



CareQuality  
Commission



and the voluntary sector, must learn from these examples of good and effective practice. The challenge of tackling child sexual exploitation is not going away. Multi-agency systems within local areas must build on the strengths identified in this report so that all children get the services and support they need.

## Key findings

- Although the pace of change is variable across areas inspected, there has been progress in the multi-agency response to tackling child sexual exploitation since 2014.
- Tackling child sexual exploitation can be done, but only if all partners take responsibility for their role as a discrete agency, work collaboratively with each other and have a shared understanding of how to tackle child sexual exploitation.
- Strategic goals must be clearly identified, understood and agreed across agencies, which also must commit resources to tackle child sexual exploitation. However, collective commitment at a strategic level is not always translating into effective practice.
- The local authority, police, health and other key agencies like probation and youth offending must share information and intelligence to fully understand the local patterns of child sexual exploitation, to disrupt and deter perpetrators and to identify, help and protect children. They need to be aware that patterns of offending evolve and change rapidly, for example the increase in online grooming. A dedicated professional, with good access to a range of multi-agency information to ensure that those children who are at risk and the profile of offenders are understood and managed, is needed to best inform local areas.
- Raising awareness across the community is crucial. Children can help in developing materials to support other children to understand the risks and issues. Schools have a critical role. The wider community, including parents and carers as well as public services such as transport and recreation and the business community, needs to take responsibility for their role in protecting children.
- Children benefit from being able to build a relationship with one trusted individual, and being actively involved in decisions about their lives. Professionals in all agencies, and particularly social workers and health professionals, need the time and capacity to build relationships with children if they are to effectively identify children at risk and help protect them.
- There needs to be a better understanding of why children go missing at an individual and a strategic level if agencies are to do more to protect them. Local authorities need to gather all available intelligence to understand why a child has gone missing, including sensitively encouraging children to talk about why they ran away. The current requirement that every child who has been missing should receive a return home interview is not working well enough.