



HM Government

# Sexual Violence against Children and Vulnerable People National Group Progress Report and Action Plan 2015

March 2015

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# Introduction

## The National Group

Sexual violence is a serious and devastating crime. The National Group on Sexual Violence against Children and Vulnerable People was formed by the Government in 2013 to examine the lessons from recent inquiries, and to shape the Government's response to all forms of sexual violence against children and vulnerable people. Sexual violence includes sexual abuse within families, sexual exploitation by individuals or groups, and online sexual abuse, such as online grooming and sharing images of sexual violence on the internet, as well as newer forms of crime, such as live streaming of child sexual abuse. This report reflects on the action the Coalition Government has taken to tackle sexual violence against children and vulnerable people since the last action plan and progress report was published in July 2013, and sets the direction for future work.

The National Group brings together experts, policymakers and key partners to oversee and co-ordinate this work, and to develop a unified response. Led by the Minister of State for Crime Prevention, the National Group consists of Government departments, key partners such as the police, the National Crime Agency's (NCA) Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Command, the Local Government Association and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and experts such as the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Rape Crisis England and Wales and Barnardo's.

## Our strategic aims

The Government is determined to fundamentally change the way society understands and deals with sexual violence, and protects and supports victims. The National Group has identified four strategic aims, set out below.

### **1. Improving the way organisations and professions protect children and vulnerable people**

Although there are many excellent and dedicated safeguarding professionals, it is also the case that many people who have been victims of sexual violence have been failed by those whose specific responsibility was to protect and support them.

There needs to be a strong and pervasive safeguarding culture in relevant organisations and professions. This means making sure frontline practitioners understand the signs that a child or vulnerable person is at risk or is being abused and are confident in sharing that information with others and taking swift action. It means that agencies work together seamlessly. It means robust leadership, governance and accountability, so that professionals fulfil their duty to protect all children and vulnerable people from sexual violence.

## 2. Supporting victims and survivors

People who have experienced sexual violence will often have complex and varied health and support needs. We must make sure there is sufficient provision of services to meet these needs, over the long term if necessary.

Not all victims will choose to go through the criminal justice process, but if they do, the process of navigating the justice system can be highly traumatic. To provide access to justice for victims, and protect them when they are most vulnerable, we need to ensure they are supported before, during and after the criminal justice process, and that they are treated with kindness and consideration throughout.

## 3. Preventing sexual violence

We want to support people in recognising sexual abuse, and the risk factors that lead to it, when they see it or experience it, to make them more resilient, and to make environments safer for them – including the internet. An effective preventative approach also involves making people more aware of what constitutes abuse, and ensuring that those who are at risk of being sexually abused, and those who are around them, are aware and empowered to act.

## 4. Tackling offenders

Sexual abuse of any kind is a serious crime.

The number of people who are reporting their experience of sexual abuse has increased significantly in the last two years. We must ensure that law enforcement agencies have the right capabilities and resources to tackle offending. We have been working in partnership with industry and the voluntary sector to close the net on online sex offenders. We also need effective means of preventing reoffending, deterring and disrupting would-be offenders, and intervening to stop offending escalating.

## Setting the future direction

The report sets out progress so far and next steps in the Government's response to sexual violence against children and vulnerable people. It covers the extensive set of actions that have been announced in the Government's report on tackling child sexual exploitation, as well as wider work to tackle online abuse and violence against children and vulnerable people. Reporting to Secretaries of State, the National Group will have a key role in overseeing this work in the months to come.

# 1. Improving the way organisations and professions protect children and vulnerable people

Children and vulnerable people who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, sexual violence must be treated from a position of trust and belief, rather than inaction, apathy or blame. This requires strong leadership, and a culture that treats them with sensitivity and care. It requires a shared understanding among frontline professionals of what works: collaborating across organisational boundaries, sharing information, and making joint decisions in their interests.

## Progress since July 2013

To recognise at an early stage when people are at risk or being abused, agencies need to work together. To promote more effective working and sharing of information between agencies, we have:

- strengthened statutory guidance on safeguarding, *Working together to safeguard children*, to make sure that everyone who works with children understands their role and the roles of their partners in relation to child sexual abuse and information sharing;
- on the day the Government published its report *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation*, the Home Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Education, Communities and Local Government, Justice and Health, wrote to all local authority Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services, Police and Crime Commissioners, Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Health and Wellbeing Boards and GPs setting out how and when personal information should be shared;
- developed and published a report on multi-agency working and information sharing models (such as Multi-agency Safeguarding Hubs) in July 2014, highlighting practical examples of where agencies are working together to stop abuse before it occurs, to promote effective practice across local authorities;
- through the College of Policing, published Authorised Professional Practice guidance on child sexual exploitation in February 2014, to drive a shift in focus in the police onto how best to support victims, focusing on the credibility of the allegation rather than the credibility of the victim, and to support better information sharing;
- published revised statutory guidance on how social care and health professionals, police, schools and the voluntary sector should respond when children run away or go missing from home or care, highlighting the risk of sexual abuse.

To improve local oversight of safeguarding arrangements, we have:

- put the Adult Safeguarding Boards on a statutory footing, setting out the responsibilities of Boards and sharing relevant information between partners;
- established a new national, independent panel to advise and challenge Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to set up and publish high-quality serious case reviews, so that, nationally, lessons can be learned to improve child protection services and avoid mistakes being repeated;
- through the Department for Education, asked LSCBs to develop leading, innovative practices in tackling child sexual exploitation, and related issues such as children going missing from care and child neglect.

To improve the culture in professions, so that those with responsibility for working with children and vulnerable people have clear standards of service and put their needs at the heart of their work, we have:

- announced radical changes to leadership and professional standards in social work, including the piloting of three levels of assessment and accreditation within children's social work to provide much greater confidence about the quality of practice at each of those levels;
- developed a guide for healthcare practitioners who provide sexual health services, to help them spot the signs of child sexual abuse and safeguard children; and a child sexual exploitation pathway for school nurses which also helps them to improve their core offer to pupils;
- issued a fact pack to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) on violence against women and girls and sexual violence, and hosted an event with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners on early intervention and violence prevention, to engage PCCs directly on their role in galvanising local action;
- published a further progress report on culture change in care home settings in response to Winterbourne View Hospital, setting out how we have improved standards and accountability in services which care for adults with learning disabilities.

