

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

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

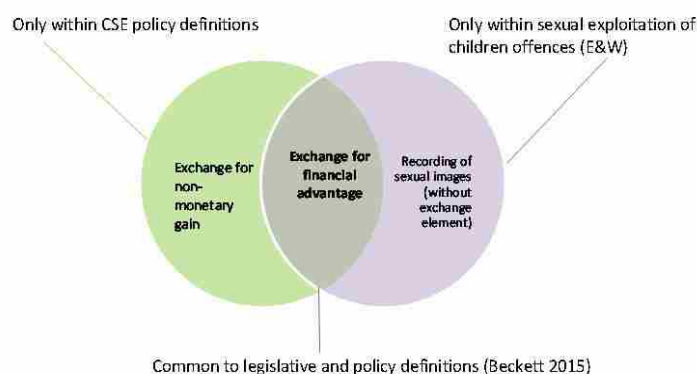
**Witness Statement of Dr Helen Beckett, Director of 'The International Centre:
Researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking' at the University of
Bedfordshire**

I, Dr Helen Beckett, will say as follows:-

1. As requested, please find a brief response to three questions asked by the Panel at the CSEN investigation public hearing on 22 September 2020. These are supplementary to my original witness statement, provided in advance of the hearing.
2. In relation to the question posed in relation to the definition of child sexual exploitation (CSE) adopted by the Council of Europe, we are interpreting this as relating to the Council's Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention), ratified by the UK in 2018. The Lanzarote Convention stipulates that the term sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children includes (as outlined in Articles 18 to 23):
 - a. Sexual abuse
 - b. Child prostitution
 - c. Child pornography
 - d. Corruption of children
 - e. Solicitation of children for sexual purposes.
3. Interestingly, it does not define which elements fall under the term sexual exploitation, or indeed offer any definition of sexual exploitation. One could potentially conclude given the presentation of sexual abuse as a separate category (Art.18), that sexual exploitation then covers the other four elements presented separately to this. This is however potentially problematic in suggesting that these issues are somehow not sexual abuse; a linkage that has been strongly emphasised in UK discourses. Furthermore, the text of the Convention does not clearly delineate between the five different elements cited or offer a clear explanation of the perceived relationship

between them; mirroring some of the challenges previously noted in relation to UK definitions of CSE and their relationship to the wider concept of CSA.

4. It is also important, when considering the potential transferability of the language of the Lanzarote Convention to the UK context, to note that the UK has moved away from the language of child prostitution and pornography. In moving from child prostitution to CSE, UK nations have also expanded the parameters of their policy definitions beyond sexual activity for tangible gain (as per child prostitution), to also include that for intangible gain or absence of a negative; which would most likely fall under the definition of child sexual abuse in the Lanzarote Convention.
5. The definitions of prostitution and pornography outlined in the Convention align more closely to the offences contained within the Sexual Offences Act; previously called abuse of a child through prostitution and pornography and renamed in 2015 as abuse of a child through sexual exploitation.
6. As explained during the hearing in response to the query around any impact that changes to the definition of CSE might have on our understanding of the offences for which those responsible are currently capable of being prosecuted, this renaming of the offences (the remit of which remain exactly as were before) has created a confusing misalignment between the policy definition of CSE and the offences of sexual exploitation of children. The policy definition (but not the offences) includes exchange for intangible gain and/or the absence of a negative. The offences include indecent images with no requirement for exchange, the absence of which would exclude such cases from the policy definition (see diagram below and Beckett and Walker 2018¹, for a fuller exposition of these issues).



7. This has caused clear confusion in practice, particularly between those working in criminal justice versus other settings, with the language of sexual exploitation of a child/CSE meaning different things depending on whether the person using it is interpreting it according to the policy definition or the actual sexual offences. Addressing this disjunction between policy and practice would remove the associated confusion, and more helpfully draw attention to the range of offences that could be

¹ Beckett, H and Walker, J (2018) 'Words matter: reconceptualising the conceptualisation of child sexual exploitation' in Beckett, H and Pearce, J (eds) Understanding and Responding to Child Sexual Exploitation; document provided in original statement.

used to prosecute CSE cases, beyond those with the language of sexual exploitation in their title that only capture cases of CSE where the exchange is for tangible gain.

8. As noted at the hearing, I have asked Dr Carlene Firmin who leads the Contextual Safeguarding Programme of work, to respond to the query relating to the impact of a Contextual Safeguarding approach, in relation to data collection around CSE. She has provided the following response.
9. Contextual Safeguarding approaches require two key considerations regarding data collection. The first is that services be able to flag/record whether the abuse a child has experienced occurred in an extra-familial relationship/setting (beyond the home), a familial relationship/setting or both: i.e. was the child abused by someone connected to their family, unconnected to their family or both. This is important as social care, child protection and wider safeguarding responses to abuse within and external to families are different and there are more established routes and statutory frameworks for responding to abuse within a family setting. Contextual Safeguarding is concerned with how extra-familial harm (and the contexts/relationships in which that harm occurs) is responded to; it is rare that local areas can report this which creates challenges for auditing and improving local practice. The second data recording requirement would relate to contextual information – i.e. local authorities being able to record and respond to groups and locations where harm occurs (through a safeguarding lens) and not solely the individuals involved. So from a strategic perspective safeguarding partnerships would need to know the number of public spaces, school environment, peer groups etc. have been identified and are being responded to in terms of abuse - as well as the numbers of individual children affected: is their profile largely associated to parks, high streets, shopping centres, transport hubs etc. and what does this mean for the commissioning of services that are equipped to build safety in those settings.
10. Such an approach would not undermine existing data collection around the sexual nature of the harm, but would provide additional important contextual information to support enhanced responses to forms of CSE occurring outside of the family home.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Signed:

DPA

Dated: 21.10.2020

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