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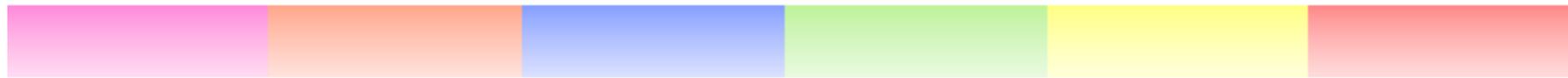




Operation Fenestra Key Messages
from the Serious Case Review into
Child Sexual Exploitation

Purpose of the Review

To learn from individual agency involvement with the children concerned, from the experiences of the children, and learn from the findings from similar reviews *to promote rapid change in the effectiveness of multiagency practice* and response to child sexual exploitation



Case Summary

- The concerns dated back to 2010 for child Q and 2011 for child C who were both aged 15 when agencies learnt that they had an older 'boyfriend' and were engaged in a sexual relationship
- The actual age and identity of any boyfriend was not known initially
- The perpetrators ran a tattooing and piercing shop where young women went
- The police investigation initially commenced in 2012 and then intensified in 2014 due to concerns and allegations reported to statutory agencies in relation to child C & Q
- The police investigation Operation Fenestra was managed via a multi agency approach from 2015 when the investigation progressed to arresting and charging the perpetrators



Inappropriate Relationship Model

- Both C and Q believed they were 'in love' and the perpetrator was their boyfriend, who gave them presents and intended to have a permanent relationship with them
- He was significantly older and subjected them to physical, sexual and emotional abuse as part of a controlling relationship
- This model of abuse is distinct from the models described in other high profile serious case reviews where victims were coerced into having sexual relationships with the boyfriends associates or with multiple men



Nature and Complexity of the Review

- Sexual offences against 9 children with 2 perpetrators during the period 2009 - 2014
- Working Together 2015 criteria for serious harm was met by 2 children Child Q and Child C
- Historical nature of the abuse: focus on lessons relevant to present practice
- Operation Sanctuary in Newcastle where adults were targeted for abuse as well as children



Nature of the Harm

- Child Q and Child C both had relationships with perpetrator A that resulted in a number of pregnancies ending in miscarriage or termination
- Both children experienced persistent physical and emotional abuse which put them at risk of long term mental health issues
- Both experienced mental health issues as a result of the abuse
- Both gave birth to live babies who were fathered by the perpetrator
- There was also learning from the experiences of the other children



Key Messages from Victims

- Need to develop consistent, trusting, persistent and caring relationships with practitioners: Takes time
- Listen to us and talk to us
- CSE can happen to anyone and be perpetrated by anyone
- Parents and professionals should notice changes in children's behaviour
- Availability and accessibility of help: providing a mobile phone number for use outside of working hours



Key Messages from Young People

- When is it legal to have sex and what age is okay ?
- 2+ years unacceptable / inappropriate
- Parents should talk and listen to their children about CSE and understand 'grooming' behaviour



Key Messages from Parents

- How to keep their children safe when they can be exploited in their own bedroom through social media
- Insufficient understanding of grooming and that children can see abuse as 'normal'
- Parents need more understanding of the risks for young people and better support



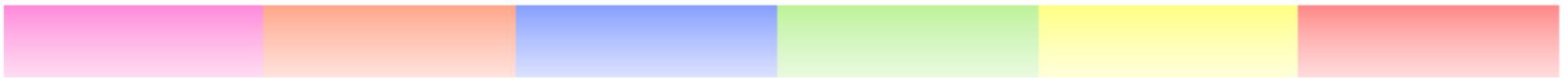
Key Messages from Professionals

- Difficulties in identifying CSE when the child believes they are in a loving relationship
- Limited amount of time with each patient for health professionals in primary care and sexual health services to elicit information about sexual partners
- Issue of consent for 16 and 17 year olds is a 'minefield'
- Improved awareness of CSE but not enough understanding of what constitutes CSE and when to use safeguarding procedures



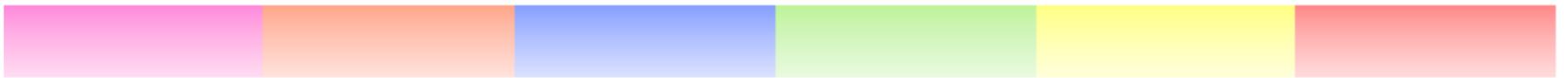
Missed opportunities to identify risk and abuse

- CSE is a particularly difficult form of abuse to investigate: takes investigation over a prolonged period of time
- 14 opportunities missed when information / allegations could have led to finding out what was happening from 2010 -2012:
 - Sex with underage girls seen as consensual relationship
 - Disclosures of historical abuse not acted on by CAMHS
 - Failures in recording and sharing of police intelligence
 - Lack of professional curiosity



Finding 1

- Professionals find it challenging to interpret legislation relating to consent for sexual activity for young people and to distinguish between informed consent for adolescent sexual activity and coercion and inappropriate relationships, and to appropriately assess capacity to consent for children and young people particularly where the young person is aged 16 years and over and there maybe concerns about child sexual exploitation



Why is it difficult?

- Children under age 13 not legally able to consent to sex, but legal age to consent is 16
- Government guidance makes clear no intention to prosecute 14 and 15 year olds when mutually agreed, similar age and judged to have capacity / competence
- New guidance on CSE (2017) helps a little: specifies covers 16+ and seemingly consensual sex may not be so



Questions

- Are practitioners sufficiently aware of the different models of exploitation, including that of 'inappropriate relationships?'
- Do practitioners need more training, guidance and access to expertise locally about issues around consensual sexual activity and competence / capability?