## Improving the way organisations and professions protect children and vulnerable people – current and future priorities

Our priority for the future is to work with professions, agencies and local authorities in support of their efforts to protect children and vulnerable people from sexual abuse.

### In the next 6 months, we will:

Take **immediate action to clarify and strengthen the guidance for practitioners**, so that they know what their responsibilities are, including:

- Setting out a clear and unambiguous statement about everyone's responsibility for safeguarding children, including tackling sexual abuse, through revisions to guidance for safeguarding professionals) March 2015
  - revised statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children* on safeguarding children and young people, including from sexual abuse;
  - revised guidance "*Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers*", to dispel common myths and concerns about information sharing
- Publishing in the summer of 2015 revised versions of guidance *What to do if you are worried a child is being abused* providing clear information for members of the public and children about how to identify child abuse and neglect and what action to take. The Government will spend £1 million on a communications campaign to promote the messages in this guidance to the public and other audiences.
- Publishing in September 2015 a revised version of statutory guidance *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation; Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children*.

### Over the next 12 months, we will:

**Explore and develop ways of improving leadership and accountability for those with safeguarding responsibilities**, including sanctions if they fail in those responsibilities, by:

- Launching a public consultation, which will include mandatory reporting, to understand the benefits and negative consequences of options for legislative change and options for imposing sanctions for failure to take action on abuse or neglect where it is a professional responsibility to do so.



**Over the next 18 months, we will:**

Work with agencies and local authorities to **develop and ensure widespread uptake of effective local arrangements to combat child abuse, including sexual abuse**, including effective multi-agency working, information sharing, and joint decision-making, based on evidence of what works:

- Create a new national taskforce to help local authorities when child sexual abuse is a particular concern. This will ensure that specialist professionals in social work, law enforcement and health are available to be deployed when they are needed anywhere in the country.
- Link this to a new national Centre of Expertise to identify and share high quality evidence on what works to tackle child sexual abuse. The centre will identify gaps in evidence and commission research or validate local practice to address these gaps. The Centre will develop training and materials for professionals, and will work with the taskforce to champion best practice at a local and regional level.
- Explore in a number of Local Authority areas alternative ways of providing local assurance about multi-agency working on child abuse and neglect;
- Deliver a series of events to promote multi-agency information sharing models, identify the barriers to information sharing, and disseminate best practice;
- Through the Information Sharing Centre of Excellence, provide direct support in overcoming the barriers to sharing information.

## 2. Supporting victims and survivors

Supporting victims and survivors means providing services that meet their short and long-term needs, recognising that every person's experiences and needs will be different. The National Group has been instrumental in delivering guidance for practitioners working with victims, with the aim of improving safeguarding outcomes, and trialling new ways of working to deliver better support.

The provision of services must meet the demand for these services. Over the last two years the number of people who have experienced sexual abuse and now feel able to report their experiences has increased significantly. This has placed enormous pressure on services. An immediate priority is supporting them to meet the demand.

### Progress since July 2013

To ensure all victims can access specialist support services which are expert in helping them cope and recover, we have:

- ring-fenced nearly £40 million of stable funding from 2011 to 2015 for specialist local domestic and sexual violence support services including 87 Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs);
- placed funding of rape support centres on a more sustainable footing, spending £4.4 million to fund 84 rape support centres in 2014/15;
- announced in December 2014 a £7 million package of investment to the end of the 2015/16 financial year to ensure more victims of sexual assault have access to specialist help, including more than £2 million extra funding for the 84 existing rape support centres;
- set up new rape support centres in Grantham and Crawley which will be in operation in 2015 – on top of the 13 set up since 2010 - meeting the coalition commitment to open 15 new centres by 2015;
- launched the first ever dedicated Male Rape Support Fund with a commitment of £650,000 funding each year for this and the next financial year to provide services to support male victims of rape and sexual violence;
- provided ongoing funding for 2015/16 to young people's advocates, who provide direct support to young women who have been victims, or are at risk, of sexual violence by gangs, as part of the government's Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme;

- updated the Victims' Code to ensure automatic referral to victims' support services and enhanced entitlements for victims of rape and sexual violence, including the right to ask to read out (or have read aloud for them) their victim personal statement in court and the right to information about restorative justice.

To reduce the trauma that children and vulnerable people may feel from their experience of the criminal justice system and to ensure that they get the support they need to feel safe and respected we have:

- made it a requirement for all publicly funded advocates in sexual offences cases to receive training so that children and vulnerable witnesses are treated with the care they deserve;
- given children and vulnerable witnesses greater opportunity to give evidence from a place where they feel comfortable, rather than having to go to court, with at least one such location available in each court region;
- piloted pre-trial cross-examination for children and vulnerable victims, so that they will not have to appear in person in a crowded courtroom or give evidence in a live trial;
- enhanced the role of services such as the Crown Prosecution Service Victim Liaison Units, Witness Care Units, and the Witness Service in supporting victims through the criminal justice system;
- set out specific measures, in the new Victims' Code, to make sure children and vulnerable witnesses understand the special measures to which they are entitled, such as having a screen around the witness box, being able to give evidence by live video-link, the judge and lawyers removing their wigs and gowns, and having an intermediary accompany victims in court to help them understand the process and questions.

To support local commissioners through the change from national to local commissioning of victims services, we have delivered a programme of work with commissioners aimed at setting out the respective roles of different local and national services and the obligations of commissioners in meeting victims' needs:

- a specific Violence Against Women and Girls event and fact pack for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs);
- £1.3 million to PCCs in 2014/15 with a further £1.35 million in 2015/16 to provide local domestic and sexual violence services – PCCs are not limited to this funding for sexual violence or domestic violence services and use their wider budget for those services too;
- a series of regional events for commissioners and service providers, supported by online resources;
- a series of commissioning 'masterclasses' designed for providers of Violence Against Women and Girls services in collaboration with the Cabinet Office Commissioning Academy.

