

East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee



Child Sexual Exploitation 100 Stories

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Child Protection Committees are locally-based, inter-agency strategic partnerships responsible for the design, development, publication, distribution, dissemination, implementation, embedding and evaluation of all child protection policy and practice across the public, private and wider voluntary/third sectors in their local authority area.

In East Ayrshire, the Child Protection Committee is a partnership between East Ayrshire Council, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Police Scotland, Scottish Children's Reports Administration (SCRA), Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Third Sector

The core functions of the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee (EACPC) relate to:

- Strategic planning
- Continuous improvement
- Public information and Communication.

The Committee operates within the framework of the original guidance on the operation of child protection committees in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2005), and as revised in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2014)

The CPC have strategic oversight and responsibility for all aspects of child protection and have prioritised the following key areas for 2017-2020:-

- Neglect;
- Internet Safety; and
- Safeguarding – themes include:
 - Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE);
 - Human (Child) Trafficking;
 - Force Marriage;
 - Female Genital Mutilation (FGM);
 - Suicide;
 - Self-Harm;
 - Prevent (Counter terrorism);
 - Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender + (LGBT+); and
 - Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

Child Sexual Exploitation – 100 Stories

Child Sexual Exploitation is considered to be one of the key priorities of the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee (EACPC).

As part of the EACPC's role of communication, planning and information sharing, a conference on Child Sexual Exploitation was organised for the partnership. The conference had speakers representing East Ayrshire council, Police Scotland, current research, and the guest speaker was Sammy Woodhouse, one of the young girls from Rotherham who inspired the film, 'The Three Girls'. The conference was full to capacity and representatives from health, social work, community partnerships, third sector, education, housing and Police Scotland attended.

As part of the event, a collection of 100 stories of child sexual exploitation (CSE) were gathered and each story was placed on a separate card then suspended like bunting around the conference hall so that participants could read each card in turn. The stories represented all the various types of people and children who have been involved in CSE, showing that any child, from any walk of life, can be caught up in CSE.

Many of the stories were gathered from organisations such as Barnado's, NSPCC, Real lives, One Voice etc. Stories also were gathered from Significant Case Reviews (SCRs) from across the country, the Jay Rotherham report and stories from parents. More than half the stories were gathered from real people who had told their story personally to the East Ayrshire Multi-agency Learning and Development Officer, who compiled the 100 stories.

Some of the people mentioned in the stories are now adults who had never before shared their story. One adult said he had always been ashamed of his story and so had never told anybody but was now really happy for it to be shared in the 100 stories. His view was that if it could help just one person, then something good will have come from his own negative experience.

13 year old girl

Soon after my 13th birthday, a friend and I went one Saturday to a shopping centre in the nearest town. None of us had what you'd call a boyfriend then. During this trip, a couple of Asian lads called Niv and Jay started talking to us. They were friendly and good-looking but a few years older than us.

We started to go into town by bus to meet them on Saturdays, then on some weekday evenings too. My parents worked until late and I had more freedom to stay out. I found it easy to tell lies to my parents about where I was going and at this stage I didn't know they were bad people.

They introduced us to older men, one of them being Tarik. I liked his confidence and the fact that the others seem to look up to him. For a while, Tarik was nice, and would give me rides in his car, gifts, drinks and cigarettes. He encouraged me to try drugs, telling me I was old enough. Then suddenly he changed.

One night, after we'd been out drinking, Tarik dragged me into an alley and raped me. I was so confused by what had happened and terrified by his threats that I let him sell me on for sex with other men. I never thought of myself as a prostitute, but looking back, that's exactly what I was. It is only now that I can see that, much as I wanted to believe Tarik had feelings for me, he didn't. He just wanted to make money out of me.

I wanted it to stop, of course I did, but I believed that there was no one I could tell. The gang had convinced me that they were the only people I had and they said that if I ever told anybody about what was happening they would firebomb my house or rape my mother and make me watch.

In the end, my mum found out. I'd left my mobile phone on the kitchen table. It rang and my mum picked it up. The man's voice on the other end disturbed her, so she checked my messages. Knowing something was wrong, my parents sat me down and asked what was going on, and it all came out.

The police were called, statements taken and Tarik was arrested. He denied everything but the police didn't believe him. I can't say I hate Tarik. If anything, I pity him. I feel like he'll never do well in life. He'll always be an evil person.

12 year old boy

I was 12 when I started to use the internet to find out more about my sexuality. I was confused because I found men attractive but felt too embarrassed to speak to my mum and dad. I was worried what their reaction would be if they thought I was gay. I used chat rooms to talk to men. It was nice to be able to talk openly about my feelings and not be interrogated.

I soon got talking to Peter. Although he was a lot older than me, he was very nice and made me feel special. He made me feel confident about myself and helped me understand that what I was feeling was normal. He was also very interested in me and he looked nice in his picture.

We started to flirt and he asked me to send photographs of myself. He flattered me and told me that I had a nice body. He wanted to be my boyfriend. I soon began sending naked photographs of myself and he got me to pose in sexual positions. He told me that he loved me and I thought that I loved him.

We soon started to meet up. Peter travelled quite far on the train to meet me. We would go to nice places and he bought me presents like an iPod and paid for me to have my ear pierced. He took me to stay in hotel rooms and at first it felt nice. We started to have sex and that was when things changed.

Peter wanted to do things that I felt uncomfortable with. When I refused, he became violent and threatened to post my naked photographs on the internet. I had to do what he wanted. I was too ashamed to get help. I started to miss school and not look after myself, hoping that he would not want to touch me if I made myself ugly. My parents tried to talk to me but I just hit out and started to smash things up in the house.

One day Peter took me to a hotel to make me have sex. I was upset when I got there and someone must have been worried about me because they called the police. Peter was arrested. I would like to meet that person and thank them because I couldn't see a way out and they helped me.

Moving to a new school was a big deal for me, I was at last able to leave behind the torment dished out to me by the kids who made fun of me because of my weight. New school, new start. I tried hard to make friends over the next year but I still felt like an outsider. I ended up skipping school when I could get away with it and that was how I met Dan.

Dan understood me. He knew how unhappy I was. He took me under his wing and told me not to worry about that fact he was a lot older than me – what mattered was how we felt when we were together. He did warn me not to mention it to my mum though, as she wouldn't understand.

He liked that I was a bit bigger than other girls. He made me laugh and feel good about myself. We used to hang out with his mates and they spoiled me, buying me drinks and cigarettes. In the early days we had such a great time, finally I felt wanted.

The fun stopped when he invited one of his mates to have a threesome. He told me it was the least I could do, considering his mate had put on the party. Over the next few months, things got worse and he became abusive, hitting me if I refused to have sex with his mates. He would lock me in hotel rooms and I would wait to see who came through the door. I felt so alone and I hated myself for wanting Dan no matter what.

I couldn't speak to my mum about it – she didn't understand and she was never around anyway. I couldn't trust anyone at school either. I felt so low that I started to cut myself because the pain I felt when I did it made me feel better. My life line came when one of my friends noticed the cuts on my arm and told a teacher.

Telling someone about Dan and his mates was the best thing I did. Dan was the adult and I was kid. He knew I was vulnerable and he took advantage of me, I can see that now. Dan and his mates have been locked up and will be spending the next 8 years in prison. If my story saves just one person from experiencing what I went through, I know some good will have come from my experience.

Linda Hartley – survivor

Hartley was 17 when she started a relationship with Pasha, who was 20 years older than her. He was everything that she dreamed of in a man. "He was sophisticated, Persian, erudite, cosmopolitan. He was fantastic and a great guy, and very clever. I felt really safe with him." she remembers.

Before long, however, he became more possessive, and Hartley, who had moved into a flat with him, felt isolated from her friends and family.

"I was hooked. I was dependent. But something wasn't right. It was like my life was just off centre. Every time I mentioned going to college, restarting my A-levels, it would create such an argument."

Hartley was an attractive young woman and was spotted by model scouts. She started travelling abroad for work, but the situation at home deteriorated. Hartley remembers once when she arrived outside the front door, she found herself locked out of the flat.

On other occasions, Pasha turned up with a gun, asked detectives to follow her, threatened that she would end up in a wheelchair and that he would run her over. "It got really nutty. It was non-stop."

Hartley lived in fear, until one day she found herself locked in the bathroom with a knife, cutting her hand. "I realised I had to get help. I had to do something. This wasn't me."

Eventually she managed to break the bond and cut Pasha out of her life. Twenty years later, she has written a book and is open to sharing her experience to help others.

Emma's Story

"I was just hanging around at the park with my mates when I met Dave. I'd seen him driving past a few times, he was really good looking. I couldn't believe it when he came over to talk to me.

"He offered to take me for a drive in his car, said it was cooler than hanging around the swings with my friends all night.

We had a laugh and got on really well. He said he really liked me and that I was really different to the other girls he knew. He started to turn up every night. He'd take me out in his car. We'd go out for pizza or we'd just sit and chat.

"Dave was so generous, he was always buying me presents like a top up card for my phone, and he said that I could get in touch with him if I needed to. My friends were really jealous, I started hanging round with them less and less, because I had so much more fun with Dave. He'd text me and email me all the time, he was really interested in what I was doing and who I was with.

"My mum was being really nosey. She was always wondering who I was texting and why I was on the internet so much. She was so overprotective, having a go at me just because I was a bit late home.

"I really liked Dave, he understood me. And he was always buying me new things - new clothes and jewellery. My mum said I was acting different, but I just thought I was a bit more grown up. Dave liked me to dress a certain way but I didn't mind, I just like to keep him happy.

"He took me to really cool parties with all his friends. They were all really nice and I had a really good time. Dave even gave me beer and vodka, but he said it didn't matter. He said I was mature for my age. He said it would make me have a better time.

"My parents used to go mad when I didn't come home until the morning after but I didn't care, I wanted to spend all my time with Dave. Sometimes I'd stay at Dave's for a few days. We'd just hang around his flat. Mum even reported me missing to the police but I thought she was just over-reacting.

"But after a while things started to change. Dave started to get really jealous if I spoke to anyone else or wanted to see my friends. He said they didn't understand me like he did and they didn't really want to spend time with me. But he bought me a brand new phone, but only he had the new number and he kept my old sim card. I thought because he loved me so much that he just wanted me all to himself.

"But one day Dave asked me to do something for him, he said he owed his friend some money but if I was nice to this friend he would let him off. I wasn't sure what he meant but something didn't seem right.

"Then I realised he wanted me to have sex with him, I didn't want to, but Dave said it would be ok. He said it would really help him out, and I just wanted to make him happy. It was

awful, I just cried and cried and was so relieved when it was over. But it didn't stop there, Dave changed. He became really aggressive and I was so scared that he would hurt me that I just did what he said.

"I had to drink to block out what was happening. I didn't know what to do. Dave said there was no point telling anyone. They said they wouldn't believe me and I would get in trouble for making things up.

"Things got worse and worse, I felt worthless and so alone. Dave started getting violent. He even punched me in the face when I asked why he was being like this. I couldn't believe that someone I thought loved me could turn into a monster and treat me like this.

"I didn't want to go to the police. I was scared I thought they'd say it was my fault, and I was scared what Dave would do if he found out. But Mum called them for me. The next day an officer came to my house. She was really nice. She didn't judge me. She was really understanding. She told me none of this was my fault, and I was the victim of child sexual exploitation and they would help me.

"My mum felt really bad that she hadn't realised what was happening. She said she knew something wasn't right but never imagined things could get as bad as they were."

John told me he was 23, but the police told me later he was 44. We became friends because he used to buy us all cigarettes and drinks and that. He let us go round his flat to hang out. We knew he was trying to get with us but we just led him on to get stuff out of him.

One night, he tried to touch me and kiss my mate and we panicked. It kicked off and we had a massive row in the car when we made him take us home.

“I thought I was in control of the situation, but when he got angry, I realised I wasn’t.”

I called the police later that night. My friend didn’t want to. Said we would get in trouble, but I was scared by how angry he’d got. I was worried what my dad would say too, but I didn’t know what else to do.

During their investigation, the police discovered that John had ‘befriended’ several other girls, and made illegal sexual advances to them. John was found guilty and sent to prison for five years.

I met Joe when I was 11. He worked at the stables I used to hang around at.

I really wanted to ride horses, like I used to see on the films I'd watch on a Sunday afternoon. Joe let me do that. He was also the first person that bought me cigarettes and I thought smoking was really cool but did not want my mum and dad finding out.

I got on with my parents and sister well, but Joe let me sort of do what I wanted.

I suppose I wanted to grow up quick and Joe made me feel like an adult. But I wasn't an adult, I was a kid – you know, I still find that hard to accept because I've realised just how much of a good job at manipulating and brainwashing me into thinking I was his equal.

He showed me pornographic magazines to start with and then it went on from there. He'd do truth/dare with me and it always seem to end up with him touching me and doing stuff.

But I'd kind of try and forget about it because he would buy me records, cigs, food, trainers, magazines and let me ride the horses whenever I wanted to. It was like they were mine. It really messed my head up later in life. I blamed myself for taking the items off him. It was like he'd bought me.

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I kept all this quiet about all this for about 15 years mainly because I didn't want to admit to myself what had happened never mind admitting to anyone else. I was ashamed, felt guilty and just hated myself for it all.

But I found someone to talk to, someone like me that helped me challenge my own thinking. I got so much from talking to him, and then others until I found myself realising that this wasn't my fault.

I missed out on a good education when I was younger because of what was going on for me, so getting one now is really important and I think I'm doing pretty well for myself now. I have a degree I worked really hard for, a good job, and I can finally talk about what happened.

I'm not ashamed anymore because I know I have nothing to be ashamed about – I did nothing wrong.

When I was 6, my dad was taken away from our house. My mum was an alcoholic with depression, and I know she took drugs too.

My brothers and sisters were sent to live with other members of our family and I have never been home since. I was moved around a lot and stayed with different people. When I was 15 I stopped seeing my mum completely and was taken into care.

I was always in trouble – running away, drinking, and taking drugs. I stole things too so I could get money. Me and my mates would ask random blokes to buy us cigarettes or vodka. Whatever we could get.

I started to hurt myself. I hated my life. I would cut my arms or take lots of painkillers.

Me and my mates hung around with blokes that were older than us and I slept with some of them, even though I didn't really want to. Even though I was only 15, groups of older blokes would still try and get me and my mates to go back to hotel rooms with them. If they bought us drinks, then we would a lot of the time. When I was drunk I never really thought about what I was doing.

I told the police about a guy who attacked me once. I got a lot of stick from my mates and other guys for doing this.

A social worker is helping me now. I actually really like her. She answers her phone to me, even when I ring really early or late.

My criminal record means that I can't become a police officer or social worker like I wanted. But I am trying hard at college now and have done some volunteering for young people.

"I want other young girls to know that they need to be careful.

I was good at sport at school. And my family was what you would call 'normal'.

I met Nick on the internet and thought he was in his mid-twenties. We got on really well and agreed to meet up. As soon as I saw him, I knew something was wrong – he looked about fifty!

I'd invited him to my house when my parents were out and it was clear he was expecting sex or something.

"I felt like I had led him on and didn't know how to say no, so I agreed to have sex with him."

I immediately regretted it and told him I didn't want to see or speak to him any more. But he wouldn't leave me alone and kept trying to get in touch. I didn't know what to do so I told a family friend and the police got involved.

The police identified the man as a local business man. When they seized his computer they discovered that he had been chatting to other under-age young people, telling them he liked 'young girls'. He frequently tried to meet up with the people he chatted with, for the explicit purposes of having sex with them, even though he knew they were not yet 16.

My mum and dad drank a lot and take drugs. My dad used to hit mum and me sometimes. We kept kicking him out and moving house but he always managed to find us and start causing problems again.

When I was 12 a boy at my school tried to get me to have sex with him and hurt me. I told people about it but then I got scared and didn't want anything to happen about it. So he got away with it.

At 13 I got a new boyfriend who was a lot older than me. We had sex. He said he loved me.