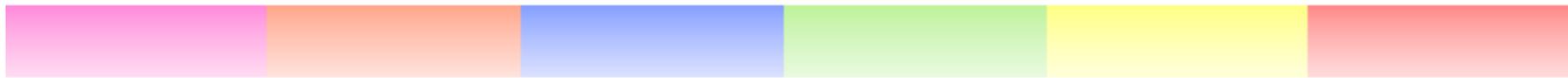
Finding 2

- There is still a tendency within some services to focus on perceived parenting deficits, and as a consequence risk minimising real parental concerns of the risk of harm to the child external to the family. This can lead to the provision of insufficient support to the family



Do practitioners listen to parents / family concerns ?

- Agencies responded to concerns about possible abuse by parents and appeared to ignore allegations being made about perpetrators
- Children's social care provided short assessments and then closed case as child protection threshold not met(re harm from parenting)
- Professionals appeared not to hear parents'/ families' concerns
- Similarities to SAR about 'Tom' who had a head injury



Questions

- Do practitioners understand the need to 'hear' family concerns about their child's / relative's safety?
- How does practice need to change so that practitioners can hear the concerns of families about their relatives
- Do practitioners understand the need for persistence and curiosity when developing such relationships with people who maybe being exploited?



Finding 3

CSE investigations need a multi-agency investigative model able to develop consistent relationships with alleged victims over a long period; without this the likelihood to provide support to the children concerned, protect them from further harm and establish the evidence needed for a successful prosecution are severely reduced



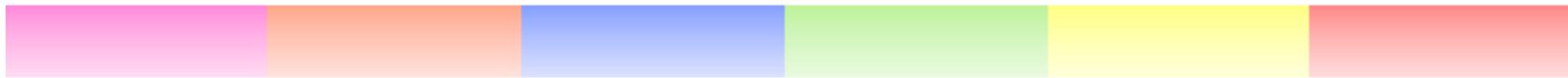
Learning from the investigation

- Highlighted by difference in outcome between 2012 and 2014 investigation
- Each victim when asked what went well, immediately said the investigating officer, taking time to get to know victims and their trust in this professional
- Vulnerability of this individual officer raised the need for a larger investigative team -a multi agency investigative approach?



Questions

- How could we achieve an effective multi-agency approach to support police investigation into exploitation concerns and allegations working with the children involved?
- Which practitioners might be best placed to develop a consistent relationship over an extended period with victims in building trust leading to disclosure? Is there scope for this function to be shared with or led by partner agencies, depending on the needs of the individual ?



Finding 4

Linking information within and between agencies is an integral part of the safeguarding system to protect children from harm: improvements have been made in recent years, but there is scope for further development of this to protect children, especially from sexual exploitation



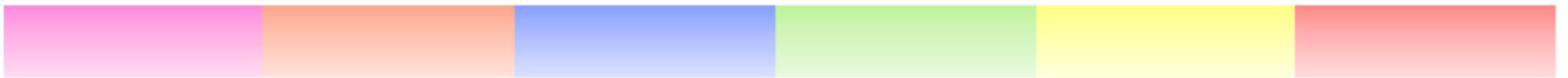
Information needs to be shared, joined up and analysed earlier

- In this case, instances of police intelligence were not used adequately re underage sex in place of work
- But more widely underlying concerns about lack of 'joining dots and linking suspects and victims' both within agencies and across agencies
- How can we ensure that information held about victims and perpetrators can be linked and shared appropriately with the police to identify patterns of individual and group behaviour



Questions

- How effective are current record keeping processes (both within and between agencies) for identifying patterns of individual and group behaviour?
- Are there clear information sharing arrangements between agencies to identify perpetrators and patterns of activity?



Finding 5

Children who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing CSE need accessible, timely and skilled support for their emotional and mental health problems: this is developing in Somerset, but requires further improvement to provide for the range of need



Children did not have timely access to mental health services

- 6 of 9 victims referred to CAMHS
- Some referrals were not accepted, others closed if the child was thought not to be engaging
- Repeated lack of referrals to CSC for Q
- Lack of accessibility, flexibility and appropriate service for some of the adolescents: need wider range of resources at earlier points of need / different environment



Questions

- Is there a clear fast track arrangement for young people who have been subject to child sexual exploitation to be able to access CAMHS, adult mental health services or Talking Therapies ?



Finding 6

There is a need for good early multi-agency collaboration, along with consistent and persistent relationship based intervention, in this complex area of work; without this there is the potential of unrecognised risk and individual practitioners feeling isolated in the safeguarding of children considered to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation



Need for early multi agency practice to identify and protect children and adults from CSE

- Nature of exploitation involves grooming over a long period and the challenge to identify this early
- Lack of co-ordinated multi-agency work when concerns about children / adults do not meet threshold of social work involvement
- Good individual work, but not delivered and monitored as a co-ordinated plan to safeguard the child: risks isolated workers
- Practitioners considered that there are not effective arrangements in place for sharing information about risks and concerns about CSE



Questions

- Are there multi agency forums that could provide the opportunity for information sharing, co-ordination and planning that are needed in suspected exploitation cases where the threshold for safeguarding is not met?
- Are there screening and decision making tools to help you in deciding when to engage with other practitioners in a multi agency approach to develop a plan to work with the adult to reduce the risk of exploitation and keep them safe ?



Key Message

The current arrangements nationally in relation to piercing and tattoo salons does not adequately address safeguarding risks for children



Feedback

- What are you going to take away from today to change your practice ?
- What messages are you going to share with your colleagues ?