To support the care of children who have, or may have, been trafficked for the purposes of sexual abuse, we have:

- begun a trial of specialist independent advocates for child victims of trafficking across 23 local authorities, which will include consideration of how these advocates will support victims who, like many of those victims in Rotherham, have been trafficked around the UK for the purpose of exploitation, with a view to introducing this provision more widely if the trial proves successful.

## Supporting victims and survivors – current and future priorities

The National Group has overseen an uplift in the funding of services for the victims and survivors of sexual violence, and work between Government and some commissioners to maintain specialist service provision. We now need to provide ongoing assurance that the needs of victims are being met, particularly when the number of victims coming forward is increasing. We also need to ensure that those who engage with the criminal justice system are supported to do so and treated appropriately throughout.

Our priorities for the next period are to ensure the adequate, joined-up provision of specialist services, supported by a thorough understanding, which is widely shared, of what victims and survivors need. This support should be available if they do not choose to go through the criminal justice process – but if they do, they should be supported throughout that process too.

### In the next 6 months, we will:

Take immediate action to **support the capacity of organisations which provide direct support to people who are victims of sexual abuse**, by:

- delivering the £7 million uplift in funding announced in December 2014 for non-statutory organisations which support the victims and survivors of sexual abuse.
- directing victims who do engage with the criminal justice system to information which clarifies the role and availability of pre-trial therapy for victims and survivors.

### Over the next 12 months, we will:

Develop **more ways of supporting the diverse needs of people who have experienced abuse in the longer term, including within the criminal justice system**, by:

- examining the outcome of the current Home Office trial of independent child trafficking advocates across 23 local authorities and how these roles will improve the welfare of children at risk of child sexual exploitation;
- Using the Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme to fund projects which represent innovative approaches to children's social care, including projects which support the victims of sexual abuse.

Improve the ways in which the **criminal justice system responds to the diverse needs of people who have experienced abuse**, so they can access justice, by:

- Exploring how to further expand out-of-court provision for children and vulnerable people who have experienced sexual abuse and are giving evidence;
- Increasing the provision of specialist support for vulnerable people during trial by increasing the use of intermediaries.

### Over the next 18 months, we will:

Develop a **thorough and robust understanding of the demands on support services**, working with the specialist voluntary sector, to support a 'whole systems' approach where services are joined up, and supply meets demand, including:

- Undertaking research and analysis on capacity and service provision by the specialist sexual violence voluntary sector, to understand how victims' needs are being met and what gaps in provision exist;
- Assess the provision of support to sexual violence victims by comparing what statutory agencies are providing against what we know about the people who are seeking services.

## 3. Preventing sexual violence

We want to make sure people who are close to those at risk feel confident in identifying the signs of sexual abuse and know how to act on their concerns. Children and vulnerable people should have easy access to information which explains what is acceptable in a healthy relationship and what sexual consent means.

Prevention also means increasing resilience and creating safer spaces for children, young people and vulnerable adults. Recent cases of child sexual exploitation, explored in reports by Professor Alexis Jay and Louise Casey on Rotherham and by Ann Coffey MP on Greater Manchester, highlight the vulnerabilities of young people in town centres at night. We want to close down the opportunities for offenders and minimise the risk to vulnerable people.

### Progress since July 2013

To help prevent abuse we have:

- run a high profile 'This is Abuse' campaign, which aims to prevent teenagers from becoming victims or perpetrators of abusive relationships, encourages them to consider their views of abuse and the meaning of consent within relationships and signposts them to help and advice, with over two million unique visitors to the website since it launched;
- continued to support the NCA's *Thinkuknow* programme which helps children and young people to identify the risks they may face both online and off, understand how to protect themselves and know how to seek further support;
- commissioned the PSHE (personal, social, health and economic education) Association to produce new guidance for teachers on teaching consent and, to further support teachers we established a PSHE expert group to ensure that teachers have the advice and resources to deliver high quality teaching, and give PSHE the same prominence as national curriculum subjects;
- extended grant funding to the PSHE Association into 2014/15, providing an additional £75,000 for it to continue advising schools on curricula and staff training, and to develop and promote a set of case studies illustrating good PSHE teaching, including teaching a better understanding of consent;
- published resource packs for schools and colleges on preventing youth violence, providing access to guidance and evidence on safeguarding, child protection, online safety and 'sexting' in July 2013;

- set out clear and simple guidance for all teachers and staff working in schools and colleges setting out their responsibility to identify children at risk of sexual abuse, including child sexual abuse, and giving them clear information on what to look out for. 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', published in April 2014, has the force of statute and provides clear and simple principles which allow frontline, skilled professionals to use their knowledge and judgement to protect children in their care.

To make the internet a safer environment for children, we have:

- delivered a global summit, #WePROTECT Children Online, to drive a coordinated international response to tackle online child sexual abuse in December 2014. The UK Government pledged to provide £50m of funding over the next 5 years and to work with UNICEF to develop a child protection fund to drive action in this area.

worked with the technology industry through WePROTECT to explore innovative technological solutions to combating online child sexual exploitation. There are particular 'hotspots' in towns and cities, where children and vulnerable people may be more exposed to potential sexual abusers, particularly at night. To minimise the risk in the night-time economy, we have:

- through the Security Industry Authority (SIA), changed licensing conditions in November 2013, ensuring that SIA licence holders have had to undergo child sexual exploitation awareness training before getting licensed. Since January 2014 this also includes all door and CCTV staff so that these night-time workers can more easily spot potential signs of abuse.
- written to the Chief Executives of all local licensing authorities reminding them to ensure that all licensed drivers have undergone a thorough vetting process.

Women and girls can experience significant harm as a result of their association with gang members, including sexual violence. We have driven work to tackle this issue, including:

- work to ensure that youth offending teams can provide help to girls who may suffer intimidation from gang members, and have provided training for teachers, health and youth justice professionals on how to identify and support these girls and young women.