I started cutting myself, not eating, and I took lots of my mum's medicines for her depression. Eventually social services took me to a hospital and I stayed there for few months. I used to run away from there a lot, meeting up with mates and that. I had sex with some of them sometimes, or friends of theirs. A lot of them were older than me.

I smoked a lot of weed and drank as much as I could to get off my head.

"Sometimes when I woke up, I didn't know where I was or who I was with, even though we had just had sex."

One man threatened to hurt my friends if I didn't have sex with him. He told the police he thought I was 16, but he knew I wasn't.

Paige was referred to a specialist child sexual exploitation team. They earned her trust and helped her move to a new area, away from the threats and bad influences. She told them what happened to her and they were able to identify and prosecute the people who committed offences against her and her friends.

My daughter Elizabeth was 13 years old when it started. She was a really well-behaved girl; we had a fantastic mother-daughter relationship. She has had a stable home life and I have always had clear boundaries for what is acceptable behaviour. There was nothing to suggest that she would be in any danger.

It started when Elizabeth was contacted through Facebook by a 20 year old woman who she knew vaguely through a family connection. This person was able to gain Elizabeth's trust and used her influence to draw my daughter into meeting with her and then a wider group of young people. There were young teenagers aged 13-16 there, a lot of them came from troubled backgrounds. The group also included men and women aged up to their mid-20s.

It seemed as though they had a power over Elizabeth. I realised that while she was with this group they were working on her, brainwashing her against me. It was clear that these young people were being controlled by the older adults – both men and women. I'd hacked into Elizabeth's Facebook account and saw the messages they would send her – manipulating her with emotional blackmail, veiled threats and saying horrible things about me. I would read messages demanding my daughter leave her home in the middle of the night to meet them.

The first time my daughter went missing it was for three days. The group would meet together and drink and take drugs, and they had convinced my daughter to come along to one of their 'parties.' I reported her missing to the police, and when they finally brought her back it was as though her personality had been completely transformed. It was like she had been replaced by this rude, aggressive girl. She would say things like 'they're my family, not you' or 'you hate my friends but you don't even know them.'

Elizabeth started to go missing from home at least twice a week. I was out of my mind with worry. I'd report her missing to the police and eventually they'd find her with her 'friends' and take her home, drunk, aggressive, fighting, sometimes threatening to kill me. It didn't matter what I did to keep her in the house, she would be gone – climbing out of windows, sneaking out when I was too tired to stay awake. Her attendance at school dropped. She would just walk straight out of school and go and meet the group.

It is the control they had over her that frightens me the most. Elizabeth's appearance changed completely. The group would self-harm together as though it was a competition, they would take her out shoplifting. They even convinced her to file a police complaint for assault against me. The police had to investigate, which meant interviewing my other children and asking if I'd ever hurt them. The pain of having that happen to my family is still difficult to bear.

I'd always had a good relationship with my daughter but it was like she'd been cloned. I felt humiliated, powerless. I was working with specialist social workers and police officers to try and manage her behaviour – they were questioning every part of my relationship with her, telling me what I should and shouldn't do as though I didn't already know how to be a good parent.

Then after about seven months, Elizabeth came home having gone missing for four days. I knew instantly that something awful had happened. From the snippets of what we've learned since, during a 'party' one of the men had given her drink and drugs until she passed out, then he raped her.

That was a turning point – it was then that she realised that these people weren't her friends, but the control they had over her was still there. Gradually, with a lot of work by myself and social workers, we were able to distance my daughter from the influence of the group. Together we are helping her recover, but she has found it so difficult dealing with the guilt of what happened. It resulted in her taking an overdose. I'm just thankful that she survived without any lasting damage.

When Raj started to feel attracted to men, it seemed as though there was no-one he could talk to. He went on Facebook and met Mike, a 20-year-old university student.

After weeks of chatting online, Mike told Raj he was falling for him and said he'd like Raj to be his boyfriend.

The conversation turned to sex and Mike said he'd love it if Raj sent him a naked picture. Raj sent several pictures.

One morning Mike asked Raj if later that evening he'd use the webcam.

When Raj hesitated, Mike told him that if he didn't do as he said, he'd send the naked pictures of Raj to Raj's family and friends.

Raj didn't want to use the webcam but didn't want his parents finding out.

He felt so sick that he couldn't face going back home after school.

When the police found him, Raj couldn't talk about what happened because he didn't think the police would understand.

The police woman talked about her work as a Lesbian and Gay Liaison Officer. She then asked Raj if he was OK and Raj told her about Mike and the photos and webcam.

The police investigated and a man living nearby was arrested.

"I was worried about what would happen but the police helped me make a statement. "They put me in touch with a local group for gay and lesbian kids who gave me the confidence to talk to my parents. "OK, dad's not great with it he says I'm still his son and he loves me no matter what."

'Sophie's' mum, Linda, has been known to a local violence against women service for a number of years because of the violence she has experienced from multiple partners. Sophie is a white British young woman and she was 13 years old when Linda met Ray. Ray, who was also white British, moved in with Linda and was violent towards both her and her children. Ray began to invite his friends around to the house. They, in turn, were abusive to Linda and her children. Following this, Ray offered Sophie as a sexual commodity to his friends on a regular basis and threatened Linda and Sophie with violence if Sophie did not comply.

'Teegan', a white British young woman, was sexually exploited from the age of 12 years old. From the age of 13 Teegan was taken by a Turkish man to a variety of 'parties' across England that she reports were in nice houses and in some cases described as 'mansions'. In these houses Teegan would be raped by several men, from a range of ethnicities, who were paying to use her.

Teegan described a book being available with photographs and ages of all of the girls being sexually exploited by this particular group. Men could choose which girls they wanted. Teegan reported men paying those who were exploiting her up to £500 for an hour with her. Groups of men could also request one girl to share between them over a night, where the rape of the girl would be filmed.

The operation involved men working the streets to pick up vulnerable girls, forming 'relationships' with them by grooming them and then passing them on to the men who controlled the business. If Teegan ever refused to comply, she would be beaten and her family threatened.

Following the abuse, Teegan took several overdoses, was placed in secure accommodation, and self-harmed by cutting and ligaturing sometimes on a daily basis.

Teegan described the abuse that she experienced as serious and organised, and is unwilling to make a formal complaint for fear of repercussions from those involved in the operation.

'Sahida', a 17-year-old British Pakistani young woman, made an allegation of sexual abuse against a family member. As a result she was threatened with a forced marriage. Sahida's family claim they want to remove her from the country to curb her 'wild behaviour'.

Following these threats Sahida began spending time with older males, described by professionals as 'Asian', and was moved to multiple locations by them.

Sahida is now pregnant as a result of the sexual exploitation she has experienced. Family members have physically assaulted Sahida as a punishment for the pregnancy.

'Randall' is a 15 year old boy, of mixed ethnic heritage, and described by professionals as 'exploring his sexuality'. He is said to be unaware of safe routes to meeting other gay young people.

Professionals report Randall has been seen hanging around at bus stops. He has disclosed to professionals that he has been targeted by groups of men who are grooming him to exchange sex for alcohol, cigarettes and acceptance.

Professionals are working with Randall to try to keep him away from areas of risk, but they are aware he continues to go missing and are unable to account for his whereabouts on all occasions.

Rebecca is a 15-year-old black British girl, and has reported she was forced by a group of girls to have sex with a boy in the girls' toilets at their school; otherwise they would beat her up.

The group of perpetrators were made up of three 14-year-old girls and one 14-year-old boy, all of whom were black British. One of the girls is described as the 'instigator' of the assault another girl filmed the assault on her mobile phone.

The assault took place as part of a pattern of ongoing bullying of Rebecca. She was anally raped by the 14-year-old boy.

She had never had sex before this assault.

'Mitchell' is a white British 17 year old boy, and has been known to the youth offending service for several years. From the age of 12 Mitchell was seen spending time with white British men, some of whom were believed to be sexually exploiting young women in the local area. Some of these older males bought Mitchell trainers, taught him how to comb his hair in particular ways and how to speak to girls.

The older men also introduced Mitchell to some of the girls that they were sexually exploiting. At one point, he was found locked in a garage where one of the older males had brought young female victims of abuse.

Mitchell gradually became involved in the sexual exploitation of young women in the local area, and would pass them onto his older peers.

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We became friends because he used to buy us all cigarettes and drinks and that. He let us go round his flat to hang out. We knew he was trying to get with us but we just led him on to get stuff out of him.

One night, he tried to touch me and kiss my mate and we panicked. It kicked off and we had a massive row in the car when we made him take us home.

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I called the police later that night. My friend didn’t want to. Said we would get in trouble, but I was scared by how angry he’d got. I was worried what my dad would say too, but I didn’t know what else to do.

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I immediately regretted it and told him I didn't want to see or speak to him any more. But he wouldn't leave me alone and kept trying to get in touch. I didn't know what to do so I told a family friend and the police got involved.

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I was babysat by my uncle when I was 12 every Thursday to let my Mum and Dad go out. I liked him cause he used to give me sweets and toys.

One day he asked if I wanted the toys he had brought it was a matchbox car. I said yes but instead of giving it to me he said I had to do something for him to say thanks. He made me do something to him which was horrible. Then he gave me the car. He acted like nothing was wrong and asked me what car I wanted next week.

He babysat me for a year every week before I said that I didn't need a babysitter to my mum and dad.

He made me feel that it was my fault cause I owed him cause he was buying me stuff.

I didn't tell my mum and dad because he was my dad's brother and if they didn't believe me then it would be worse. I also felt that I asked for it cause I wanted the car. He said it was good payment. I am still haunted by it.

I had moved to a new area and school and I didn't know anybody. A girl asked me to hang out with her and she was nice.

At the weekend we met up and she introduced me to some lads that were older and not from our school. One of them was really nice and we got chatting.

The next week he was part of the group again and they had drink for us. He got me to drink more than I had drunk before and then he wanted to walk me home. I said no but he came anyway with his friends following. He pushed me onto the bench in the park and started to have sex with me. I didn't want him to. His friends were there as well watching and cheering him on. Afterwards, he put his arm round me and said I was his girl now.

I didn't want to go out the next week but my friend said it was okay and that's part of the group initiation and that I should be okay cause the worst was over. I went out and he came over to me and put his arm around me, he said now I was his girl I could be with one of his friends and be safe cause I was his. I was so confused and scared. The other guy was so rough and I cried. My guy said it was okay, he would take care of me.

I didn't want to go out again, but the guys met us from the school and text me all the time. I was scared they would come to the house. He said that's what friends in this gang do, look out for each other and help each other. He said that we should stick together and not talk to anybody else at the school.

I didn't tell anybody, my friend said not to.

Danny's Story

Danny's family background is one of parental substance misuse, domestic violence and mental health issues. Danny and his five siblings were neglected and when Danny was seven he and his siblings were taken into care.

Danny was placed in a separate foster placement to any of his siblings and eventually moved into a children's home because his behaviour was deemed too difficult for foster carers to manage. Danny started to run away overnight when he was nine, started drinking alcohol and smoking cannabis when he was ten and diagnosed with ADHD when he was 12.

For a number of years Danny missed his parents and siblings but believes that no-one got to know him well enough for him to trust them and tell them how he was feeling.

'I was just another kid in care, another kid in trouble. ... I've had that many social workers I've lost count of them all. ... I've been moved from care home to care home and had that many people looking after me.' After being placed in yet another children's home, Danny started to run away to be with a group of young people who took him to parties held by adults. After being given large amounts of alcohol and drugs, Danny was taken to a room where a number of men sexually assaulted him. Danny describes how he started to 'act out' after this incident and smashed up his room in the children's home. Danny was moved to a secure unit then after returning to a children's home was once again sexually exploited after being introduced to adults by young people who lived with him.

Danny felt like he had no control over what was happening to him and started to carry out increasingly violent criminal acts. No-one ever asked him why he was doing what he was doing and if there was anything wrong. Danny wanted to tell someone what was happening to him but felt that there was no-one there for him who he could talk to: 'The police just thought I was a waste of space and got fed up of coming to look for me when I ran away. None of my social workers stayed around long enough to get to know me. I went to this project for kids in trouble with the law but they just focused on all the things I did wrong.

Who was I supposed to talk too? Who was I supposed to tell what was happening to me?'

Danny has recently committed a violent crime for which he was caught, is awaiting a court appearance and been told that he is likely to be sent to a Youth Offending Institution (YOI). Up until his research interview, Danny had not told anyone about the sexual exploitation he experienced. There are no specialist projects in the local area to support children and young people who experience running away and CSE. Danny has agreed that the researcher can tell his Youth Offending Team (YOT) worker, who Danny likes, what has happened to him so that the process of providing Danny with some support can begin.

Sunny's Story

Part One

Sunny was raised by her father. After Sunny's father remarried, her younger siblings were born. Although Sunny was not close to her stepmother, she was happy at home, had friends she enjoyed spending time with and was working hard at school.

After a long illness Sunny's father died when she was 14. Sunny was devastated and felt like her world had been ripped apart. She continued to live with her stepmother and siblings but Sunny's stepmother's behaviour towards Sunny became physically and emotionally abusive. One of Sunny's siblings copied this abusive behaviour and her home life became very difficult.

Sunny began to feel depressed and her school work was affected. Through friends Sunny met an older White British male who asked for her mobile number and she started spending time with him at his flat. Sunny began to think of this older male as her boyfriend. Because of how she was treated at home, Sunny wanted to feel loved and to be somewhere where she felt cared for.

Sunny started to run away to spend days at a time with her boyfriend. When she was with him, she just wanted to cuddle up to him and feel safe but he wanted more than this and pushed her to have sex with him. Sunny's relationship with her boyfriend caused problems within Sunny's wider family and community.

Sunny started to feel more estranged and not wanted which, in turn, pushed her to spend more time with her boyfriend.

Part Two

Eventually Sunny's school contacted a specialist project working with children and young people who experience CSE, as they had a number of concerns about Sunny. A project worker from the specialist project started to see Sunny at school.

At first Sunny did not want to discuss her relationship with her boyfriend. However, after building a trusting relationship with her project worker, Sunny disclosed that she had a number of problems at home and within her community that related to her relationship with her boyfriend. Through work with her project worker, Sunny started to understand that her relationship with her boyfriend was an exploitative one.

Sunny ended the relationship with her boyfriend but, by this time, her step-mother had thrown Sunny out of home and her extended family were not speaking to her because of the shame she had brought upon them through running away and having an relationship with a White British male.

Sunny was living in temporary accommodation and felt lonely with no family, boyfriend or community to turn to. Sunny's project worker continued to support Sunny through this time and also acted as an advocate on Sunny's behalf, meeting with Sunny's grandfather with the aim of getting him to understand that Sunny had felt lonely and isolated after her father's death and that she had been a victim of abuse through no fault of her own.

As an older male, Sunny's grandfather was influential within his family and community. It was hoped that if he could understand the reasons for Sunny's running away and sexual exploitation he could support the process of facilitating Sunny to have contact with her family and community, which would go some way to alleviating her loneliness and isolation.

At first Sunny's grandfather was not receptive to considering that Sunny was not at fault, but over time and a lot of hard work from Sunny's project worker, his attitude has changed and Sunny has started to spend time with her family and slowly begun to be reintegrated into her local community.

Jimmy's Story

When Jimmy was 13 he realised he was sexually attracted to men, which troubled him as he knew that being gay would not be accepted by his family and community, and that he would be expected to marry a woman and have children.

When Jimmy was 14 he got to know an older male in his mid-twenties who was the son of another Traveller family on site. This man invited Jimmy to his caravan where they drank alcohol and smoked cannabis. One night the man asked Jimmy if he had ever had sex with a girl. The man made a joke about Jimmy preferring boys and then said there was nothing wrong with that. The man's response stunned Jimmy as he had not thought that there was anyone who thought that being into boys was acceptable. One night when Jimmy was round at this man's caravan he saw a pornographic magazine featuring men. The man saw Jimmy looking at the magazine and told him to have a look.

