

2. REFLECTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS ON CERTAIN PROPOSALS

Creation of a statutory agency

2.1 Proposal 1(i) is the creation of a statutory agency, similar to the US Bureau of Justice Statistics to monitor sexual abuse in prisons; or for a new mandatory duty on an existing statutory agency, such as HM Inspectorate of Prisons, to collect this data.

2.2 As I understand it, the US Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is a federal government agency belonging to the U.S. Department of Justice that collects, analyses, publishes, and disseminates information on crime, criminal offenders, crime victims, and criminal justice operations at all levels of government (BJS website).¹ I also understand that the US Bureau of Justice Statistics Survey of Sexual Victimization, referred to in the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA), is a key source on child sexual abuse in custody. This survey found rates of sexual victimisation to be 2.5 per cent for youth on youth victimisation and 7.7 per cent for staff sexual misconduct (Beck et al., 2012).² I also understand that the Bureau of Justice Statistics also carries out an annual survey of correctional authorities on reported allegations of sexual victimisation in juvenile facilities. The most recent findings from this study (Beck and Rantala, 2016) were that there were 23 allegations per 1000 youth in 2012, with just over half relating to peer victimisation and the remainder relating to staff victimisation.³ I note that the Inquiry's REA found that, in contrast to the USA, there was little robust research evidence to draw on from England and Wales in respect of child sexual abuse in custody (REA, 2018, p. 18).⁴ Whilst the HMIP annual survey in Secure Training Centres (STCs) and Young Offender Institutes (YOIs) does ask children questions about sexual abuse, the way the survey is carried out and the

¹ <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=abu>

² <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/5197/view/Child%20sexual%20abuse%20in%20custodial%20institutions%20REA%20-%20Full%20report.pdf>

³ <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/5197/view/Child%20sexual%20abuse%20in%20custodial%20institutions%20REA%20-%20Full%20report.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/5197/view/Child%20sexual%20abuse%20in%20custodial%20institutions%20REA%20-%20Full%20report.pdf>