## Preventing sexual violence – current and future priorities

The National Group has overseen a number of projects to raise awareness of the abuse of children and vulnerable people, the risk factors, and the signs of sexual abuse. We need to make sure this continues, reaching more people so that they feel confident in acting on their concerns and reducing the risk that they or others may face.

Our priority for the next period is to reduce the number of children and vulnerable people who experience sexual violence by increasing the number of places where they are safe and ensuring that more of the people they come into contact with understand and can act to mitigate the risks.

### In the next 6 months, we will:

Take **immediate action to support earlier identification and referral of people at risk**, including

- Launch a wide and far reaching communications campaign, based on updated *What to do if you are worried a child is being abused* guidance, to provide clear information for professionals, the public and children on how to identify and report child sexual abuse and neglect;
- Include new advice on how to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse in sex and relationship education guidance for schools.

### Over the next 12 months, we will:

**Consolidate and build on the progress we have made on communicating the risks of sexual abuse**, by extending this work, including

- Addressing under-reporting by supporting projects that encourage reporting from women, especially in hard-to-reach communities.

### Over the next 18 months, we will:

**Work towards an overall reduction in the risk to children and vulnerable people**, including work with partners to increase the number of safe spaces for vulnerable people, including:

- Building on the *Say something if you see something* campaign, working with the voluntary and private sector to support workers in hotels, restaurants and take-aways in reporting concerns;
- Working with groups such as street pastors, Purple Flag and Best Bar None, which promote safety in the night-time economy by engaging directly with young people on streets in towns and cities, to support better safeguarding of vulnerable people;
- Exploring with partners in the restaurant industry the creation of 'safe zone' status for premises – as a means of making clear that establishments meet safeguarding standards;
- Working with partners on the issues for vulnerable people in the community.



## 4. Tackling offenders

Sexual abuse of any kind is a serious crime. Law enforcement agencies need the intelligence, the capacity, and the co-operation of their partners to identify and stop the people who commit this crime. While it is not possible to put a definitive figure on victim numbers, the NSPCC have reported that approximately 1 in 20 (5%) of UK children have experienced some form of coerced sexual act by the age of 16 years. The Child Exploitation & Online Protection (CEOP) Command of the National Crime Agency estimated that, in 2012, there were as many as many as 50,000 people in the UK involved in the downloading and viewing of indecent images of children. Understanding the true scale of both contact and online offending in this area will always be difficult owing to its hidden nature. However, the potential scale of abuse is clearly alarming.

We have set out below the work we have done since 2013 to introduce new guidance and powers to ensure that the police are able to tackle offenders, and to improve the likelihood of convictions.

### Progress since July 2013

The Government's Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, published in October 2013, highlighted the sexual exploitation of children as a key threat. Through the strategy, the Home Office, the National Crime Agency (NCA) and police forces are delivering improvements to the capacity and capability of law enforcement agencies to tackle the sexual abuse of children. In October 2013, the NCA became operational, incorporating the former Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre. The NCA's CEOP Command is equipped to deal with complex cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Every one of around 4,500 NCA officers has a legal duty to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

This year, to help tackle offenders we have given child sexual abuse the status of a national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement, ensuring that this is prioritised by every police force.

The College of Policing and the National Policing lead have set a requirement on all forces to train all new and existing police staff including call handlers, PCSOs, police officers, detectives and specialist investigators on how to respond to child sexual abuse. The College of Policing has developed and will keep under review, a comprehensive training programme, to raise the standard of the police response to this crime, including addressing police behaviours and attitudes, support to victims and the importance of partnership working and information sharing:

- All new recruits will receive a combination of classroom-based training and e-learning. All existing officers will undertake a tailored e-learning package.



- All detectives will receive one week of classroom-based training on public protection, with a strong emphasis on child sexual abuse.
- All specialist investigators must complete the Specialist Child Abuse Investigation Programme before they can be included in the National Register of Child Abuse Investigators managed by the College of Policing.

To support the identification and investigation of sexual abuse – including online abuse – so that police can ensure the prosecution and conviction of more offenders, we have:

- published local profile guidance in 2014 which helps police to work across force boundaries when tackling serious and organised crime (including sexual exploitation), and to work with other agencies as part of local partnership boards that involve the police, government agencies, voluntary organisations and the private sector;
- introduced legislation which will allow police to require hotels and similar establishments, in which they reasonably believe child sexual exploitation is taking place, to provide information about guests, better equipping them to investigate sexual offences committed on the premises;
- through the Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Act 2014 (DRIPA), provided a clear basis on which domestic communications companies can be required to retain certain types of communications data – which the Director General of the National Crime Agency has identified as the most powerful tool available to those investigating child sexual exploitation and identifying and safeguarding its victims and potential victims;
- introduced to Parliament, in November 2014, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill, which includes provisions to enable the Government to require communications service providers to retain additional data necessary to establish what individual, or at least what device, was using an IP address at a specific point in time. This will enhance law enforcement capabilities further in the investigation of child sexual abuse and exploitation online, and in the location of missing people.

To tackle the use of the internet in the sexual abuse of children, so that law enforcement agencies are more able to identify people who create and share images of child sexual abuse, and to stop the proliferation of such images, we have:

- seen the success of the NCA-led Operation NOTARISE, a major, UK-wide operation to identify and take enforcement action against individuals viewing Indecent Images of Children (IIOC) online has resulted in over 700 arrests and more than 400 children being safeguarded;
- worked with industry and partners to block returns leading to child sexual abuse material from online searches – additionally, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) is now able to search out indecent imagery proactively so that it can be taken-down or blocked;
- introduced a single, secure database of indecent images of children which will provide law enforcement agencies with effective tools to search seized devices for IIOC, reduce the time taken to identify such images, increase the ability to identify victims – the database will be linked into other national databases across the world through INTERPOL to provide greater understanding on the global nature of IIOC and increase victim identification capability internationally;

- announced a further £10m for 2015/16 to allow NCA-CEOP to create new teams to tackle online child sexual exploitation, and a joint NCA and Government Communications Headquarters team that will use the latest techniques and expertise to track down online offenders;
- introduced legislation making it an offence to possess images that depict rape, by closing the loophole in the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 on extreme sexual images, and introduced provisions through the Serious Crime Bill to criminalise sexual communication with a child and the possession of 'paedophile manuals'.