Jimmy did and the man told Jimmy that he was better looking than any of the men in the magazine and why didn't they take photos of Jimmy. So Jimmy took his top off and the two of them fooled around with the camera on the man's phone. At one point, the man grabbed Jimmy and kissed him roughly on the lips. This frightened Jimmy who put his top back on and ran back to his caravan.

Jimmy tried to avoid the man as he was having conflicting feelings about what was happening. On one level he was frightened because he knew that this man should not have kissed him because of how others within his family and community would react but the kiss had also excited him. After a few days Jimmy went back to the man's caravan. The man said he had missed Jimmy coming round and gave him a beer. They watched a film and smoked weed and drank. Nothing was said about the kiss. After a while, when he was drunk and stoned, Jimmy leant over and kissed the man on the lips. Jimmy and the man embarked upon a sexual relationship. At first Jimmy enjoyed the sex but then the man's demands changed and he became violent. The man started making up excuses to take Jimmy off site 'to help him with a job' but this was an excuse to get Jimmy away from the site. At first Jimmy was excited by leaving the site with the man he thought of as his boyfriend but he found that the man had arranged to meet other men, outside of the Traveller community, in a hotel and they were expecting to have sex with Jimmy and a couple of other boys that they had brought along with them. Jimmy did not want to have sex with these men and said so. The man he thought of as his boyfriend took Jimmy into the bathroom and said that if he did not do what he was told, he would show his father the photographs he had of Jimmy on his phone. The man then calmed down and told Jimmy while stroking his hair that he owed these men money and that they would harm him if Jimmy did not do what they wanted.

After being forced to have sex with a number of men, Jimmy changed. He started to get into a lot of fights and generally cause a lot of problems at home with his family. Jimmy wanted to tell someone what was being done to him but felt trapped and that there was no one he could go to as being gay was viewed as unacceptable. He had a lot of arguments with his father who was violent towards Jimmy to teach him to respect. Jimmy continued to meet the man in his caravan because he was too frightened to stop doing so.

One day the man came to Jimmy's father and said that he had work that he wanted Jimmy to help him with and that Jimmy would get paid. Jimmy had a feeling what the work would involve and told his father that he did not want to go. His father told him not to be so stupid and to go. Jimmy could not face being forced to have sex with a number of men again and jumped out of the car when they were driving through the city centre.

Freddie's Story

Freddie, one of six children, was singled out by his father and physically and emotionally abused. To avoid his home situation, Freddie spent time with his older siblings and other young people out in the local area. When he was nine Freddie started to run away from home to be alone.

'I used to just run off and be on my own. I went to this wood and this field. ... I just wanted to be on me own.'

When Freddie was ten he got to know a 20-year-old male who invited him to his house. Freddie started to spend time at this male's house when he ran away from home:

'At first we used to play on his Xbox but then he started giving me booze and touching me and that.'

Freddie was taken into care and lived in a residential school for two years. He often ran away and, at first, stayed with this older male. However, this older male's sexual advances became more and more forceful. During one episode of running away the adult male raped Freddie. Freddie continued to run away after this incident but spent time on his own as he had done when he was younger and had first started to run away.

Nicole's Story

Nicole's life changed when a male relative started to sexually abuse her and invited his friends to do the same:

'He came round to me house when me mum and dad were at work. He forced me to give him a blow job. He hit me when I refused to do so and grabbed me round the throat. I was really scared and felt sick afterwards. He told me to keep it quiet and said that no-one would believe me if I told anyone what had happened. And he was right – no-one would believe me; things like that didn't happen in my family. It would be my word against his and no-one would believe me.'

After a while Nicole's relative forced her to have oral sex with his friends. Nicole became very depressed and started to self-harm. Nicole's relative went on a family holiday and she ran away just before he returned as she dreaded the exploitation resuming:

'After two weeks of having a break from him I felt like I couldn't bear it all starting again. It was the beginning of the summer holidays so I was off school and I knew he [her cousin] would be round when me mam and dad were at work so the day before he came back from holiday, I ran away. ... I planned it all out. I took some stuff with me – clothes and that – and some money that I'd saved up and I went to me friend's. ... I'd never done anything like that before so me mam and dad were really worried but I didn't understand why they hadn't noticed the change in me [as a result of being sexually exploited]. ... I was quiet when I didn't used to be. I wasn't doing so well at school. I was so unhappy but they [her parents] didn't notice any of it and I felt angry about it. ... I wanted them to notice me and to see that something was wrong and to stop what my [relative] was doing to me.'

Nicole returned home and the following day a police officer came to see her:

'The police came to speak with me and asked me why I was running away. Like I could really say "my [relative]'s making me suck his dick and his mates' dick". It just wasn't going to happen.'

Nicole continued to run away, sometimes staying with friends and sometimes staying out all night on her own or with other young people:

'I ran away so me [relative] couldn't find me and couldn't make me do all that stuff. ... There was no-one to help me with it all so all I could think to do was run away and be somewhere where he couldn't find me.'

Lily's Story

Lily started to run away because she did not like living in the children's home: 'It was horrible. ... The staff, the rules, the kids. It was like a prison.'

Lily experienced sexual exploitation on a number of occasions when she ran away from children's homes. On one occasion, Lily's friend persuaded Lily to run away with her to spend time with a male who was unknown to Lily. This male lived with his mother and did not want her to know that Lily and her friend were with him in his bedroom:

'He did [sexual] stuff to me as well. ... And, that time, I really wanted to go home [to the children's home] and I just wanted to turn me phone on and ring the home and be like "will you come and get me?" but I couldn't; I couldn't move. And then I thought "I'll get up and I'll run downstairs to his mum and say look, I'm going home" but I couldn't; I couldn't do anything.'

Lily described another incident where she ran away and experienced sexual exploitation: 'I was just walking out [after running away] and someone ... shouted "oi, come up here and I'll give you some free drink" or something and I don't know, I don't know what it is but you just go [to be with the person who has offered the free alcohol] and I don't know why. ...

What happened that time was like it was a house share and I sort of knew one of them [who lived in the shared house] and I didn't know this other person. This person [the one that Lily sort of knew] got me really drunk until the point that you don't know what you're doing and after he did whatever he did to me, we went into this like communal living room and I fell all over the settee and then it got really serious because then the other guy [who Lily did not know at all] came in and he was twenty-five and the guy I was with was like "get out now" to me but this other guy was like "oh no, she's staying with me".... Because you're bladdered you can't move or get out and then [after further sexual assault has taken place] you're like "oh my god, oh my god" but still you can't move and you're just laid there going "oh my god". ... It happened a lot that stuff.'

Fay's Story

When Fay was 12 her mother started throwing her out of home. Fay was very confused by her mother's behaviour and didn't know what to do when her mother threw her out. Sometimes Fay was able to stay the night with a friend but this was not always possible. One evening, with nowhere to go, Fay sat on a swing in the local park worrying about what she was going to do. A man who lived in the local area sat on the swing next to Fay:

'He asked me if I was alright. He could tell I was unhappy and asked me what was wrong.

... I told him me mum had said I couldn't go home that night and that I didn't know where to go. ... He knew all the right things to say: he said that he knew me brother [who was in prison] and that he [Fay's brother] wouldn't like to see me with nowhere to stay. He said he knew what it was like to be chucked out of home 'cos his dad used to do it to him and that I could stay at his house. ... I now know I was stupid to go to his house but, at the time, he seemed really nice and like he understood how I was feeling. I thought 'cos he said he was a friend of my brother's, it would be alright [to go to his house].'

The man made Fay some food and then told her that he needed something from her and forced her to have oral sex:

'Looking back on it, I didn't feel right about it but I didn't know anything [about sex] then.'

Fay continued to stay with this man when she had nowhere to stay:

'He basically told me that nothing is for nothing and that I had to pay my way in some way.'

I lived with my mum and Dad but my Mum had a son from a previous marriage who lived with his Dad. He used to come and stay with us for the weekend once a month. He was 17.

When I was 8 he came into my bed one night and said he couldn't sleep so we cuddled in. This happened a few times. He always brought me stuff and gave me sweets which we hid from mum and dad cause they didn't let me have too many sweets.

One night I woke up and he was on top of me and touching me. I didn't like it and said no and to get off me. He just laughed and said that it was okay and that he would tell my mum about the sweets and him being in my bed. I was scared but didn't want to get into trouble from my mum. He told me my mum would be disappointed in me.

He made me feel it was all my fault.

Casey

Casey went to a private school which her mum and dad struggled to pay for. They always went on about the sacrifices they made for her to get a good education.

Casey's uncle began to abuse her when she was 12 and when he visited the house or he took her out in the car. Casey at 13 said no to him and said she was going to tell her mum. Her uncle gave money to Casey's mum and dad to help pay for the school as Casey was his favorite niece.

Casey was told by him that he had paid for her and that now she couldn't tell because she would get into trouble and also her mum and dad would have to pay the money back.

Casey was sexually exploited by her uncle for 4 more years till she left the school.

Casey said, "I felt like I had no choice, he had paid for me, I couldn't do anything about it".

My mum had a boyfriend who she loved and couldn't see what he was really like. He abused me a lot when mum was on the night shift at the hospital. I got pregnant.

I was 15 and he persuaded my mum that I was a slag and that he had seen me with loads of guys. I wouldn't say who the father was, but inside I wanted to scream that it was him, but he said I wouldn't be believed.

I got really angry and kept running away, so in the end I was sent to a home for young mums and their babies. When the baby was born she was taken away from me. I cried for a month. I then went to a hostel and met a man who seemed to really care for me, he said he would look after me. He said he loved me. He asked me to move in with him which was better than at the hostel.

He was lovely but he had some horrible friends, he went out one night and left me with his friend and he wanted to have sex with me, I didn't want to but he did it anyway. I told my boyfriend but he said that it was good of me cause his friend had been through a hard time and needed to have some love from a women. I was so confused, I thought he would be furious with his friend.

The friend came again the next week and I didn't struggle this time. My boyfriend said that his friend had given him some money as a thank you and this was great cause he had paid out a lot for me staying with him. He said he had another friend that would give money if I had sex with him as well.

I really didn't want to but had to.

I was in the choir and really liked it. I wanted the lead part so was working hard for this.

The choir leader was a good laugh, he asked some of us round to his house for extra practice. He had some beer and we all had some and had a laugh. He asked me to help him get more beer from the garage.

In the garage he touched me and made my hand touch him as well. Back in the house, he acted as though it hadn't happened. A few weeks later he asked some of us round again. We had some beers and then he asked me to the garage again. He made me get on my knees and he stuck his knob in my mouth and held my head to it to move up and down. I was stuck and shocked and didn't know what to do. After he said that I had got the lead part.

When we went back to the house he told everyone that I had the lead part. When he dropped me off home he told my mum and dad that I had the lead part and he was proud of me.

Mum and Dad were so pleased and proud of me and phoned my Gran to tell her. That was the start...

I was playing a football game online. I had worked up a great score. One of the friends I had met online chatted to me and kept saying how well I was doing. We got really friendly and over the next few months he chatted to me. He was my age and sent me a photo of him playing football. He asked if we could meet up.

I went to his house and his big brother was there. He gave me some beer while we were waiting for my friend to come back. After some beers, I realized that there was no friend but that this was the friend this "big brother". He made me do things to him that were horrible. I ran as fast as I could when I got out of the house.

He chatted to me again online when I got home and said that I couldn't tell anybody cause he had taken photos of me in his house doing that to him and he would tell the school and all my friends and my mum and dad.

I did tell my mum, because I was so upset and she noticed that I was really upset. She told the police and they were nice and said it wasn't my fault and that this man had been exploiting me. I am glad I told.

I met Gary at a friend's party. I was 14 and had lied to my mum about going out. She thought I was staying at my friend Stacey's house but we both were going to the party. I was in 2nd year at the high school and Gary and his friends were in 4th year. We were both so chuffed that the big boys had asked us to the party.

We didn't really drink but when we got there, Gary and his friends kept giving us vodka and beer. I went to the toilet to look for Stacey and couldn't find her. I went into one of the rooms and Gary was there with another friend, Stacey was on the bed. They got us to touch each other while they took photos. They said that it was a laugh. We didn't really want to but they were still giving us drink and also they said we were so gorgeous that we could have been models. We did it, and Gary seemed so pleased with us. Stacey was with the other guy Mark who started kissing her.

Gary was so nice and kept going on about how beautiful I was and had a great body and figure. At school on Monday, Gary, Mark and their friends came up to Stacey and me and hung out with us at the break time. The other girls in our class were so jealous.

The next weekend, we went to one of Gary's friends' houses. I didn't like this guy he was a bit creepy and wasn't at school, he was about 20. After some beers, Gary said it was time for the camera again. Stacey and me went a bit further this time cause we were encouraged and egged on by Gary and Mark. They were making us laugh. The other guy was in the room, and I didn't like it so just kept looking at Gary. They asked us to do stuff that we weren't sure of, and got us kissing each other and doing stuff to each other. Gary said it was really turning his on and Mark said the same to Stacey.

I don't think we would have done it if we hadn't been drinking and if we hadn't been trying to please Gary and Mark.

Later when we had got dressed and were having another beer, the guy whose house it was gave Gary some money. I asked why and Gary said that he owed him the money. On Monday at school Gary and Mark didn't come over to us. When Stacey and me went up to them they said they were busy. Gary didn't reply to any of my text. They were like that all week and then on Friday didn't ask us out with them at the weekend.

Stacy phoned Mark on Saturday and a girl answered his phone and then laughed when she heard Stacey's voice.

Roisin and Amanda became friends in February 2011, although both have attended the same Secondary School in Glasgow since first year. Roisin has stated that 'Eleanor got Amanda into meeting men online, and then Amanda tried to get Roisin into it.

Roisin stated that last summer she and Amanda met Ryan (28 y/o) and his friend (no name given) who was 24 y/o. Amanda met Ryan on Face book and agreed to meet him. She told Roisin to 'bring some condoms.'

Roisin went with Amanda to meet an older man, Ryan, and his friend whom she had met on the Internet. The friend whom Roisin had sex with was 24. Amanda still sees Ryan who is 28. Barnardo's worker explored with Roisin why someone in their twenties might want to meet someone much younger. Roisin stating she can't understand it either as they would have nothing to talk about, Roisin clearly suspicious of Ryan's continued contact with her friend. Roisin visibly upset remembering meeting the males, stating she wouldn't have gone through with it if it hadn't been for Amanda.

Roisin feeling she would still be a virgin if she had not become friends with Amanda and would not drink as much. Roisin raising concerns about Amanda as she is continuing to meet men she meets on Facebook.

Roisin has recently disclosed that Amanda had been raped when she was 13 following meeting adult male(s) from online.

Jessica is 17 years old and has been supported by one of Barnardo's sexual exploitation projects for 2 years. She was just 14 when she became involved with an older group of children, who introduced her to drugs.

'My mum wasn't around, my dad was drinking and spent most of his time internet dating, and my sister had left home. I got involved with a group of friends outside school – they were older – who were drinking and there were drugs,' says Jessica.

'I was already drinking when I met them, but I'd never touched drugs before. There was a lot of peer pressure to get involved. At first it was okay – I could get the money from my dad. But after a couple of weeks, I was getting hooked and there wasn't enough money.

'My new mates said that it was fine and introduced me to a new boy in the group. They said he fancied me, they said that I should go out with him. I didn't realise what was happening – I was being set up. After I had slept with him – I realised that I'd been used but it was too late. I ended up hooked on drugs. The need and the want became more and more. Next thing was, he made me sleep with one of his friends to clear a drugs debt.....That was only the start of it.'

When Jessica was just turning 15 the 'risk' signs were already there. She had family problems, was using alcohol and drugs and was staying out at night. 'I had so many problems. I really needed my mum but she'd gone off with another bloke. Dad didn't care and my sister had gone off and was hardly ever in touch. The drugs seemed like my only escape because I had no one. No one seemed to care for me or be looking out for me. Yes, the situation was frightening – but I didn't know how I could change things,' says Jessica.

