

Survey on police powers to protect 16/17 year olds from CSE

Who responded to the survey?

- As of 27th September, there were 213 respondents to the survey. However, not all of these respondents answered every question.
- The highest number of respondents was from the Met, followed by Lincolnshire. There appeared to be no responses from 12 forces, including West Midlands Police, Merseyside Police and Norfolk Police (although respondents from these forces may have skipped the question indicating which force they were from).
- Nine out of ten of those who responded were either Constables or Sergeants.

What was their experience of the relevant powers?

Career experience

- Over half of respondents had ever used Child Abduction Warning Notices or Sexual Harm Prevention Orders to disrupt CSA/E in cases involving 16-17 year olds as victims.
- Around a third of respondents had ever used Sexual Risk Orders or Domestic Violence Protection Orders to disrupt CSA/E in cases involving 16-17 year olds as victims.
- Respondents were least likely to have ever used Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders to disrupt CSA/E in cases involving 16-17 year olds as victims.
- The main reason for not using all of these Orders was a “lack of capacity” or “not in my remit”. For Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders and Sexual Risk Orders, in particular, lack of awareness and lack of training were also identified as barriers.

Experience in past financial year

- Six out of ten respondents were involved in a case that included applying for (or monitoring use of) a CAWN/SHPO/SRO in the past financial year.
- The circumstances in which these different Orders were applied reflected the ways in which they are allowed to be used:
 - A key theme in the circumstances in which CAWNs were used was to protect those ‘at risk’ of CSE. In particular, these were used when young females were (frequently) going missing and found with older males. Here CAWNs were used to disrupt the relationship.

- Sexual Risk Orders appeared to be applied particularly where victims were unwilling to make a complaint or the alleged offender had no previous convictions.
- Some forces appeared to apply for Sexual Harm Prevention Orders for all relevant prosecutions.
- The decision to pursue an order/notice commonly appeared to be based on an assessment of risk, informed by a review of intelligence. Advice was also frequently sought from force legal departments, the CPS or other police officers.
- About nine out of ten of those respondents who had applied for (or monitored use of) a CAWN/SHPO/SRO in the past financial year felt they had received sufficient advice and guidance to apply for the notice and the prohibitions to include.
- The most common challenge faced by those respondents who had applied for (or monitored use of) a CAWN/SHPO/SRO in the past financial year was a lack of awareness/training, followed by a lack of guidance.
- About one in five respondents identified lack of support/advice from legal advisers as a challenge when applying for Orders with most respondents (around two-thirds) rating their experience with their force's legal advisor to be 'excellent' or 'good'.

What were their opinions about the orders?

- Around three-quarters of respondents thought that the Orders acted as a sufficient deterrent for offenders/potential offenders.
- However, other respondents emphasised how such Orders are only partially effective and not sufficient when used alone.

Gist:

'It was noted that the CAWN may be more difficult to enforce in some circumstances where victims are in 'relationships' with offenders (particularly older children, aged-16-17). The complexity of sex offenders' motivations was noted. The importance of continuously monitoring the orders was highlighted.'

- About four out of five respondents felt that breaches/non-compliance of a CAWN/SHPO/SRO were dealt with effectively in their organisations.
- For those who felt that breaches/non-compliance of a CAWN/SHPO/SRO were not dealt with effectively, the main reasons given were officers having a poor understanding of the Orders due to lack of training or guidance.

Gist:

'The implications of limited resources for the police were highlighted.'

What other tools were available?

- The other most commonly used tools to disrupt exploitation activity for 16 and 17 year olds were Criminal Behaviour Orders and civil injunctions. The majority of respondents saw these tools as being 'somewhat effective' rather than 'highly effective' or 'not at all effective'.
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| Sensitive/Irrelevant |
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- Most respondents (4 out of 5) reported that their forces or local partners did not have a disruption toolkit.
- Other methods which forces had used to disrupt exploitation included:
 - arresting offenders for other (non-related) offences;
 - partnership working with other agencies (e.g. social services), including identifying interventions that these other agencies could instigate;
 - warning letters;
 - home visits;
 - visible patrols.