We have taken steps to ensure the criminal justice system does not work against victims, and instead supports them in securing convictions against their abusers.

- The new Guidelines on Prosecuting Cases of child sexual abuse, published by the Crown Prosecution Service in October 2013, have established a new approach for dealing with cases of sexual violence against vulnerable people, which promotes a focus on the credibility of the allegation rather than the credibility of the individual.
- Alongside the prosecuting guidelines, we have published a list of stereotypical behaviour previously thought to undermine the credibility of victims to dispel the associated myths when bringing a prosecution;
- We have delivered face to face training for lawyers by the CPS Principal Legal Advisor for existing specialist lawyers regarding the lessons arising out of the Savile Case, and in-house training for all prosecutors to introduce the new guidelines.

The UK has some of the toughest powers in the world to deal with sex offenders and we are committed to ensuring that the system is as robust as it can be. To stop people who have committed sexual abuse from reoffending, prevent offending from escalating, and deter those who are in danger of offending, so that more people are prevented from becoming victims, we have:

- through the 'This is Abuse' campaign, which we launched in December 2013, delivered a strong message to those who might be at risk of offending to consider their own attitudes and behaviours;
- secured £100,000 funding for the 'Stop It Now' helpline, which aims to stop child sexual abusers and potential abusers, by challenging them to recognise their behaviour as abusive and to seek help to change;
- reformed the civil orders available to manage sex offenders and risk, introducing a new sexual harm prevention order and a sexual risk order, which are more flexible and clearer than the orders they replace;
- secured legislation to roll out mandatory polygraph testing as a licence condition for high risk sex offenders across England & Wales;
- developed a suite of accredited treatment programmes aimed at different groups of offenders in the community and in custody which offer targeted interventions to address their offending behaviour.

## Tackling offenders – current and future priorities

The National Group has overseen work to improve the ability of police forces and law enforcement agencies to identify and stop the people who sexually abuse children and vulnerable people. However, our understanding of the scale of, and motivations for, offending continue to evolve, and it is clear that we need to do more to ensure our law enforcement and offender management responses are sufficient.

Our priority for the next period is to develop a robust and nuanced intelligence assessment of sexual violence, to ensure law enforcement capacity and capabilities are enough to deal with this emerging assessment, and to develop a wider range of well-evidenced interventions to prevent re-offending.

### In the next 6 months, we will:

**Implement new powers for police which will close down opportunities for offenders,** and provide more effective early interventions for tackling offending:

- Giving police the power to close an establishment which might be used for sexual activity with a child, by commencing new closure powers, which strengthen the powers in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 in March 2015.
- In March 2015, commencing Sexual Harm Prevention Orders and Sexual Risk Orders, which replace existing powers in England and Wales and lower the threshold for risk to cover any case of sexual harm, not just cases of serious sexual harm, with a penalty of up to 5 years imprisonment if breached.

### Over the next 12 months, we will:

**Develop police and law enforcement intelligence and capabilities to detect, investigate and prosecute offenders,** including:

- Ensure national rollout of the child abuse image database to all police forces;
- Ensure national implementation of the policing child sexual exploitation action plan;
- Support the global response to tackle online child sexual exploitation through the commitments made at the #WePROTECT Summit.

### Over the next 18 months, we will:

**Deliver a step-change in the investigation and management of offenders,** based on evidence and improved intelligence, to ensure capacity and capabilities continue to meet the scale and nature of offending, including:

- Expand the operational capacity of the NCA-CEOP Command during 2014/15 and 2015/16 to address the scale of online offending.



<p>1.3 Promote multi-agency information sharing models and explore the local barriers to effective information sharing and joint action.</p>	<p>Deliver a series of events to promote multi-agency information sharing models and explore the local barriers to effective information sharing and joint action. This will build on the Home Office's report in July 2014, which recommended that local areas set up strong multi-agency working arrangements.</p> <p>Commission the Information Sharing Centre of Excellence to provide direct support to Local Authorities in how they share information. Lessons learnt will be shared across the Local Government Association and other networks.</p> <p>Complete the roll out of the Child Protection Information Sharing system which supports health professionals in dealing with children who visit unscheduled health care settings by alerting them if child is subject to a child protection plan or is looked after by a Local Authority.</p> <p>Explore in a number of Local Authority areas alternative ways of providing local assurance about multi-agency working on child abuse and neglect, with up to £1 million to support this.</p>	<p>By September 2015</p> <p>By April 2016</p> <p>By 2018</p> <p>From April 2015</p>
<p>1.4 Improve inspection regimes so that inspections are integrated and assess multi-agency working.</p>	<p>Work closely with inspectorates, including Ofsted, CQC and HMIC, to develop and deliver a robust and effective system of multi-agency inspections, which examine how local agencies work together to help, care for and protect children and young people.</p> <p>Refocus the inspection regime on practice not policy so that organisations and individuals are judged on the impact of their performance on the ground, not on whether there are action plans in place.</p>	<p>From April 2016</p> <p>By April 2017</p>