At that point a Barnardo's worker paid a visit to Jessica's school. She was chosen as part of the group to do a project about the dangers of abusive relationships, how young people could be groomed and the signs to watch out for. The education worker also gave a presentation about the help Barnardo's could offer. Unbeknown to her, Jessica had been identified at school as being a girl 'at risk' of being sexually exploited. No one knew that it had already started.

'My situation had got more and more frightening – then one night I was raped at a party because I said no to someone my so called boyfriend had set me up with, as a 'favour'. I didn't know what to do – I was desperate and had nowhere to go. I couldn't go home, I couldn't tell my friends. It was really scary – but I knew I had to do something and I went to the Barnardo's project the education worker had come from', Jessica says.

'Luckily there was someone working late and they helped me. I knew that I didn't want to live like this anymore. Even then – I knew that the drugs and abuse wasn't my destiny. So I changed it – with the project's help'.

Two years on, Barnardo's have helped Jessica get a place at college, gain qualifications and find her own place to live. The days of drugs and abuse are firmly in the past and she has made her 'escape' thanks to a lot of determination and the support of the project.

She says: “They pick on vulnerable, lonely girls like me. They can almost sniff out the needy, lost girls. The girls looking for love, who crave affection and who are desperate to belong to something, anything.

‘Those words ‘child sexual exploitation’ they makes me shudder, makes my skin crawl. I know that’s what happened to me and there was no way I could recognise it at the time, I was so young and vulnerable.

‘And what was worse.....there was no way I could have stopped it on my own, without help and without knowing Barnardo’s was there for girls just like me.’

Sophie is 16. The oldest of six children, Sophie grew up caring for her mother who suffered from mental health issues and her younger siblings. The family was too proud to ask for help, so Sophie struggled on lonely and isolated, sacrificing her childhood for others close to her.

'I had a lot to do at home and I admit, sometimes it felt lonely. I started to get into trouble at school for attendance and by the time I was 12, I began falling behind,' Sophie says.

'I suppose I did feel isolated and I never seemed to get any attention at home.'

Typical of many young carers, Sophie craved attention and it was this vulnerability that would make her the perfect target for an abuser, set on finding another child.

'I was 13 when I met him and it all seemed so exciting. I was invited to my cousin's 21st birthday party at her house and met this gorgeous guy. He said that he was 18 and we swapped telephone numbers – it seemed so innocent at first,' Sophie continues.

The guy started calling Sophie regularly. He took her to the cinema, bought her thoughtful presents 'daft bits of jewellery' and paid her the attention she had never experienced. Within weeks she was 'hooked' and there was no going back. 'At first he really treated me well and it felt so normal, so right. My mum was getting worried, but I did listen to her, I wouldn't have listened to anyone, I was totally in love,' says Sophie.

'But then he started to change. He got more aggressive and bad things started happening. He'd hit me, but the next day say he was sorry. I'd always forgive him. He started taking me to parties, he'd give me drink and we'd stay out all night. It just got worse, worse, worse.'

Sophie was just 14. Her relationship with her mother was deteriorating rapidly, she wouldn't hear a word said against her 'boyfriend' and she had started to go missing for days on end. Sophie was being dragged into a dangerous world of drugs, alcohol and sex. Still a child, lonely and desperately in love, she was powerless to resist.

'The parties got worse and so did the way he treated me. At first I'd fight back, but it was really hard. Then one night at a party, he took me and some friends upstairs. He made me do things that I didn't want to do. I was frightened,' she says.

At first Sophie had told her mother that she was staying over with friends. She regularly got grounded, but would then run away to be with her boyfriend. The grip he had over her life was terrifying – Sophie just couldn't see the danger she was in.

'Friends told me he was older, that he had a police record, but I wouldn't believe them. I called them a liar, I was still in love with him,' she adds.

But Sophie's regular episodes of running away hadn't gone unnoticed. Her mother had reported the incidents to the police and they became concerned at her relationship with the older man. They began an investigation, interviewing Sophie's friends and then alerted the local Barnardo's child sexual exploitation project.

'From then on, every time I went missing the project worker came out to me. She told me straight what he was doing and how it was not only me, but my family that was at risk. Gradually, I began to see what was happening – I realised the danger, that I needed to get out,' Sophie says.

With the help of Barnardo's, Sophie plucked up the courage to tell her abuser to leave her alone. It wasn't easy; he followed her, left messages and intimidated friends. But with the support of Barnardo's and the police, she was able to escape the abuse.

'Barnardo's helped me realise what was happening, and then they helped me escape. The worker helped me mend the broken relationship with my mum and get the whole family back on track,' Sophie explains.

Emma came into contact with Barnardo's when she was 12-years-old and was living in a children's home. She had a history of running away and it was thought that she had been sexually abused.

There were concerns that Emma was being sexually exploited on home visits or when she absconded. It soon emerged that her mother had different men coming to the house, who would often be physically abusive to her. The mother was a known prostitute and the Barnardo's worker believed that she was putting her daughter on the streets, forcing her to sleep with men for money.

From the age of 8 or 9, her mother had taken little responsibility for her. However, despite this Emma still loved her mother, felt protective towards her and would put herself in danger to protect her mum. On the occasions that Emma ran away from the care home, she would always head for her mother, even though her flat was being used for "adult prostitution".

Once at 'home' Emma would give the different men her mobile number, or go off with them, so that they would leave her mother alone. She was putting herself at risk, but she confided in her Barnardo's worker that she just wanted to see her mum. Emma just wanted to be part of a family, to be loved, to be treated as a child.

However, through working with Barnardo's Emma finally came to understand that by running away, she was risking her life. She realised that she couldn't live with her mother, because despite how much she loved her, the mother would put her on the streets.

Emma is now 14 and for the first time in years, is attending a specialist school regularly. She has discovered that she really enjoys 'doing well' and talks enthusiastically about doing Karaoke with friends; or her new teachers – in fact all the normal things 14-year-olds chat about.

Zoe was known to social work services all of her life and started having a drink problem when she was just 11-years-old. Growing up against a chaotic background where her mother was an alcoholic and in violent relationships. Zoe used alcohol to block out the world. Before long she began running away from home – at the time not realising the danger.

“No one really cared about me; I don’t think they noticed if I didn’t come home. I didn’t like it when mum’s ‘boyfriend’ was around, I suppose I got scared.

So I started going missing for a few nights – I was 11. Then I met this boy, he was 17 and really paid me a lot of attention. He let me stay in his house and I thought he loved me. Then he forced me to have sex, I didn’t want this to happen, I said no,” says Zoe.

Zoe’s drink problems accelerated and her ‘boyfriend’ introduced her to drugs. Before long she had stopped attending school and was self-harming by cutting herself. Eventually Zoe was placed in secure accommodation – but it was only a temporary measure. The ‘missing’ episodes continued and when Zoe was 14 a friend introduced her to yet another older man, he was 35-years-old and quickly realised the youngster’s vulnerability.

“He’d pick me up and take me to loads of different places to meet his friends. Sometimes we’d go with other girls. At first it was all right,” Zoe adds.

Although she didn’t know it, Zoe was being groomed. After three months her new ‘boyfriend’ started getting violent, he’d punch and kick her. Then he’d demand sex and didn’t appear to care that he hurt her. Zoe couldn’t make him stop. Then one day she was taken to one of the ‘regular flats’ and he told her to have sex with his friends. Isolated and frightened Zoe said ‘no way’, but when her ‘boyfriend’ threatened to beat her, she was forced to do as she’d been told. This was how the pattern of sexual exploitation started. It happened more and more, different towns, different flats. Often she was not alone; other girls were being ‘used’ too.

But Zoe’s behaviour and constant missing episodes had raised concerns with social services and at this point Barnardo’s became involved. Within three months her missing episodes had dropped from several episodes every week, to one or two per month. Gradually she came to realise that she was not to ‘blame’ for her own abuse, there had been a complex process of grooming and sexual exploitation. Today Zoe is back in education. She’s stopped running away, self-harming and has set herself ‘life goals’. For many these would seem small steps, but for Zoe her life has been completely turned around.

Today Zoe has just passed her Maths and English exams and has applied for a college place to continue her studies. She’s moved away from the men who abused her and finally feels safe.

‘The best thing was just having someone to talk to,’ she says. ‘Thanks to the Barnardo’s staff, I went back to college and have a place to live and now my life is back on track.

Pamela is an 18 year old young person who was referred to the service through the local area social work team. Pamela has a diagnosis of a genetic disorder which was assessed by social work as placing her at a functioning age closer to 16.

Pamela had recently given birth to a child as a result of an exploitative relationship with an older male she met online. The male posed as 20 years old in his online persona and developed an online friendship with Pamela prior to meeting her. When Pamela met with the male she agreed to go with him to his car to help him with his laptop, despite him being significantly older. Pamela and the male were in contact for a number of months before the relationship was terminated by the male upon learning of Pamela's pregnancy. There were concerns about Pamela's capacity to assess risks, her desire to re-connect with the male, and subsequent long term child protection concerns.

Pamela had experienced a considerable amount of trauma and disadvantage throughout her life and in her relationships. , This appeared to impact her sense of self-worth and confidence. She expressed feeling at fault for her experiences and was initially protective of the older male.

A Barnardo's service worked with Pamela to help Pamela to develop an understanding of exploitation and the process of 'Grooming'. She was also able to think critically of the older male's motivation, and understand her own experience through this lens. This learning was incorporated into a wider understanding of how to identify and respond to risky situations; both online and in person.

Pamela also recognized her struggles with confidence, and the impact this had on her autonomy and ability to assert her rights. The service therefore additionally provided work around confidence in order to boost Pamela's sense of capacity and autonomy, and reduce Pamela's vulnerability to exploitative relationships.

Barnardo's also attended the Child Protection meetings for Pamela's child, providing advocacy and support to Pamela throughout this process.

Vicky was referred to the Barnardo's service by CAMHS who had become aware some time ago that there had been incidents of Vicky posting sexual images online. This had been discovered by her mum who had since restricted her home computer use. Social work services had become involved at mum's request but the case was then closed after assessment that risk had been removed. CAMHS remained concerned that Vicky had a lack of awareness of the exploitative nature of relationships that she had had online and was still vulnerable to further exploitation.

The service accepted the referral and began weekly sessions at the service base, focusing on the following outcomes –

- Knowledge of Sexual Health Strategies
- Able to Identify abusive/exploitative behaviour
- Recovery from sexual abuse/exploitation
- Able to describe safety strategies
- Reduction in level of risk/harm
- Reduced association with risky adults/peers
- Remains in regular contact with the service
- Awareness of own rights and those of others

During the course of initial work Vicky disclosed an unhealthy peer relationship which had led to further face to face sexual exploitation and it was apparent that she was still at significant risk of resuming online relationships. The service made a Child Protection referral to social work services and we continued to support Vicky during the subsequent investigation.

The service progressed work with Vicky – supporting her to identify the grooming process of intentionality and control that she had experienced in her relationships online. In time Vicky's perception of these as being loving relationships changed to where she was slowly able to acknowledge and disclose incidents of blackmail and coercion.

Work was undertaken to inform Vicky of the nature of perpetrator behaviours, the grooming process and also the concept of exploitation as abuse, with focus on Vicky's right to protection and safety. But also included input where Vicky was able to identify her motivations for seeking out adult relationships; using the time & space to explore her sense of self, her identity including sexual identity and to articulate her views on her own experiences.

By the end of contact Vicky considered she was still at some risk of reaching out for adult relationships but that this was minimal. She felt she had an increased confidence in managing her own emotional needs, and with the additional support that she was now receiving from various services she now had increased protective factors and was participating in age appropriate activities that met her intellectual needs and had focus for her future.

Christopher was referred to a Barnardo's service by his social worker when he was seventeen years old. He had been looked after since he was very young and had recently suffered a breakdown in his long-term foster placement, after he had made an allegation against an older male neighbour. Christopher stated that he no longer felt safe in this placement.

Christopher had suffered significant abuse and trauma which resulted in him being accommodated from an early age. He had ongoing mental health issues and was struggling with both his sexuality and his gender and spent a significant amount of time living under a female identity. In addition there were significant concerns regarding Christopher's use of alcohol and drugs, sexual health and risk taking behaviours and his relationships (both with peers and adults).

He was referred to the service as workers were very concerned, as he was going out and frequenting bars in the city centre and coming back to his accommodation heavily under the influence. He had also been found by the police in the city centre unconscious on several occasions and has also disclosed several incidents where he alleged that he had been sexually assaulted. Christopher continuously stated that he did not believe that he was at any risk and that he could not understand why workers were concerned about him.

The service met with Christopher over a period of four months. Initial contacts were very short and occurred fortnightly, however as Christopher got to know and trust workers, we slowly managed to increase the frequency of these contacts to weekly. During the time that we worked with Christopher, his accommodation broke down which resulted in him becoming homeless and living in unstable accommodation. We tried to link him into another Barnardo's project that could support him to access more suitable accommodation but Christopher was reluctant to meet any more workers and did not follow through with this.

More information emerged regarding his involvement in sexual exploitation although Christopher repeatedly stated that he was not at any risk and did not want to acknowledge or discuss this part of his life. His use of alcohol and drugs increased and his mental health deteriorated and he eventually withdrew from engaging with the service and other workers in his care plan. Christopher acknowledged that the service allowed him to be himself and was honest and up front with him regarding his behaviours and experiences.

We also consistently challenged him regarding some of his behaviours. This ensured that Christopher was always aware of what he could expect from the service and that workers were there for him if he wanted to talk about anything. We also helped him to put his views across at his meetings, although this became increasingly difficult due to Christopher's own uncertainty regarding who he was, how he felt and what he wanted to happen. The service currently has no contact with Christopher, although we continue to keep a look out for him through street work. It is understood that he is engaging with some workers and has been referred to a suitable accommodation project.

Emily is 15 years old.

Emily lives with her mother and her younger brother. Emily's mother is a single parent. Domestic abuse had been present in previous relationships, including Emily's father. Emily and her brother had also been hit by partners in the past and when they were young had witnessed domestic violence and a sexual assault of their mother within the family home.

Emily's mother was no longer in a relationship, although she was diagnosed with depression and also continued to use alcohol as a coping mechanism, drinking most evenings. Emily's relationship with her mother appears to be more of a 'volatile friendship' than a daughter and the levels of supervision, rules, routines and boundaries have not been appropriate to Emily's age and stage of development for a number of years. Social work did not currently have this as an open case.

Emily's school attendance has been poor for a number of years and school have made many attempts to work with mum in regard to this but mum does not follow through with meetings or strategies.

Emily bought a Blackberry Messenger phone and through BBM has been indiscriminate in who she contacts and who has her own contact details. Emily's mother has not been monitoring who and where Emily is in the evenings and in the last year Emily has increasingly been hanging out with slightly older friends, drinking and attending parties. On a couple of occasions Emily engaged in underage sexual activity while attending these parties with a 16 year old boy, later Emily would also disclose that she was sexually assaulted by an older male while drunk at a party but that she did not report this.

Emily started going out with a boyfriend at school who was her own age. They used their mobile phones for 'sexting'. Initially exchanging text with sexual content but then also exchanging pictures. Emily sent her boyfriend a number of sexually explicit photos of herself. The boyfriend showed these photos to friends of his and then also sent them on. Emily split up with him following this. However, due to the bullying this instigated within the school Emily rarely attended school over a number of months and began to drink more and hang out with older young people in the community.

Emily began to be sexual activity with a number of these 'friends' who at the time she did not think were exploiting her but is now aware that she was being groomed. Emily began attending parties on her own and has now disclosed that on a couple of occasions when drunk she slept with not only her 'boyfriend' but also a 'friend'. In addition to this Emily was being increasingly targeted either for bullying through BBM by peers or sexual advances by older 'friends'.

