regular updates to the young person's CSE matrix of any concerns about escalating risk, this is recorded and discussed with the ERASE team.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

**Signed:**

**John Pearce**

**Dated:**

23 October 2020