**Outcome: Agencies intervene earlier when vulnerable people are at risk of sexual abuse**

Actions	Detail	Timeline
1.5 Support local authorities in developing and delivering effective responses to child abuse.	<p>Develop an independent child sexual abuse taskforce. The taskforce will assist local authorities when large cases arise. The taskforce would focus on ongoing and current cases, with the aim of preventing further harm to victims and intervening early. It would ensure that specialist professionals are available anywhere in the country at the point they are needed.</p> <p>Link the taskforce to a new Centre of Expertise to identify and share high quality evidence on what works to tackle child sexual abuse. The centre will identify gaps in evidence and commission research or validate local practice to address these gaps. The Centre of Expertise will develop training and materials for professionals, and will work with the taskforce described above to champion best practice at a local and regional level.</p>	<p>During 2015/16</p> <p>During 2015/16</p>
1.6 Improve the way agencies protect children when they go missing from care or are placed in care outside the local authority that has responsibility for them.	<p>HMIC to inspect all police forces on their response to missing and absent children, and with the National Policing Lead for Missing Persons and the National Crime Agency, consider options for a national register of missing persons data.</p> <p>Funding a programme of support and training for children's homes over the coming year, helping embed the new regulations and supporting homes on critical areas of practice.</p>	<p>By October 2015</p> <p>April 2015</p>
1.7 Improve safeguards for children in children's homes.	<p>Make clear in our guidance on the new Children's Homes Regulations that staff in children's homes can and should take steps to protect a child from meeting someone when they believe there is a threat to the child's safety.</p> <p>Encouraging through the Department for Education's Innovation Programme, the development and testing of new, better tailored approaches to care for children who have been sexually exploited.</p>	<p>New regulations come into force April 2015</p> <p>From April 2015</p>
1.8 Increase transparency and accountability around how agencies are responding when children go missing.	<p>Making clear, in statutory guidance, that data and analysis of the children who go missing from home or care must be included in regular reports to council members and to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.</p>	<p>By March 2015</p>

**Outcome: There are effective mechanisms for holding individuals and organisations to account for how well they carry out their safeguarding responsibilities.**

Actions	Detail	Timeline
<p>1.9 Create clear accountability for those with safeguarding responsibilities and sanctions if they fail in those responsibilities.</p>	<p>Launch a public consultation, which will include consideration of mandatory reporting, to understand the benefits and negative consequences of options for legislative change.</p> <p>Challenge the local government sector to strengthen accountability arrangements for senior local leaders immediately through improving its existing self-regulation.</p> <p>Through the Small Business and Enterprise Bill, ensure that exit payments for senior staff, including council staff, can be clawed back where those people are quickly re-employed in the same part of the public sector.</p> <p>Make it clear that local authorities should adopt the principles on the use of settlement agreements in the public sector that were set out in the Government's guidance, published on 1 February this year. This guidance sets out the circumstances when it is not appropriate to enter into such agreements. We will challenge the sector to take action to ensure that authorities meet these standards.</p> <p>Respond to the public consultation on improvements to police complaints and disciplinary processes, to improve standards of integrity in the police.</p>	<p>By September 2016</p> <p>By April 2015</p> <p>By April 2015</p> <p>By April 2015</p> <p>By April 2015</p>

<p>1.10 Improve local accountability, scrutiny and transparency around safeguarding.</p>	<p>Commission an external analysis of Local Safeguarding Children Board reports in 15/16 to bring greater scrutiny to the system and examine how effective the Local Safeguarding Children Board has been in responding to child abuse and neglect.</p> <p>Through <i>Working Together</i>, introduce an expectation that all Local Safeguarding Children Boards will conduct regular local assessments on the effectiveness of local responses to child sexual exploitation and publish the outcome of those assessments through their annual reports.</p> <p>Improve the quality of central Government data collection to include data on the prevalence on child sexual abuse and publish this data to inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board assessments so that the performance of local agencies is more transparent.</p>	<p>By December 2015</p> <p>March 2015</p> <p>By March 2016</p>
<p>1.11 Provide increased protection for whistleblowers.</p>	<p>Create a new single point of contact for child abuse related whistle blowing reports to ensure that all professionals can raise concerns about how their organisation is protecting children from the risk of abuse. This new single point of contact will be able to spot patterns of failure across the country, and link to the new joint area inspections where there are concerns.</p> <p>Create a new expectation that all organisations that have safeguarding responsibilities should have internal whistle blowing policies. These policies should reflect the principles that Sir Robert Francis sets out in his review 'Freedom to Speak Up'.</p> <p>Ensure that new multi-agency inspections examine whistle-blowing arrangements.</p>	<p>During 2015/16</p> <p>By March 2015</p> <p>During 2015/16</p>



**Outcome: There are clear standards in the organisations and professions that deal with the victims of sexual abuse, and victims know what level of service to expect.**

Actions	Detail	Timeline
1.12 Develop a 'Pledge to Victims' for professionals and agencies who work with people who have experienced sexual abuse.	Consult experts, victims and survivors to develop a statement which articulates what every sexual violence victim can expect from services after they have made a disclosure, and encourage agencies and professional bodies to sign up to the pledge.	By July 2016
1.13 Implement a new set of professional standards for social workers, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a new Approved Child and Family Practitioner status for social workers that deal with the highest-risk areas of child protection;</li> <li>• a new assessed and accredited supervisor status;</li> <li>• a new role of social work practice leader. This will be a senior position focused solely on the quality of frontline practice in a local area and accountable for the quality of that practice.</li> </ul>	Pilot the new leadership and professional standards in 2015.  Rollout the new standards nationally, subject to evaluation of the pilot.	From April 2015  During 2016/17
1.14 Provide guidance for police officers investigating cases of institutional child sexual abuse.	Produce a series of best practice briefing papers for front line police officers investigating cases of institutional child sexual abuse and abuse involving persons of public prominence. Guidance should include best practice for the management of victims, witnesses and offenders.	By April 2016
1.15 Provide guidance and training to healthcare workers to improve early identification of and response to child abuse and neglect.	Start to expand routine enquiry on child sexual abuse during 2015/16 by professionals in targeted services such as mental health, sexual health and substance misuse services, to help ensure early intervention to protect those at risk and to ensure victims receive the care they need.  Update 'safeguarding children' training materials for National Health Service staff (Health Education England).  Produce an awareness raising film on child sexual exploitation for all staff in the National Health Service (Health Education England).	During 2015/16  By April 2016  In 2015/16