Due to the complete disengagement of Emily from school and the lack of response from her mother school put in a Child Concern Report to Social Work. Initial home visits felt that the case was not sufficiently concerning to be opened and that School Community Support Services should be able to engage Emily back in school. However this was unsuccessful and Emily's brother also disclosed concerns to a guidance teacher that he was worried about his sister. This led to a further Child Concern Report and referrals to specialist CSE and alternative to education resources.

It took both these services a number of months to build a relationship with Emily and for the above information to be disclosed so that she could be supported with all of these issues. Emily has not returned to school but is hoping to now attend college and is engaged in group work with other young people looking at issues around CSE and work they can do to raise awareness of the risks for other young people.

Angela and Sarah are aged 12 and 14 and both live at home. They do not have good relationship with their family or peers and do not engage well at school.

They were first approached by Barnardo's CSE service late at night in town when they were seen approaching adult men and asking for cigarettes, they also said they were stranded and couldn't get home. When it became apparent that these jaunts into town were not just one-off incidents the team invited the girls to the Barnardo's office to discuss risk-taking behaviour.

By this time both girls had stopped going to school, Angela stopped attending after reporting that she had been sexually assaulted in the playground but no action had been taken. Sarah didn't want to go to school – embarrassed about only having two tops. She had little access to basic needs such as food and clothing. Her elder sister had been arrested on two occasions for shoplifting food.

Barnardo's staff had contact with the girls 2/3 times a week and as their confidence in town grew so did their risk taking behaviour such as running away from home and involvement in sexual exploitation. They were regularly supported to return home and the project workers gained the trust of the girls which enabled them to gather more and more information as they opened up.

As it turned out Angela had a very bad relationship with her mother, when she disclosed that her dad had sexually abused her, her mum refused to believe her. Sarah's relationship with her dad fell apart when she found out he had lied about her mum's death.

Risk indicators for the girls included going missing for long periods of time and their parents didn't know where. They had no awareness of their rights or the risks associated with their behaviours. They received little communication or warmth from their family, used alcohol inappropriate to their age, did not attend school and both had histories of abuse and neglect.

James is 15yo and has grown up in a chaotic home prior to being accommodated. James' mum suffers from significant mental health difficulties, and has made several suicide attempts, on occasion when James has been present.

James has experienced violence from his dad, stepdad and other partners of his mum during his time living at home. James has also witnessed domestic violence against his mum and as the oldest son has tried to protect both her and his siblings from this violence. James became accommodated in a local authority children's unit following a significant incident of violence from one of his mum's partners.

James is very protective of his mum and there are indications of a co-dependent relationship between them. James will sometimes share that he feels he hasn't done well to protect his family. James' mum will still seek James' support in times of crisis.

James was referred to the service following missing episodes and the disclosure of rape.

James identifies himself as gay and his experiences of sexual exploitation began age 15 through making contact with males in social networking and dating sites online.

James is quite shy and has difficulty in developing relationships. He felt it would be easier to meet someone, just like him. Someone who wanted to meet other people, maybe a partner, but who like him struggled to start up conversations. Initial contacts involved online chat and trying to get to know these males. James' online profile stated he was older; otherwise he wouldn't have been able to post on the sites. However James was always upfront in chat that he was only 15yrs of age.

Some of these conversations progressed to James being invited to meet up face to face. Meetings have taken place in various places - hotels, car parks/parked cars, and at houses in locations across the country. All of these males have been adults – ranging from 20 – 45year of age and have been aware of James age at the time of contact. Unfortunately James has difficulties in assessing risk and judging character – a result of his significant early relationships, causing him to be vulnerable to the skills of perpetrator males in grooming him. James feels now that he has been naive to have believed that these males wanted to have equal relationships rather than the abusive, exploitative relationships he has experienced.

James has been raped, contracted STIs, and has been hospitalised as a result of infection. His esteem has been damaged with increased feelings of rejection and he now has an increased sense of vulnerability.

James is slight in build and presentation and was told by one of the males who abused him that what appealed to him was James' vulnerable child-like appearance, adding he looked like a 12yo.

Since working with the service James has an increased awareness of the motivations of these adult perpetrators to have power and control over him.

James is now working with supports to build positive pro-social relationships into his day to day experiences, support in reducing his feelings of isolation and inadequacy and increasing his opportunities to increase his self-regard and his confidence.

The work is supporting his recovery from child sexual exploitation and developing his skills and confidence to be able to engage in equal relationships in the future.

One of Raven Kaliana's earliest memories is being taken to a family portrait studio by her parents, at around the age of four. The studio was in the basement of a department store in a town 50 miles from their home. Once they had arrived, they waited for another couple to arrive with their own child.

"Would you like to have your picture taken with this cute little boy?" her mother asked, before the parents left the kids with the photographer and retired to the cafe upstairs. But while they sat eating ice cream, the images being made in the studio down below were far from happy family portraits. Raven and her companion had just been sold into the child abuse industry.

It was to be the beginning of a 15-year ordeal, which saw Raven regularly trafficked by her parents and other members of an organised crime ring from her home in a middle-class suburb in the American north-west to locations all over the US and abroad. In her teens, the crimes were often perpetrated in Los Angeles, where many film studios provided ample opportunity for the underground child abuse industry in the 70s and 80s.

Her father, precariously self-employed after losing his teaching job, was violent towards her younger brother, but since she had become the family breadwinner, Raven was granted a peculiar status. "My father always favoured me because I brought in the money – I was supporting our whole family. My younger brother was jealous because of my dad's special treatment of me.

"My father was also quite affectionate towards me whereas he would beat my brother to a pulp. Although he did hit me, he wanted me to stay intact because the less scars I had, the more I was worth."

Inevitably, as she grew older, Raven's value to her abusers decreased and subsequently the kinds of films she was required to take part in became more extreme and violent.

Yet from a young age, she had learned from her parents to rationalise and deny what was going on within the family. "It's the same way that someone who has a problem with alcohol will rationalise their behaviour – 'It's only this many drinks. It's before noon but, oh well, just today'.

"I remember my mother saying things like, 'Oh, they'll never remember it,' like people do when they get their babies' ears pierced. I told myself that my parents meant well, that what I was going through was what was necessary to help my family. It was paying our mortgage."

Rosie lived with her mum and stepfather. Her stepfather used to hide a camera in the toilet and watch Rosie from the age of 10.

When she was 12, he started to come into her room at night when her mum was out and abused her. When she was 13, he took her once a week swimming and he then took her for a treat afterwards to an ice cream café. He asked her every time what flavor she wanted of ice cream and bought her the double cone she wanted.

On the way back from the ice cream she had to perform a sex act on her stepfather. He said the ice cream was payment for this.

Rebecca's story

It started when I was 11, the grooming. It was older men who lived in the area, Rusholme, Moss Side. Then when I was 12, 13, and 14 that's when there was abuse. By the time I was 16, there had been more than 50 men who had exploited or abused me.

I'm telling this because we need to stand up and speak up about this. This is the future of our children. Because of what happened I have trust issues with men, depression, it's always on your brain, I didn't have a good education. But I know I want to fight against child sexual exploitation.

Our project is called Reign because we want to be queens in our community - take a stand and speak up.

As a child, I had problems at home - my brother was always in trouble, my dad wasn't around and my mum had problems with alcoholism. I used to wag school a lot. A lot of hanging around - chilling on the streets. But all the people I should have been chilling with, like my friends, were in school. I was more likely to bump into older people and they obviously knew I was vulnerable and kind of encouraged me and changed my mind about doing things.

It was more fun than going to school. Then on the few times I went in, it was like my classmates were lower than me, I was a big girl because I was chilling with these men.

Teachers didn't want me there, they put me in another room with different work. So that put me off even more. They had a responsibility to ask where I was when I wasn't in school - but they didn't. I've learnt there are a lot of older men out there with an interest in young girls.

I guess you're an easy target, vulnerable. The men I met, it was people you wouldn't expect to be looking for young people. They can buy nice things for you.

Every young girl wants to feel older, and an older person has the funds to get you things - cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs. It's hard to say but there were more than 50 before I was 16. They weren't connected.

There would be someone who worked in a shop, someone you met on a bus, someone walking down the street with a dog, or you'd bump into them.

At first it was just conversation, but then you'd exchange numbers. It would go from there. They encouraged me to take things, drugs. I thought it was right to because they said it was right.

'It takes away your innocence, your childhood'

I was young and I wanted someone to be there for me, someone to trust, someone to look after me, buy things for me and treat me like an adult. There were lots of people ready to do

that. But they were the wrong kind of people, giving me the wrong attention.

It should have been my school, social workers and my family should have known a bit more about what I was up to.

Social workers came but they made me feel more vulnerable - they approached me wrong. They were so formal with their clipboards, if they feel you are at risk they can remove you. Then when I needed them they weren't there.

I was too young then to understand what was going to happen. When I got pregnant I moved away and that's when it stopped.

Jess was the envy of all the girls at school. None of the other 14-year olds in her year had a 30-year old boyfriend that met them at the school gates in a flash car. They didn't get presents of perfume and clothes. None of them had gone 'all the way' with a boy, let alone a man.

Because Chris told Jess that she drove him crazy, and that he loved her. And if she loved him too, she'd sleep with him. Soon he was picking her up from home and taking her back to his flat, where they'd listen to music, smoke and have sex. Unlike her parents and teachers, he treated Jess like an adult. She felt special.

But Jess wasn't an adult. She was just a child. So when Chris started inviting his friends over and letting them touch her and have sex with her, she didn't know what to do.

She was passed around a steady stream of strange men like a toy, and forced to do things no child should ever do.

Soon it wasn't just happening in Chris's flat. Soon, he would pick her up in the morning and drive her to flats all over the country, where she'd be forced to have sex with men as old as 65. Men on drugs, who hurt her. Men who got more excited if she struggled and cried.

She knew it was wrong. And she tried to make it stop. But if she told him she didn't want to, or threatened to break contact with him, Chris hit her – sometimes to the point where she ended up in A&E. But Chris was clever. He always went with her, and never left her side. Jess never got the chance to tell the nursing staff. And worse than hurting her, he told her he'd hurt her parents too, show them the vile videos he'd recorded of her. He threatened to take her little sister away where they'd never find her, and let his friends enjoy her too.

Greg

At the age of 12 Greg entered into a relationship with a 26-year-old male, who initially told him he was 18. He first developed this relationship online and met in person after two weeks.

The man made him feel like he was in an intimate relationship and he listened to him and agreed with him when he told him how unfair his life was.

Greg started being introduced to other adults by the man. He felt like these men were the only people he had. He felt that they liked him for being himself.

But then he was told to go to places and have sex with men, and train tickets and cabs were paid for him to get to the locations. The abuse he experienced became more severe and sadistic and he was put into very risky situations.

Eventually Greg was referred to Barnardos', who worked with him to help him to understand the reality of his abuse and how he had been groomed and taken advantage of.

I don't remember a time when I wasn't being abused. My Dad used to take my sister and me to different houses where there were men who took it in turns to sexually abuse us. My Dad got money for this and when we arrived, he was welcomed by the men like a hero. I used to think he must be really important, it was only years later I realized that it was because he was bringing me and my sister. I was very angry all the time but my sister was very quiet and withdrawn, she clung to me all the time.

We didn't go to school when we lived with my Dad, maybe somebody would have noticed us if we had. My mum cooked for us and I remember she used to wash us carefully and lovingly in the bath and then hold us closely when we were wrapped up in the towel afterwards.

My Dad hit my mum a lot so we didn't get a chance to have a lot of nice time with her.

One day when I was about 10 and my sister was about 8, my Dad forgot to lock the car door, so I dragged my sister out of the car and we ran down the street. A lady stopped us and asked us if we were okay, she took us to the police station. I remember we got hot chocolate and kit-kats by a lady police officer.

Me and my sister were sent to a big children's house and went to school for the first time. We were in different classes but met up at break times. We were different to the other children and didn't know how to read or write so it was a hard time. One day after school, my Dad was waiting for us at the school gate. He grabbed us and put us in the car. He was really angry talking about all the money we had cost him and he had been looking everywhere for us.

Dad drove us for a long time in the car to a horrible flat in a big building. We were put in a room and the door was locked. Later than night the men came again and we were back to normal.

We were then taken to a lot of different places where there were men that paid money to Dad for us. My sister got very ill and Dad got more angry with her. One day he took her away and I didn't see her again. I think he took her to a hospital.

My Dad started to give me drink and that helped me a lot when the men came if I was drunk. When I was about 14, my Dad threw me out because he said that I was too drunk and angry and the men were complaining about me. I lived on the street for a few days before a man picked me up and took me to his house.

He bought me clothes and really looked after me. He said that I could still do the work with the men but this time I would be looked after and kept safe. I lived with him for a few years while he brought men to the house, but he was kind and I wasn't a prisoner, he also gave me money and bought me clothes. It was a good time.

I really wanted to find my sister, so one day I went into the Salvation Army as I had heard they could help. I spoke to a lovely lady called Anne and told her my whole story. Anne met me every week for a while and was so kind and not judgmental with me. Anne helped me get out of that way of living and helped me get to a house where other women lived who had been through similar stuff to me.

I found it really hard to settle and kept wanting to go back, it sounds mad but it was what I knew and I felt so guilty about my sister and my mum and that I wasn't working.

It took a long time to feel safe, and know what safe actually was.

One 40-year-old woman with a sixth-grade education explained that her mother was a prostituted woman who physically and sexually assaulted her and put her out in prostitution at age 12. “My mother was my first pimp. She used to sell me to the landlord and other men who wanted a young girl. She was a junkie.” After she ran away, she was picked up by a pimp and held against her will, and later was held captive by another. “I thought that was normal.”

She ended up in a massage parlor and eventually the manager asked her to watch the desk a couple of times, “and the rest was history. He told me if I could recruit girls I could run the spot myself as long as I covered each shift with a least three to four girls. I have been pimped all my life, used by my family, and sold to any Johnny-come-lately. I was tired of selling my own body. It wasn’t my idea at first but I knew all the ropes and the girls trusted me.”

When asked what her attitude was toward pimping, she explained, “I wanted to run every day, but what would I do with a sixth-grade education and make the money I was making, and who is to say they would let me walk like that?” She was, however, fired from her job because she had gotten into a fight and her face was cut pretty badly; she was told she couldn’t work because of the scar. Today, she takes two different drugs for depression and has been diagnosed as bipolar. “I just hope what I’m telling you can help someone not end up feeling and looking like me.”

In 2013, a series of high-profile court cases sent shockwaves through the West Midlands town of Telford. Seven men, all from the town's Pakistani heritage community, were jailed for selling vulnerable young girls for sex. The convictions made national news, but for one girl the chilling headlines were all too real.

Holly Archer was just fourteen when her life changed forever after becoming embroiled in a frightening web of exploitation and abuse. Enduring countless violent rapes and death threats, she was forced to sleep with several men a night. As her abusers' grip tightened, she fell into despair, twice becoming pregnant. Hours after her last GCSE exam, Holly took an overdose in a desperate attempt to end the nightmare that had become her life.

Her escape eventually came when, old enough to leave home, she fled to Birmingham. She moved house every six months, fearing her abusers would hunt her down. She eventually found the strength to return to Telford shortly after giving birth to a daughter, around the same time the police launched an investigation into the exploitation of young girls in the town.

She underwent hours of rigorous police interviews but in the end decided she could not face her abusers in court.

Nonetheless, seven men were convicted of sex offences and jailed as a result of the investigation. Holly slowly began to pick up the pieces of her life and was given a job with a rape prevention charity.

Rotherham

Child A (2000) was 12 when the risk of sexual exploitation became known. She was associating with a group of older Asian men and possibly taking drugs. She disclosed having had intercourse with 5 adults.

Two of the adults received police cautions after admitting to the Police that they had intercourse with Child A. Child A continued to go missing and was at high risk of sexual exploitation. A child protection case conference was held. It was agreed by all at the conference that Child A should be registered. However, the CID representative argued against the category of sexual abuse being used because he thought that Child A had been '100% consensual in every incident'.

