

# IT WAS HARD TO ESCAPE!

## Safeguarding children at risk from criminal exploitation

The following is a summary of a review into safeguarding children from criminal exploitation by The Child Safeguarding Review Panel which sets out recommendations and findings for government and local safeguarding partners to protect children at risk of criminal exploitation. A copy of the full review can be found [here](#).

### 1. INTRODUCTION TO NATIONAL REVIEW

Young people face a number of challenges to their safety and wellbeing today – none more complex and damaging than criminal exploitation. Being drawn into exploitative situations, where children can be both victims and perpetrators of serious harm, can have severe consequences for them and for their families, friends and communities.



The review asked two connected questions:

- Do young people in need of state protection from criminal exploitation get the help they need, when they need it?
- How can the services designed to keep young people safe from criminal exploitation, and the way those services work together, be improved to prevent further harm?

The review found that the answer to the first question is 'not always', although there is much good practice to build on.

In response to the second question, the review found a number of ways in which services could be improved, including working more effectively with families and responding quickly and flexibly at times when children are likely to be at their most vulnerable (reachable moments).

The review focused on 21 children from 17 local areas who died or experienced serious harm.

### 2. KEY FINDINGS

- Young boys from black and minority ethnic backgrounds appear to be more vulnerable to harm from criminal exploitation
- Known risk factors around vulnerability were not present in the lives of many children in the review

- Exclusion from mainstream school is seen as a trigger point for risk of serious harm. 17 young people had been excluded from mainstream education.
- Building trusted relationships between children and practitioners is essential
- Parental engagement is nearly always a protective factor
- More priority should be given to disrupting perpetrators
- Many practitioners lack knowledge or confidence about local processes and what they can do to help exploited young people
- Moving children out of area is not an effective long term strategy
- The National Referral Mechanism is not well understood and is inconsistently used
- Comprehensive risk management arrangements can be effective and make a difference

There are **critical (reachable) moments** when vulnerable children particularly need, and are willing to take-up, offers of support. These include

- When they are excluded from school
- When they are physically injured or when they are arrested

Professionals should capitalise on these moments to effectively safeguard the young person.

It is important to remember that all young people are 'reachable' at any stage of exploitation so we should not wait for moments when they are more 'reachable'.

More evidence is needed about those key moments, so that service design and individual practitioners can anticipate them and be ready to capitalise on the receptiveness of children at such times.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The report outlines a **Practice Framework** designed to provide a comprehensive approach at the point of the child being identified at risk of criminal exploitation. The framework includes:

- Building a relationship with the child
- Actively engaging parents and providing them with targeted support and an immediate full-time education package to children who are excluded from school
- The review recommends that the government should fund evaluated trials of the framework
- Review Working Together (2018) to reflect the circumstances of children at risk of criminal exploitation
- Review use of the National Referral Mechanism
- Better data collection to improve local and national understanding of criminal exploitation characteristics

#### 4. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR PRACTICE?

- Ensure that you feel confident in spotting the signs of child criminal exploitation (CCE)
- Consider if you are in a position to engage with young people at the critical (reachable) moment(s)
- Consider attending specific [training](#)
- Make sure you are familiar with the local pathway of support for children at risk or involved in child criminal exploitation
- Familiarise yourself with the Nottingham City child criminal exploitation [Flow Chart and Toolkit](#)
- Familiarise yourself with the child criminal exploitation chapter in the interagency procedures