1.15 continued	<p>Develop a new guideline for practitioners with evidence-based recommendations for action to improve early help, recognition, assessment and response to harmful sexual behaviours in young people (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.)</p> <p>Train staff providing services used by sexually abused children and vulnerable adults to be able to support people to access the services that they need to get their lives back.</p> <p>Work with professional bodies, NHS England, Public Health England and Health Education England on where effort needs to be focussed to upskill staff on trauma-informed approaches to care in mental health services.</p> <p>Public Health England is reviewing the public health research on child sexual exploitation and abuse and in collaboration with the Office of the Deputy Children's Commissioner (England), is convening an expert public health group in mid-April from which PHE will articulate the role public health can and should play in keeping young people safe from sexual harm.</p> <p>Public Health England is developing a programme of work on the role that resilience building can play in helping young people stay safe and make informed decisions.</p> <p>The Department of Health and Public Health England will publish a child sexual exploitation guide for school nurses.</p> <p>NHS England to publish two new resources to support commissioning effective, seamless transitional mental health services for young people.</p>	<p>By September 2017</p> <p>By March 2017</p> <p>From March 2015</p> <p>From April 2015</p> <p>From March 2015</p> <p>March 2015</p> <p>February 2015</p>
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## 2. Supporting victims and survivors

**Outcome: Commissioners and both statutory and non-statutory service providers are supported in understanding the needs of victims and how they can best be met within the current commissioning environment.**

Actions	Detail	Timeline
2.1 Supporting the development of integrated support pathways in local areas, which join up statutory and non-statutory specialist services for children and vulnerable adults.	<p>Undertake research and analysis on capacity and service provision by the specialist sexual violence voluntary sector, to understand how victims needs are being met and what the existing gaps are.</p> <p>Explore issues in the context of sexual violence victims, comparing what statutory agencies are providing against what we know about the people seeking services.</p> <p>Explore how the different guidance on health, social and non-statutory services can be consolidated, covering local and national commissioning.</p> <p>Introduce new data collection requirements across the NHS to help understand the prevalence of child sexual abuse and to enable commissioners to make sure services are provided in areas where they are most needed.</p> <p>The Department of Health will improve available data on the prevalence of child abuse using the upcoming population-wide children and adolescent mental health survey.</p>	<p>By December 2015</p> <p>By December 2015</p> <p>By March 2016</p> <p>During 2015/16</p> <p>During 2015/16</p>
2.2 Examine the work of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Taskforce.	The Department of Health's report on the work of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce will set out a clear national ambition to support and inform the design and delivery of a local offer of services to all children and young people, including those who are particularly vulnerable, such as sexually exploited or sexually abused children. Delivering the ambition will require local leadership and ownership to deliver the principles and ambitions of the report.	March 2015
2.3 Examine the outcome of the current Home Office trial of independent child trafficking advocates.	The Home Office will review the outcome of the trial which is being carried out across 23 local authorities, including considering how these roles will improve the welfare of children at risk of child sexual exploitation.	By November 2015

2.4 Increase the provision of support to victims and survivors.	<p>As previously announced, an additional £7 million has been allocated over this year and 2015/16 to non-statutory organisations which support the victims of sexual abuse. This will include specialist services for all child victims of sexual abuse and services in areas where there is a high prevalence of child sexual abuse.</p> <p>Provide £165,000 of funding to non-statutory organisations in South Yorkshire to support female victims of rape and sexual abuse including in Rotherham and £50,000 to support male victims of rape and sexual abuse.</p>	During 2015/16
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**Outcome: The victims of sexual violence receive equality of access to justice and are safeguarded before, during and after their involvement in the criminal justice process and have access to specialist support after the criminal justice process has completed.**

Actions	Detail	Timeline
2.5 Facilitate uptake of pre-trial therapy by signposting to guidance clarifying its role.	Signpost victims to guidance which clarifies the role of pre-trial therapy.	By March 2015
2.6 Increase use of special measures	Expanding out-of-court provision and monitoring uptake of this.	By September 2015
2.7 Improve specialist support during a trial.	Increase the provision of intermediaries for vulnerable witnesses.	By December 2015
2.8 Broaden the scope and use of ground rules and Ground Rule Hearings across sexual violence cases.	Develop and issue revised guidance to prosecutors on ground rules.	From April 2015
2.9 Extend the specialism of those involved in trials of sexual violence cases.	Develop a requirement for all publicly-funded advocates to undergo approved training on working with vulnerable victims and witnesses in order to be instructed in sexual violence cases.	By March 2015
2.10 Address public misconceptions about sexual violence in the criminal justice system.	Continue work to dispel myths and stereotypes throughout the handling of the case, including at trial.	By March 2016
2.11 Improve victims' experiences of trial.	<p>Launch a new information service for victims.</p> <p>Develop ways to measure and publish victims' satisfaction with the service they receive.</p> <p>Ensure that criminal justice agencies publish information to demonstrate how they have improved services for victims.</p>	<p>By March 2015</p> <p>From April 2015</p> <p>From April 2015</p>

### 3. Preventing sexual violence

**Outcome: Children and vulnerable people – and the people who care for them - are more aware of the risk of sexual abuse and what they can do to mitigate it.**

Actions	Detail	Timeline
3.1 Improve sex and relationship education to children.	<p>Ensure schools understand their duty to have regard to the Secretary of State's statutory sex and relationship education guidance (SRE), which includes how pupils can recognise and avoid exploitation and sexual abuse. The focus will be on supporting schools to cover these issues appropriately through PSHE and SRE.</p> <p>Through the PSHE Association, work with directly with a number of schools to develop training for staff to raise their confidence in using the materials.</p>	<p>By April 2016</p> <p>By April 2016</p>
3.2 Raise awareness of the risk of sexual abuse of people with mental health issues.	<p>Increase awareness and use of the UK Missing Persons Bureau's Framework (a multi agency approach to protecting vulnerable adults).</p> <p>Through the 'Street Triage' pilots, monitor how agencies are responding to vulnerable people who have gone missing.</p>	<p>From March 2015</p> <p>Pilots conclude in March 2015</p>

**Outcome: More people have an understanding of sexual abuse, and feel empowered to identify, recognise, and act on the signs.**