This was overruled, with all others at the case conference demonstrating a clear understanding that this was a crime and a young child was not capable of consenting to the abuse she had suffered.

She was supported appropriately once she was placed on the child protection register.

Rotherham

Child B (2001) was referred to Risky Business by her school when she was 15 years old. By that time, she had been groomed by an older man involved in the exploitation of other children. Child B loved this man and believed he loved her. He trafficked her to Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield and offered to provide her with a flat in one of those cities. A child protection referral was made but the social care case file recorded no response to this.

The case was discussed at regular Key Players 3 9 meetings (no records of these meetings have survived). Within just a few months, Child B and her family were living in fear of their lives. The windows in their house were put in. She and her family received threats that she would be forced into prostitution. Child B was assaulted by other victims at the instigation of the perpetrator.

An attack on her older sibling by associates of the perpetrator resulted in him being hospitalised with serious injuries. Child B also required hospital treatment for injuries she sustained. A younger child in the family was threatened and had to go into hiding so that the perpetrators could not carry out threats against her. Child B and her mother refused to have anything more to do with the Police, because they believed the Police could do nothing to protect them. Child B had been stalked and had petrol poured over her and was threatened with being set alight. She took overdoses.

She and her family were too terrified to make statements to the Police. By the time Child B was 18, her family situation had broken down and she was homeless.

She referred herself to children's social care, and was given advice about benefits. No further action was taken.

This child and her family were completely failed by all services with the exception of Risky Business.

Rotherham

Child C (2002) was 14 when sexual exploitation was identified. She was referred several times to children's social care between 2002 and 2004 because of family breakdown. She was described as being out of control.

Her mother voiced her concerns about Child C being sexually active, going missing and repeated incidents of severe intoxication when she had been plied with drink by older males.

Several initial assessments were carried out and some family support was offered. The case was then closed. The social worker's assessment was that Child C's mother was not able to accept her growing up. In fact, she was displaying what are now known to be classic indicators of child sexual exploitation from the age of 11.

By the age of 13, she was at risk from violent perpetrators, associating with other victims of sexual exploitation, misusing drugs, and at high risk.

She was referred to Risky Business whose staff identified these risk factors and addressed them through a planned programme of preventive work.

Rotherham

Child D (2003) was 13 when she was groomed by a violent sexual predator who raped and trafficked her. Her parents, Risky Business and Child D herself all understood the seriousness of the abuse, violence and intimidation she suffered. Police and children's social care were ineffective and seemed to blame the child.

A core assessment was done but could not be traced on the file. An initial assessment accurately described the risks to Child D but appeared to blame her for 'placing herself at risk of sexual exploitation and danger'.

Other than Risky Business, agencies showed no comprehension that she had been groomed at 13, that she was terrified of the perpetrators, and that her attempts to placate them were themselves a symptom of the serious emotional harm that CSE had caused her. Risky Business worked very hard with Child D and her parents.

None of the other agencies intervened effectively to protect her, and she and her parents understandably had no confidence in them.

Rotherham

Child E (2004) became a looked after child when she was aged 12. She had an abusive family background and her parents had mental health problems. She became a victim of child sexual exploitation while she was looked after in a local children's unit. Her looked after file could not be traced, although minutes from looked after reviews were accessed on the Risky Business file. Child E was described as very naïve, and desperate for affection.

She was very vulnerable to coercion and was sexually exploited when a looked after child by adult males she thought were her boyfriends. Notes from the children's unit files at the time suggest there was a level of chaos surrounding the care of Child E and other children in the unit, with staff powerless as older children in the residential units introduced younger and more vulnerable children like Child E to predatory adult males who were targeting children's homes.

Whilst looked after, she was prematurely moved into semi-independent accommodation, where she became even more at risk of harm. She was then admitted to a residential adolescent mental health unit after she suffered a psychotic episode.

There is evidence on the file that at that point every effort was made by social care staff to support her and find a suitable care placement. She was found a specialist foster placement at the age of 16, and benefited from a supportive and caring environment. Whilst there was some evidence of positive outcomes when she was 16, the longer term outcomes for this child are not known.

Rotherham

Child F (2006) was a victim of serious sexual abuse when she was a young child. She was groomed for sexual exploitation by a 27-year-old male when she was 13. She was subjected to repeated rapes and sexual assaults by different perpetrators, none of whom were brought to justice. She repeatedly threatened to kill herself and numerous instances of serious self-harm were recorded in the case file, including serious overdoses and trying to throw herself in front of cars.

Social workers worked to protect Child F after she was referred by the Police. There was good cooperation between children's social care services, the Police, Risky Business and acute hospital services, where doctors were seriously concerned about her because of the number and seriousness of hospital admissions over such a short time, many associated with serious drug misuse and self-harm.

There was evidence in the file of social workers, frontline managers and Risky Business workers doing everything possible to help Child F. She was eventually placed in secure care, where she stayed for several months. During this time she was kept safe and a process of therapeutic intervention began.

Child F was supported to return home, but because her family moved out of the area.

Rotherham

Child H (2008) was 11 years old when she came to the attention of the Police. She disclosed that she and another child had been sexually assaulted by adult males. When she was 12, she was found drunk in the back of a car with a suspected CSE perpetrator, who had indecent photos of her on his phone.

Risky Business became involved and the Locality Team did an initial assessment and closed the case. Her father provided Risky Business with all the information he had been able to obtain about the details of how and where his daughter had been exploited and abused, and who the perpetrators were. This information was passed on to the authorities.

Around this time, there were further concerns about her being a victim of sexual exploitation. She was identified as one of a group of nine children associating with a suspected CSE perpetrator. Her case had not been allocated by children's social care.

The Chair of the Strategy meeting expressed concern about her and considered she needed a child protection case conference. This does not appear to have been held. Three months later, the social care manager recorded on the file that Child H had been assessed as at no risk of sexual exploitation, and the case was closed. Less than a month later, she was found in a derelict house with another child, and a number of adult males. She was arrested for being drunk and disorderly (her conviction was later set aside) and none of the males were arrested. Child H was at this point identified as being at high risk of CSE. Risky Business, social care workers and the Police worked to support Child H and her father and she was looked after for a period.

She suffered a miscarriage while with foster carers. Her family moved out of the area and Child H returned home. Some of the perpetrators were subsequently convicted.

Rotherham

Child I (2009) was 11 years old when she was raped and sexually assaulted. Her attacker was convicted. Her older sister was a victim of CSE.

Child I regularly went missing and was subjected to rape and sexual assaults by older males. She became a looked after child because of concerns for her safety. She was further abused and exploited while she was looked after. She was placed out-of-area and repeatedly went missing, trying to get back to Rotherham. This made her even more vulnerable and she was repeatedly abused.

She suffered post-traumatic stress disorder, self-harmed and at times became suicidal.

Child I continues to be supported but despite the best efforts of children's social care services, the trauma she has suffered has resulted in lasting emotional and psychological damage.

Rotherham

Child J (2009) had a long history of neglect and child protection. She was 11 years old when she was identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation as well as sexual abuse within her family. Her older sister was a victim of sexual exploitation and the perpetrators were successfully prosecuted. Key information about Child J is missing from the electronic social care file.

When she was 14 years old it was suspected she was visiting the homes of adult male strangers and possibly coercing other children to accompany her.

A Strategy meeting chairperson clearly identified action that needed to be taken to protect Child J. There is no evidence on the file that appropriate action was taken. There was virtually nothing recorded on the file about the risks she faced, despite information being held elsewhere in children's social care that she was accompanying her older sister to high-risk situations where she was exposed to exploitation by adult males.

Rotherham

Child K (2011) was groomed by a known sex offender via Facebook when she was 13.

Around that time, she required treatment at Accident and Emergency when she was taken there in an extremely intoxicated state.

Since then, there has been a pattern of high-risk behaviour, with Child K having older boyfriends who are vulnerable.

She frequents known hotspots with other young people at risk. She has been missing with other children although her parents do not report this and do not know where she is.

Child K is very resistant to accepting help from the CSE team who tried hard to engage with her and her family and to offer support to prevent further sexual exploitation.

Rotherham

Children L and M (2012) were two young people from a minority ethnic community. They were part of a group of children who were at risk of sexual exploitation, investigated by the Police as part of Operation Carrington.

A number of children at the same school were reported to be getting into cars with strangers, and getting paid in return for performing sex acts. Child L and Child M had frequent missing episodes and their families struggled to report them missing. This was partly because of language difficulties, but also because of cultural factors. The two children were at high risk of exploitation.

The CSE team worked hard to engage with these young people and their families, to communicate the risks of sexual exploitation and provide them with education through group work and on a one to one basis.

These two cases highlight the extreme difficulty of supporting children and their families when there are major language and cultural barriers, as a result of which neither the child nor parent is willing to disclose what is happening.

The Police and social care workers in the CSE team were acutely aware of these difficulties and worked hard to overcome them.

Rotheram

Child N (2013) was 12 when extremely indecent images of her were discovered on the phones of fellow students. There were suspicions that older men and one woman had groomed her via Facebook.

Her family were very shocked by photos and video images that had been taken of her, and have co-operated fully with the Police and the support offered by the CSE team.

Child N was very angry at the agencies trying to help her. She showed no understanding of the risks of online contact with strangers and was not willing to disclose anything about those who have groomed and exploited her.

Rotherham

Child O (2013) was 13 when concerns about sexual exploitation emerged. She was wandering around Rotherham late at night, often in the company of an older girl who was a known victim of sexual exploitation.

She was found in Sheffield on one occasion. She was often angry and violent towards family members, and they did not seem able to protect her. She was very active on social media sites and had acquired many adult associates whom she perceived to be her friends. She posted information online about a video she had seen of another child being sexually assaulted.

The suspected perpetrator made contact with her and threatened if she said anything she would be the next victim. She was beaten up but neither she nor her parents were willing to disclose this to the Police.

The risks to Child O were understood and documented by the CSE team, and a programme of preventive work was put in place. Nevertheless, Child O remained secretive about where she was when missing and whom she associated with. She continued to be at risk of exploitation.

Shauna

I didn't know that sending him pictures would cause this much trouble.

We were seeing each other, Ross and I. He's the same age as me but he acts much older and hangs around with older people.

That's the trouble. He's really popular and there's always a load of girls around him. So when he said that I was square and that he'd stop being with me and giving me money, I felt forced into sending him pictures of me undressing. It felt a bit weird to start with but he says he loves me and then I didn't care and sent him loads.

I never thought that he'd put private pictures of me online. He did it because I wouldn't sleep with his older mates. Now the pictures are everywhere, and he's got more that he's threatening to put up there as well. Worse ones.

I don't think I've got a choice...

Chrissie

It was going great with Brad. We were getting on really well and he bought me things to show me how much he cared.

It was really lovely and flattering. He was really caring and definitely gave me loads of attention. I live with my parents but they don't understand me and they don't care. So it was nice to be wanted.

But I'm angry now, I liked the booze he bought me but it stopped me from saying no.

We were at a party with his friends, they're all much older than me but that made me feel special. Everyone was drinking and I was really enjoying myself, but then the room started spinning and I felt really weird – out of control.

They kept touching me and I couldn't get any words out. I didn't want to have sex but I was too out of it to say no.

And that's the last thing I can remember.

I woke up in someone's garden, without my bra and knickers. I told my friend who took me to the Police.

I can't believe that they raped me, but looking back they were being nice to me for months and months before. I feel such a fool. I don't trust anyone now.

But I did help the Police and they were really supportive. I don't think they'll be doing that to anyone else.

A parent's view: My child with Downs' Syndrome, a perpetrator's dream.

I now know that many people with learning disabilities have lots of so called 'friends' online.

The trouble is that they tend to be more vulnerable online than others because they're very trusting and they just can't tell the difference between a real friend and someone who's trying to take advantage of them.

But I found that out all too late for Jake.

He was lovely. He has Downs' Syndrome but always managed really well. He was so friendly and outgoing, and enjoyed everyone's company. That's all changed now.

It started off with what I now know as 'mate crime'. He went on Facebook and lots of people then tried to be his friend. He was getting so much attention that he was really pleased – but I just thought he was just having a good time playing games.

It's all recently come out.

His 'friends' starting asking him for money and guilted him into doing it, Jake says that they were really nice about it - saying things like "The money will be used for other people with learning disabilities that aren't so lucky."

Then it got worse. I didn't know that this friend was coming round on the day he got his pocket money and insisting they go to the pub – he's only 15! Then sometimes they'd go out for an hour and Jake would pay them £20 petrol money for a 5 minute drive.

He then said that he'd gone to a party and that he'd had sex with someone because he didn't have enough petrol money. He said that he hadn't told me because we'd stop them being together.

I didn't really notice that he was losing a bit of weight and that he was a bit bruised because he can be a bit clumsy. He was giving away his things towards the end.....

I was distraught. It was right under my nose and it all started online.

We thought that this may be hate crime, so we spoke to the Police. I wish the professionals that we work with everyday knew a bit more about exploitation - I think they just didn't think it could happen to someone like Jake.

I think that young people with learning disabilities are a perpetrator's dream.

A parent's view: it can happen anywhere.

We were devastated when we realised that our daughter had become a victim of sexual abuse when she was only metres away from the house, and we live in a really nice area.

She was being groomed to be exploited – and we just didn't see it. She was 14 when she started hanging outside the local shops at night with her friends. We thought nothing of it at first – teenagers need their space and we always knew where she was.

At the beginning, it was nothing more than chatting and fooling around with her mates, letting off a bit of steam after school. But she started staying out later and later, and coming home smelling of alcohol.

She also changed in her attitude towards us. She used to respect our rules and boundaries in return for a bit of independence, but after a while she made it clear she thought she deserved more freedom – and she'd make sure she got it whether we agreed or not.

We got a call from her teacher at school, who was concerned about her poor attendance and general apathy while there. We'd had no idea her attitude towards her studies had changed and we certainly didn't realise she'd been bunking off. She refused to talk to us about it, claiming we were interfering, and her behaviour got worse and worse. It was a very stressful time – we didn't know what to do.

One day we had a very tearful visit from her best friend - they'd fallen out. She told us that she and our daughter had been hanging out with a group of lads a few years older than they were, who had been buying them drinks and little gifts.

At first it was just in return for company, but then they started to expect more. They introduced our daughter to drugs, and got her hooked. According to her friend, she got to the stage where she'd do anything to get high, and had started sexual relationships with several of the lads just so they would keep supplying her with drugs and drink.

Her friend had refused to get so involved because she understood that this was not how healthy relationships should be, but our daughter hadn't been so lucky – she was more vulnerable in that way. She was being abused every night, and we'd had no idea it was going on. It was obvious then that she'd been targeted and groomed, and then felt that she had no choice but to be abused.

But our daughter is still not in a good place. She has been mentally and physically damaged by this experience, and it was hard to convince her to let us help her.

He buys me things – and I like it, it's all normal, isn't it?

My parents don't have much money, so it's great that my new boyfriend Steve buys me nice things. I've got a great phone and for once some decent clothes. I feel like I've got what everyone else has got – finally, better, even...

He takes me to nightclubs, even though I'm not legal, and buys me a few drinks. Well quite a lot actually.

He says he loves me and wants to be with me forever. My parents and old friends don't understand me anymore, he's right about that, so I don't see them much. I've moved out and living with Steve. We have sex and that's Ok, I guess. He says that I owe him that much. That's normal, right?

He gets me everything I need, but I can't be bothered to go to school much. I fall asleep a lot when I'm there anyway... I don't care.

He's asked me to have sex with his friends too... I don't really know how to say no and he's getting angry... He's changing... he's not looking after me as much. It makes me feel like I'm a nuisance.

I think I'd better be nice to his friends. I don't think I've got any choice.

Kirk came to us when he was 6. He was a very angry and upset wee boy. He didn't communicate with other children just pushed them out of the way and grabbed what he wanted. He regarded adults with suspicion and swore constantly at them.

