

In 2005, 2,416 people were reported to the DfES for consideration for inclusion on List 99 or the PoCA list, resulting in 525 names being added (it should be noted that the referrals for inclusion on List 99 include all misconduct, not solely that which might indicate a risk to children) (NNIRSC, 2006). Of cases reported to the DfES for inclusion on List 99 in 2003, 131 were of school staff convicted or cautioned (and therefore having accepted responsibility) for offences against children, of which 52 were sexual offences against children under 16, 63 were offences involving abusive images of children, and 16 were for physical assaults on children (NNIRSC, 2006).

In North America, Shakeshaft (2004) found a wide range of estimates of the percentage of US students subject to sexual misconduct by school staff, varying from 3.7 per cent to 50.3 per cent. She suggests that the carefully drawn sample and survey methodology of the American Association of University Women (2001) study, which found that nearly 9.6 per cent of students are targeted in this way at sometime during their school career, presents the most accurate available data.

6.3.1 Alleged abusers

As with other abuse in these settings, there is no single feature that makes an individual an easily identifiable danger to children.

In terms of gender, the DCSF survey found that 62 per cent of allegations were made against men and 31 per cent against women, with gender not recorded in 7 per cent of allegations (Lawrie, 2006). Shakeshaft and Cohan (1995) found that the abuser was male in 96 per cent of reported sexual abuse cases by teachers and 76 per cent of victims were female. For female abusers, 86 per cent of victims were female. However, a Harris poll for the American Association of University Women (2001) found that approximately 40 per cent were female abusers and 40 per cent of their victims were male. Therefore, while official figures reflect male abuse of females, confidential self-reporting is more likely to indicate higher proportions of female abusers and male victims.

The barriers to reporting related to gender are common across settings. For males abused by a woman the likely credibility of an allegation may be perceived as lower because of the broad societal perception that, for a male, any sexual contact with a female would be welcome. For males abused by a male, fear of a homophobic response may be a significant inhibitor to reporting.

The consensus from the research appears to indicate that those who sexually abuse students are often among the most competent and popular staff (Bithell, 1991). Indeed, a number of education workers known to have sexually abused children had been awarded prizes for outstanding teaching (Shakeshaft and Cohan, 1995). “The majority of educator exploiters are highly respected by their