Actions	Detail	Timeline
3.3 Inform children and the people who care for them how they should act if they are concerned about abuse.	<p>Run a wide and far reaching communications campaign based on the <i>What to do if you are worried a child is being abused</i> guidance for children, parents and professionals.</p> <p>Expand the community based English Language Programme which supports those with lowest levels of English and who are most isolated and vulnerable as a result.</p> <p>Setting up a fund to support innovative projects that will help give women, especially in hard to reach groups, confidence to challenge sexual abuse wherever it occurs.</p>	<p>From Summer 2015</p> <p>By May 2015</p> <p>By March 2015</p>
3.4 Work with the private and voluntary sector to encourage night-time and entertainment workers to report concerns.	<p>Develop links between Government and organisations that have an interest in reducing risk in the night-time economy to support their work.</p> <p>Building on the Say Something if you See Something campaign, working with the voluntary and private sector to support workers in hotels, restaurants and take-aways in reporting concerns.</p>	<p>By March 2016</p> <p>By March 2016</p>

**Outcome: There are fewer places where abusers are able to target vulnerable people.**

Actions	Detail	Timeline
3.5 Take action on 'hot spots' where vulnerable people may be targeted.	<p>Revise the guidelines around alcohol and entertainments licensing to reinforce the safeguarding responsibilities of licence holders.</p> <p>Begin a trial of 'safe zones' in the night-time economy – as a means of clearly identifying to vulnerable people which premises meet safeguarding standards.</p>	<p>By May 2015</p> <p>By March 2016</p>

**4. Tackling offenders****Outcome: Locally and nationally, there is improved intelligence and a better understanding of the threat from sexual violence.**

Actions	Detail	Timeline
4.1 Ensure the seriousness of the threat of sexual violence is reflected in law enforcement priorities and strategies.	<p>Through the NCA, deliver an enhanced annual strategic threat assessment. The enhanced strategic threat assessment will reflect the national threat presented by child sexual abuse.</p> <p>Give child sexual abuse the status of a national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement. This will support forces to prioritise this and ensure that forces work together to share resources, intelligence and best practice.</p>	<p>By summer 2015</p> <p>March 2015</p>
4.2 Ensure all UK police forces have access to the newly launched Child Abuse Image Database (CAID) with the Internet Watch Foundation receiving the hash set for the images.	The CAID will provide law enforcement with effective tools to search seized devices for indecent images of children online (IIOC), reduce the time taken to identify such images and increase the ability to identify victims. It will be rolled out to all forces in 2015.	December 2015
4.3 Ensure all serious and organised crime local profiles and partnerships reflect the threat from child sexual exploitation.	Review the definition of child sexual exploitation in professional practice to ensure all agencies are collecting the same data to create local profiles, which will help agencies work together to target disruption and investigate offending.	September 2015
4.4 Increase the identification and pursuit of organised crime groups (OCG) involved in child sexual exploitation.	National Policing Lead for child sexual abuse will co-ordinate improvements through enhanced regional collaboration and amending the OCG tracker.	By April 2016
4.5 Develop improved reporting by police forces on sexual abuse.	Police forces will improve their ability to accurately report on the prevalence of all forms of child and adult sexual abuse in their force area to allow accurate reporting on the scale of the problem and to enable intelligence to be more effectively shared.	By April 2016

**Outcome: Law enforcement has the capabilities to detect, investigate, prosecute and disrupt offenders.**

Actions	Detail	Timeline
4.6 Enhance the work of police forces to tackle sexual violence against children and vulnerable adults, based on evidence of what works.	<p>Review the Police child sexual exploitation action plan in light of the Professor Alexis Jay report into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham to ensure that the learning is shared and plans implemented in forces to improve the policing response.</p> <p>Strengthen the law enforcement response by funding a new network of regional police coordinators and analysts, located in Regional Organised Crime Units.</p> <p>The National Policing Leads for child sexual abuse and vulnerable adult abuse will co-ordinate a series of multi-agency reviews to help forces develop their response to the threat of sexual violence to children and vulnerable adults.</p> <p>All police forces to develop systems for identifying patterns and trends of abuse against vulnerable adults, as agreed in the national response to Winterbourne View Hospital.</p> <p>Prepare an overarching, evidence-based Police Child Protection Action Plan and a Police Action Plan on abuse of Vulnerable Adults.</p>	<p>November 2015</p> <p>During 2015/16</p> <p>July 2015</p> <p>April 2016</p> <p>September 2015</p>
4.7 Implement new police powers to disrupt abusers	Give police the power to close an establishment which might be used for sexual activity with a child, by commencing new closure powers, which strengthen the powers in the Sexual Offences Act 2003.	March 2015
4.8 Expand the operational capacity of the NCA to combat online child sexual exploitation	The Government will increase the resources available to the NCA-CEOP Command during 2015/16 to address the scale of online offending.	By April 2016

**Outcome: Government and law enforcement work with partners internationally to address the use of the internet in sexual abuse.**

Actions	Detail	Timeline
4.9 In consultation with industry partners, develop new technological solutions to tackle online child sexual exploitation - "WePROTECT" project.	Working with industry partners through WePROTECT identified a number of new concepts to tackle online child sexual exploitation. These and others identified by industry now need to be further developed and the viable projects implemented across the technology sector.	By November 2015

4.10	Contribute to the next international summit on online child sexual abuse in the UAE.	The summit will build on the commitments made at the #WePROTECT Summit, to deliver a sustained and coordinated response to online child sexual exploitation.	December 2015
4.11	Implement, working with UNICEF, a new global funding mechanism for international capacity building on child sexual exploitation.	Develop clear regional and thematic priorities for the fund and encourage partner Governments to support fund.	March 2015

**Outcome: Based on a better understanding of offender motivations and behaviour, a range of interventions are available to prevent re-offending and the escalation of offending.**

Actions	Detail	Timeline
4.12	Develop the use of new civil orders for lower-threshold types of abuse.	<p>March 2015</p> <p>March 2015</p> <p>April 2016</p>
4.13	Develop a stronger evidence base on the motivations for offending and effective interventions.	By April 2016