Kirk had been 'found' when his mum was in a shop and behaving very strangely and erratically. She was sectioned and Kirk came to live with us at the residential centre. Kirks mum was technically his sister although she had given birth to him and another child. Kirks father had two children to his eldest daughter and was sexually abusing his other one.

Kirk's father had for many years been filming all the children including the wee ones and was making pornographic films which he was selling. All the children had been part of the filming and had taken part.

Kirk's sister told the authorities that she was too scared to not do it and that their Dad made them do it to get food.

Tim was 14 when he was groomed by one man, but it wasn't long before he was expected to have sex with many more. "They'd give us fags, alcohol," he said. "After a while there would be three or four guys all at once. It was horrible and very scary."

Before long Tim was being taken to different houses, in different areas. He doesn't know how many men he was forced to have sex with.

Lexi started going missing when she was about 13 years old. The police would pick her up and return her home. Her parents got “fed up” with her and put her into care.

By this time, Lexi had missed a lot of school but no one at school asked her what was happening. When she was in care, she would “walk out with friends and see the guys”. The “guys”, who were all Asian, were older. She started smoking, using drugs and drinking. She would run away to another town to see her friends. Her social worker never asked her about it. Nor did her GP ask any questions when she went on the pill at the age of 14.

Lexi never told an adult what was happening to her, mainly because she thought she was in control and doing what she wanted to do. She described herself as bored and lonely; she wanted to appear “big and grown up”. She was expelled from school but ended up at another one. She passed her GCSEs and went on to college.

Lexi is now married and has a family of her own. She’s on good terms with her parents and has a busy and challenging job.

Some 20 years later, the police came to ask her about her experience (she declined to make a statement, as she did not want to be looking over her shoulder for every minute of the day).

Until then, it had never occurred to her that she had been sexually exploited. She knew “they weren’t nice people” and what they were turning her into was not good, but only when the officers explained that it had happened to other young girls did she realise that she too had been exploited.

When Connor was about 13 years old, he started exploring his sexuality. He was contacted by a man online. He thought he was a similar age but he turned out to be in his thirties. His mother discovered and told the police.

After this, his relationship with his mother deteriorated and Connor went to live with relatives. Again, a similar thing happened. He was contacted by someone online and arranged to meet him in a public place. This time Connor was detained on suspicion of indecency. He had a social worker who was good and listened to him. His GP was supportive and offered him cognitive behaviour therapy. Most of his teachers were supportive – only one “seemed to change” when they found out what had happened.

RUSafe was good and supportive – they taught him about grooming, exploitation, risk and about understanding his sexuality. The police made him feel “judged”, he felt they blamed him and it was somehow his fault. In fact, Connor himself still thought that it was all his fault.

Connor was bullied at school; he ceased to be able to go out with his friends. He was always worried about what might happen or who he might meet. In the end, he moved far away. He has a job and a new life, but little contact with his old friends or family – he feels lonely and lost. He wants young people to understand more about grooming and sexual exploitation because of the enormity of what happened to him.

Ashleigh started drinking when she was 12 years old. The Asian boys at school gave her money in exchange for sexual favours. It wasn't long before she was "introduced" to their older brothers. Ashleigh was addicted to alcohol and needed them to supply it. Ashleigh's mother had mental health problems and as long as Ashleigh said when she would be home, her mother didn't worry – even if Ashleigh returned in the early hours.

The school referred her to Children's Social Care, but having interviewed her mother, they decided the house was clean and safe so took no further action. She was seen by a social worker at school who told her to "stay in school, get educated and behave". Then a friend reported what was happening to the police. The police said there was not enough evidence and they took no action. She did go to a counselling service (Way In) twice but the counsellor was so shocked by what Ashleigh described that Ashleigh felt ashamed and sorry for the counsellor so she did not go back.

School became a dangerous place for Ashleigh as she was targeted by lots of boys. Therefore, she left and went to the school at the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). They referred her on to RUSafe and Addaction. She felt well supported by RUSafe and continues to see her worker even though she is over 18. Ashleigh has not had a drink for three years, she has a child, a safe place to live and is doing a degree.

Her life turned around when she stopped drinking. However, she wanted the review to understand young people with addictions. "When I wanted to drink a bottle of vodka, I needed someone to talk me down".

Samantha

Samantha's involvement with Children's Social Care prior to 2014 was limited to the provision of equipment and signposting to other services. It is well documented that Samantha's mother found her behaviour to be challenging and difficult to manage.

In March and June 2014 there were Missing From Home (MFH) episodes and concerns reported by Samantha's mother, that Samantha was in a sexual relationship with a 26 year old man and that Samantha was at the address of the alleged perpetrator. In June 2014, on the date of the 2nd MFH episode, it was indicated that Samantha had been assaulted by her Grandmother and again later the same evening by a member of the public. On this occasion Samantha was reported as heavily intoxicated and in the presence of a 26 year old male, about whom there were significant safeguarding concerns.

Whilst the first missing incident was not shared by the Police, later in June the Police did make a referral to Children's Social Care which stated that Samantha had been in a sexual relationship with an older male and was associating with the alleged perpetrator.

The Police made a further referral to Children's Social Care in April 2015. The Police had also provided additional information that multiple males had been contacting Samantha via Facebook, in relation to sex and drug use.

Information was also conveyed by Samantha's mother to Police Officers at the time, regarding her daughter's complex needs, developmental functioning and her vulnerability to sexual exploitation.

Lauren

Lauren had been living with her grandparents since 2011 and they were struggling to manage her behaviours. Grandmother was concerned that Lauren had been missing on at least one occasion and that she had been uploading photographs of herself kissing boys on social media sites. In February 2013 Police were called to the Grandparents home, as it had been reported that Lauren had been *refusing to comply with boundaries and was being restrained on the floor.*

Lauren disclosed that her Grandfather had head butted her and Lauren was accommodated but returned to her Grandparents home after 11 days in foster care, at which time the Police Investigation was incomplete and her grandfather had not been spoken to regarding the incident.

Within a short space of time, the situation deteriorated to the point that a tent had been erected in the garden for Lauren to sleep in. This resulted in Lauren being accommodated in July 2013 for a second time and she returned back to her Grandparents care in November 2013, at Grandmother's request and following Lauren's wishes.

Michael

The physical and sexual abuse, Michael says, began at the hands of his sister when he was aged between three and four and continued later when a boyfriend of his mother allegedly seriously sexually assaulted him.

He was taken into local authority care aged 13 to be housed at a now-closed adolescent unit in Suffolk where, after refusing to perform a sex act on a visitor, he was locked in a cupboard for 32 hours. On finally being released, he was sexually assaulted.

He was then moved to a children's home - again, now closed - where, he says, a number of adults, including uniformed police officers, abused children.

"It wasn't quite a paedophile ring," says Michael. "More an affiliation of abusers who all knew each other."

He told of one man who gave sweets or cigarettes to children who masturbated him.

Young people were taken from both the unit and children's home to north London to perform oral sex and were anally raped by men.

Children who refused, he says, were beaten.

In 1992 he was moved to the Stowmarket home of a single male foster carer where he was to remain for about six months.

The abuse started on the fourth night and escalated, says Michael, from being asked to perform sex acts (to then being told he was dirty and threatened about reporting the abuse) to rape.

It did not end there.

Michael was taken on "trips away" to Plymouth, Portsmouth, Wrexham, Cornwall and Islington, where he would be expected to perform sex acts for other abusers.

Occasionally, the children were given a little money - usually a £10 note.

"You'd find yourself thinking, at least I got a 'tenner' for it," says Michael.

Jess

Jess was the envy of all her friends at school, none of them had an older boyfriend to buy them presents and pick them up from school. Chris told Jess that he loved her, and if she loved him too, she'd sleep with him. They spent a lot of time in his flat, where they'd listen to music, smoke and have sex. Jess was besotted. Unlike her parents and teachers, he treated her like an adult and she wanted to feel mature. But she wasn't an adult, she was 14, and Chris was 30.

When Chris started inviting his friends over and letting them touch her and have sex with her, she didn't know what to do. Soon, he was picking her up in the morning and driving her to flats all over the country, where she'd be forced to have sex with men as old as 65. She tried to make it stop but if she protested Chris would beat her.

Once he hurt her badly enough that she had to go to A&E but Chris went with her so she couldn't tell them what really happened. He also told her that he would hurt her parents and little sister if she told anyone and so the abuse continued for 4 long years.

On her 18th birthday she ran away to London and ended up sleeping on the streets where she was picked up by a homeless charity. Only then was she able to tell her story.

Jess is still too scared to return home.

Adina Mukakalisa was originally from Rwanda, but moved to Uganda when she was very young. When she was a teenager, her parents both died, and she found work helping on a market stall in Kampala. One day, when Adina was nearly 15 years old, the woman who ran the stall told her to go with two men who were going to take her to live abroad, where she would be safe and could go to school.

Adina was put on a plane to the UK. A man collected her at the airport and took her to a house where another man was living. For the next two years, Adina was forced to live in the locked kitchen. She had access only to a toilet and a basin where she could wash. If she climbed on a chair, she could just see into the garden. She didn't know where she was. Adina's "job" was to clean and cook for the man who, after some time, was joined by a second.

After a couple of months, her job took on a new element – she was taken upstairs and raped. This went on for a long time. After around two years – exact timings are difficult in such circumstances – one of the men, drunk, failed to lock the kitchen door. As he slept, Adina found the keys to the front door. But as she shut the door behind her, he woke up and ran after her. She had to hide in a ditch and, when he had gone, she managed to flag down a passing car.

The driver dropped her at Marylebone Police Station in London, and they called social services, who got her the help and support she needed.

Adina was then just 17 years old.

We live in a small, rural town. It's quiet and nothing much happens. I thought it was a safe place to raise my little girl. Looking back, I was extremely naive, which is why I'm doing this. I wish I had been aware of the scale, method and ferocity of online grooming.

Even before Lucy left the local primary school, most of her friends had iPhones and iPads, Facebook and Snapchat. So, for her 10th Birthday, I bought her a second hand iPhone. She loved it, and it was great for me to be able to contact her, no matter where she was. I thought it was a good move, safety-wise. I think we talked a little bit about online safety, but I know she had covered it as part of her lessons at school. She seemed aware of it. I thought it was too early to have a conversation about porn or any of that stuff, because Lucy was only 11 and hadn't started puberty to any great degree. I felt she was still too young.

Lucy had a close circle of friends and she'd have sleepovers, go on shopping trips or to the local parks. She was a normal kid. In such a small town, everyone looks out for each other. I always knew where she was and who she was with. *For me, everything changed on Saturday 10th September, 2016.*

Lucy was having a sleepover at a friend's house, which was in the same town, less than two miles away. She had been there many times, and the parents are good people. I had no concerns at all. Making dinner, I was hit by a sudden impulse to ring Lucy and see how she was doing. She's a real Daddy's girl and we send lots of messages. It was a powerful, instinctive urge, which was unsettling. Her phone went straight to answerphone, which wasn't anything unusual. Signal can be patchy in rural areas. I sent a message asking if she was having fun, with kisses and hearts, and asked her to send me a message when she could. By 9, I was getting worried. It was unusual that Lucy hadn't sent me a message. I told myself they'd gone out for a meal or to the pictures or something normal. I was being irrational. The phone rang at 10.32pm. It was the police. They had found Lucy. She was okay but very upset. They were going to bring her home but needed to talk to me.

What did they mean, 'found her?' The doorbell rang and Lucy rushed in. She looked terrified and threw herself onto me, sobbing and shaking. I folded my arms around her and noticed the female police officer's sad smile. After Lucy had calmed down, she went upstairs and crashed. She fell fast asleep. The police officer told me what had happened:

'Lucy and her friend, Cathy, were abducted by a man, 'M', and an accomplice. We don't know exactly what happened yet, but there was a sexual element to this. Lucy managed to run away but got lost. The sexual contact seems to have been minimal. With Lucy, at least.' I didn't say a word, I just stared. Cathy was 12 and Lucy's *BFF*. The police officer continued, 'There's something else. Has Lucy told you about the Snapchat messages?' I shook my head. Reading the messages that night was terrible. They started off light and vague, but it didn't take long for me to see what was happening.

"The police officer told me that 'M' wasn't a child. He was an adult, was known to police and it was called 'grooming'. Lucy hadn't been in contact for long, but Cathy had been groomed for much, much longer. Cathy had given Lucy's Snapchat username to 'M', and told her that this 'really hot guy was into her', that she should accept his friend request and talk to him. 'M' lives two miles outside our town. I'm not going to tell you his name and address.

Lucy and Cathy had gone to the local park to meet him. He talked them into going somewhere secret – an abandoned gas works – where he tried to sexually abuse them. Lucy fought him off and started running. It was very dark, she didn't know where she was and her phone had no signal. She saw some lights in the distance, so ran towards them. Miraculously, a police car had been driving by and spotted her near the edge of the road. Two days later, we were visited by specially trained CID officers, and a woman from Social Services. I co-operated fully with everyone, and let Lucy give a statement. I also agreed to give the police Lucy's phone and iPad, so they could go through them and retrieve any evidence.

Over the next 6 months, Lucy was interviewed seven times. Not just about the abduction, but other events and abuses that she had witnessed. At first, it was hard to convince Lucy to tell the truth. Not because she's dishonest, but because she had been groomed. Everyone, myself included, became the enemy. She wanted to protect both Cathy and 'M':

'He's nice, Dad! He's not done anything wrong!'

I don't know where I found the patience to reason with her. My instinct was to shake her and scream *'don't be so stupid! He wants to hurt you!'* but she was 11, had been groomed and couldn't see that.

Elizabeth Corey

My childhood was not a childhood, it was a sad tale of sex trafficking. In my family, men had sex with little girls. It was our normal. It was our culture and it was generational. My parents grew up with it. Their parents grew up with it. Most of the victims in our family didn't even remember it because the trauma caused memory loss. We were a family of traumatized individuals who were doing whatever it took to survive ... usually at the expense of the others.

The extreme abuse in our family might seem easily discernible to outsiders. In our case, it wasn't. We were a typical suburban family. We lived in a four-bedroom house as a middle-class family with a mother, father and two children. We had plenty of social circles. The parents worked. The children attended school and after-school activities. We didn't move around all the time. We didn't request government or social services that may have shined a light on our family dysfunction. Nobody suspected anything. We just seemed like a "normal" family.

My parents, uncles and grandparents started sexually abusing me when I was 2 years old.

This was necessary to break me. I was indoctrinated in to a way of life. I was brainwashed. But there was a problem. As I got older, they realized I was a talker. They had not successfully broken me. I was actually telling people. The good news for them ... nobody believed me. Or if they did, they didn't do enough to help me. I was visited by social services a few times. My father even had to threaten a few people to shut them up. But in the end, my family maintained the secrecy ... and control.

My talking (and fighting back) led to some additional abuse. My father became physically abusive with me. I was suffocated, physically assaulted, abandoned, strangled, starved and hit many times in the head. I went to the hospital on multiple occasions. I am not sure how my father talked his way through those visits. But he did.

My mother handled the emotional abuse. She could manipulate a child better than anyone. Actually, she could manipulate anyone. She could get me to trust her just long enough to tell her what she wanted to know. She ensured that I knew how worthless I was. She told me all the time ... in many ways.

My father didn't stop with the incest. He realized that there was money to be made.

And he never passed up an opportunity to make money. So he sold me to his friends. He traded me for his friends' daughters. He sold me to groups of men who were having bachelor parties. He sold me to gangs. And he sold me to a pimp. I would spend my Saturday's working for a pimp right outside the Quantico marine base. Most of my customers were men in uniform.

By the age of 9, I was fully indoctrinated. I had given up. I remember the moment when I realized there was no hope of being saved from this terrible life. In that moment, I made a conscious choice to forget. Not only did I forget my abusive past, but I forgot every abusive event in the coming years. I could forget almost instantaneously. It is a powerful defense mechanism.

It is a common reaction to trauma. I was severely traumatized, and it manifested as intense anxiety. Although my abuse and trafficking stopped at adulthood, the affects did not.

Fern

I lived with my Dad who managed a theatre company. In the summer I went with them abroad for a production, I was 14. We stayed in a hotel for six weeks. My Dad was very busy working all the time so I was on my own a lot. Four of the men from the orchestra were very friendly to me, one in particular was very nice. They bought me drinks and food a lot and were really nice to me.

I hadn't had a boyfriend so was a bit overwhelmed as well about it all. One night one of them took me back to his room to get something and then pushed me into going to bed with him. I didn't want to but he was very persuasive and also kept reminding me that he had bought drinks and food for me over the last while and that I owed him basically.

The next day the others obviously knew and then were different to me and touching me a lot. The first guy made it clear that if I didn't do what they wanted then my Dad would be told that I had taken alcohol from them and gifts and had slept with him.

For the remainder of the time of the tour, the men had a hold over me and expected me to do what they wanted. I didn't know how to say no and didn't know how to get out of it, so just had to go with it. One of them told me later that there had been a bet among them all to see who could be first to get me into bed. They made me feel like it was my fault.

My mum worked really hard for me and my sister, and she got a job working the night shift which was more money. She was worried about leaving us but we said we would be okay. A boy at my school said his mum worked with mine and did the night shift as well, so he could come round one night and keep me company as I would be on my own as well. I didn't really want him to so I didn't say anything. One night, he turned up at my door with two other guys who weren't at school and much older. They said they had brought drink for a wee party. I said no and that my sister was here and my mum wouldn't like it. The guy from my school said it was fine and she wouldn't mind. They sat on the couch and turned the TV over. I sent my sister to her room. They had whisky and gave me several drinks. After a couple it didn't seem so bad.

The guy from my school came over and sat next to me and put his arm round me and kissed me, saying I was his girl now. When they left, he text me and we chatted for ages. Two nights later they all came back again, I was okay this time cause I was going out with one of them and really liked him. They had beer and whisky this time and the combination of the two made me really drunk. One of the older guys came over and asked how I was going to pay them for the drink, I said I didn't have any money. He said money was not the only way to pay, and he made me give him a blow job. The other two including my boyfriend didn't do anything, but just kept drinking. I was so shocked. My boyfriend came over to me afterwards and put his arm around me again and said that his friends were my friends.

I said that I was not comfortable with it all, but one of the older guys asked where my sister was. I was scared that they would do something to her. My boyfriend also said that his mum was asking where he was when she was at work, so he could tell her and she would tell her mum. I was scared of getting into trouble with my mum as well. My boyfriend was then so lovely again saying that he cared about me and didn't want me to get into trouble so let them do what they wanted and he would protect me.

They came twice a week when my mum was working and also brought sweets for my wee sister to keep her quiet. They said that because I invited them into my house and was drinking with them then it was as much my fault as anybody's. I had a few days off school as sometimes I didn't feel well after the drink. My mum was worried about me but I didn't know what to say.

One day my sister and my mum were out and they saw the two older guys. My sister told my mum that they were the guys who came to the house at night and drank beer. My mum went mad and when I came home she was so angry. I ended up telling her everything and then she was so upset and blaming herself. She called the school and the police. There was a terrible time then of police interviews, people at school wondering what was going on, the boys friends shouting at me in school and calling me a slag.

Mum changed her job so that she was home every night, which was much better. It wasn't her fault, and she helped me to see that it wasn't mine either.

'Like many 14 year old girls, my daughter struggled to find confidence. She had been badly bullied at school and felt isolated from her peers. So she was pleased and flattered when she was befriended by a woman in her early 20s.

This new friend took my daughter shopping and introduced to a young man, also in his 20s, who became her boyfriend. They showered her with gifts – new mobile phones, clothes, hair extensions and fake tans. Having struggled to form friendships, it was reassuring to see her finally going to parties and having an active social life.

But yet something was wrong. She was insistent on leaving the house at odd hours, especially once she was supposedly in bed. I would hear the front door close quietly at 3am. Mysterious cars would park outside our house and drop her off after school. She also stopped eating and sleeping. It seemed odd that she was so attentive to her new friends, and yet so unhappy.

So we did what many other parents would have done. We encouraged her to invite her friends into our home so we could get to know them. For about a year, I made cups of tea for the very young men who were sexually exploiting our daughter.

I only learnt about what was happening to my daughter through my involvement with a youth outreach project. The local police advised us that an exploitation ring was operating in the town and identified some of the main perpetrators. To my horror, I realised that some of them had been sat in my own kitchen just the day before.

My husband and I have an extremely close relationship with our daughter. When we tried to comfort her and reassure her she herself had done nothing wrong, she broke down and told us she had contemplated taking her own life. But she was unable to tell us the full extent of the abuse she suffered and was only able to talk about what happened to other girls and what she witnessed.

Now that we knew, our daughter made her own decision to withdraw from the gang, which led to several other girls disclosing the abuse. So my husband and I provided the safe place for them to talk to each other. We just sat and listened. They had to make their own choice to leave the gang, otherwise the perpetrators' grip was too strong.

Of course, we spoke to the police, handing them vital evidence such as photos posted on Facebook, addresses of where the so-called parties were held. We logged car registration numbers and the times of their arrivals and departures.

The gang knew we had spoken to the police and made it known to our family that they were not happy. There were more cars parked outside our house for days on end; I was followed and 'bumped into' by strange men.

Who could we turn to for protection and support? The gang seemed to operate with impunity; local girls were still being exploited and they made it clear they thought they were above the law. But to our frustration, we were left to our own devices. There was no specialist CSE police division to turn to. Apart from one or two exceptional officers, we were on our own.

It was a teenage girl who paved the way to my daughter's two year hell of sexual exploitation. I don't say that out of blame— she was as much a victim as my daughter was – but it shows how right from the beginning, grooming children for sex is insidious, cunning and strategic.

Stacey was a happy 13-year-old when she befriended Alicia. But the change happened almost overnight. She started wearing short dresses and make-up. She went from Mummy's girl to angry teenager; I was accused of depriving her of money, iPhones and iPads. She was no longer interested in her old friends, only Alicia and her older boyfriend with his flashy car.

Then out of the blue, Stacey went missing for three days. But when the police finally contacted her after my frantic calls, they made no effort to locate her because she told them she was 'safe and well.' They accepted that she was being looked after by a friend's boyfriend and would return home once she'd made up with me.

When she eventually came back, it was clear that she had started a relationship with one of Alicia's boyfriend's friends. Desperate to find out more, I logged into her Facebook account and checked her text messages.

I was shocked to find out that Stacey and Alicia's boyfriends belonged to a gang of men in their twenties. They were all good-looking men who obviously took care of themselves. I was mystified as to why they were interested in 13 year old schoolgirls. When I messaged Stacey's 'boyfriend' to remind him my daughter was underage and that his interest in her was inappropriate, Stacey flew into a rage and accused me of trying to destroy their lives.

She continued to go missing for days on end. Every night she failed to come home, I reported her missing to the police. Stacey was increasingly coming home drunk and disorientated. Remarkably, she even admitted to me that the men had given her drugs: MKat here, a gram of coke there. She was horrifyingly nonchalant about it. Then came the worst revelation of all: that Alicia had performed oral sex on her boyfriend in front of Stacey and that her new friends were being offered money to pose naked for photographs or to enact 'girl on girl' sex in front of men.

Of course I fed all this information back to the police. I even supplied them with the names and addresses I had found on Stacey's Facebook and phone. But groomers are clever: they know that once they have ensnared the girls, they would never make a statement to the police.

Many parents reading this will be asking why I didn't simply lock up my daughter and ground her at this point. But it's far more complicated than that. The groomers had deliberately driven a wedge between us. Breaking the parental bond is a crucial part of their strategy. So if I came down heavy and punished her, I was simply being the evil, callous parent the groomers had portrayed me to be.

Meanwhile her 'boyfriend' plied her with gifts and told her they could run away together as soon as she turned sixteen. All I could do was to hammer home the health risks of drugs and show her I loved her. I would wait up all night for her, but resisted the temptation to be angry. I had to show her that her home was a refuge. If I didn't, she would simply run back to them.

Then, a year and a half later, we hit a watershed moment. The men persuaded Stacey to bring my youngest daughter, Billie, to a party at one of their houses. Billie was only twelve; she had never even met Stacey's boyfriend. Nothing could have prepared her for what she witnessed there.

Girls as young as 14 were walking round semi-naked. Billie witnessed several sexual acts between men and underage girls. Many of the girls were so intoxicated on drugs, they didn't know where they were or what they were doing.

Two minors later came forward and said they had been gang-raped at the party. The police and social services took immediate action. They interviewed Stacey and Billie but, as I repeatedly pointed out, Stacey was so brainwashed, she would not testify that she had witnessed a rape. As far as she was concerned, the victim had made up the allegations out of spite.

'Our daughter changed forever when she was just 13. She had always been a rather quiet child, and we were very family orientated. We worked hard to cultivate family values and taught our children to respect them.

But one day we received a call from her school. They were concerned because Kitty had started hanging around with a certain group of girls. We were advised that these girls could be a bad influence. We spoke to our daughter, but because she did not form friendships easily and was naturally shy, she was not dissuaded from parting with her new gang of friends. When we invited these girls round for tea, she told us that she had to go to their houses, as their mothers worked in the evenings and they had younger siblings.

As she turned fourteen, Kitty started to go to the cinema or on shopping trips at the weekend – all normal teenage activities. When the school told us she had been missing the odd lesson, she swore to us she only ever missed PE. But the alarm bells kept ringing when she gradually changed her appearance. Suddenly she was wearing tracksuits and expensive trainers, scrunching her hair up tightly and wearing large earrings. Her taste in music changed from boybands to baseline.

Then one night, the police turned up at midnight, asking to speak to Kitty. One of her friends had been reported missing, shortly after Kitty had been seen with her. As she rubbed her eyes in her pink pyjamas and fluffy dressing gown, the police fired questions at her. Where had she been that evening? To our astonishment, Kitty told them that she had been picked up with two other girls by two men and driven round in their blue Audi. We gasped as she told them that the men had given her vodka and cigarettes, then dropped her back home at her normal curfew of 830, and driven off again. The police then told us that the men were known groomers. Neither my husband nor I knew what this meant, but a cold chill gripped my heart as the officer explained how young girls were being befriended then sexually exploited by groups of men.

It was just the start of the heartache and torment. We watched helplessly as things spiraled out of control. Kitty started going missing for hours on end. If we tried to ground her in the house, she would scream the Children's Act at us. The groomers had done a good job of creating a rift between us and our precious child. If we quizzed her on her whereabouts or activities she would clamp up or even accuse us of racism.

Eventually we got in touch with the parents of one of her girlfriends. They passed on details for the Missing Persons Coordinator and a number for PACE. For the first time we realised we were not alone and we able to share our burden with people who understood. PACE workers listened to us, and we met other parents through parent support groups.

Kitty became more and more distanced from us. We tried locking the doors and hiding the keys. Once, when she started scrambling out of a window, I even called the police and had her arrested. It was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life, but I was desperately trying to keep my daughter safe. The men had manipulated her so successfully, that she only saw us as the enemy.

We were getting very little sleep from driving round all night looking for our daughter. Sometimes she would ring and ask us to pick her up from a rundown part of our city, or even from another town. It was clear that the men were giving her drugs. As a practicing nurse, I recognised the dilated pupils and giddiness.

Then one night we reported her missing when she failed to return at 11pm. This time two police officers came round and returned throughout the night, until she came back in at 5:30am. She staggered in, obviously high on drugs, her neck covered in bruises and bites. One of the officers went through her phone, reading out vile texts from men. But she just stared into space.

The next day she told us she needed to get away. She has never told us the full extent of harm she suffered from these men, but we were so determined to set her free from her evil spell that my husband took leave and took her to Spain for a few months. It seemed to work for a while, but to our horror, she gradually she fell back in with the old crowd. Then, at 17 years old she became pregnant. Only when she was punched in the stomach by one of her abusers did she finally walk away.

Two years later she is caring for her beautiful son with us in our home. Our grandson is delightful and we can't imagine life without him. But what these men did to our daughter nearly destroyed our lives – including those of our other two children. Kitty still feels she is unable to live alone, but we hope the day will come when she can experience some independence and take up her education again.'

Charlie

Charlie was only thirteen when she met a guy who groomed her online and she very quickly became emotionally dependent on him. He bought her expensive gifts and she believed him to be her boyfriend and when they met she had sex with him – she at the time didn't see it as rape.

From the age of 14 Charlie was taken by him to a variety of 'parties' across England that she reports were in nice houses and in some cases described as 'mansions'. In these houses Charlie would be raped by several men, from a range of ethnicities, who were paying to use her. Charlie described a book being available with photographs and ages of all of the girls being sexually exploited by this particular group.

Men could choose which girls they wanted. Charlie reported men paying those who were exploiting her up to £500 for an hour with her. Groups of men could also request one girl to share between them over a night, where the rape of the girl would be filmed.

The operation involved men working the streets to pick up vulnerable girls, forming 'relationships' with them by grooming them and then passing them on to the men who controlled the business. If Charlie ever refused to comply, she would be beaten and her family threatened.

Following the abuse, Charlie took several overdoses, was placed in secure accommodation, and self-harmed by cutting and ligaturing sometimes on a daily basis.

Harry

My mum and dad ran a bed and breakfast in the town. We had lots of guys who stayed for a long time while they were working and they went home to their families at the weekend. One of the men was David, he was really nice to me and said he missed his kids. I was 12 when he first came to live with us. He got friendly and then he gave me his sound telly as he said he was getting a new one. I was really chuffed to have my own telly. He came into my room to help me set it up and hugged me and touched me afterwards. I thought I had imagined it. Then he began to wait for me to come in from school, he used to take me into his room to show me the latest CD or he had sweets for me.

Every time after he had given me the sweets or whatever, he said are you not going to thank me then? Then he touched me or got me to touch him, but it got worse as time went on. He gave me a new sound system and although I was pleased, I was scared at what I would need to do to pay for it.

I began to stay late from school and my mum started to get annoyed with me. I didn't want to go home. David said that if my mum found out what I had been doing she would kill me. He said that I had started it all by wanting his telly. I said to him I like your telly but I don't think I asked for it.

Neil

My Dad left when I was a baby and my mum was a drinker, so I stayed with my Gran and Grandpa. Grandpa was a violent man who hit me and pushed me down the stairs when he was drunk. I got into trouble at school and with the police. It was felt that I was better to live in a residential centre.

From the minute I arrived age 9, I was abused, neglected, beaten and exploited. We had to march naked from our rooms to the bathroom every day and the staff would decide who they wanted that morning. If you were picked then not only did you get abused but you also missed breakfast. The worst was at night when the staff would come and get you from your bed, they had their favorites.

One guy was a real favorite, I don't know why but he just cried all the time a low pitiful noise, which got to all of us.

Sometimes a group of us would be taken out to a house somewhere which would be full of men. We were abused all night sometimes by two men at a time. They didn't talk to us, didn't even look at us, just pushed our heads onto them or bent us over by shoving us. They laughed and didn't see or hear if we were crying or hurting.

Some of the boys got to go home at holidays for a time, and if they told what was going on then nobody believed them because they came back again. We didn't talk about it, just got on with it and hated the staff with every part of me.

Finn's Story

Finn is 12 and he is a bit of a shy boy and has found it hard to make friends with the other boys at high school. However, he has an Xbox and is excellent at playing many games. Finn has “met” many friends through playing games on line and he talks to them most nights while playing games. Finn finds it much easier to be friends online and this has helped his Mum and dad to be less worried about him. They have met one boy, Ryan, who lives nearby as he has come to the house to play the Xbox with Finn.

Within the group of boys, Finn also gets on really well with Sean. Sean has told Finn he is 13 and like Finn he finds it hard to make friends at school. Sean is a great laugh and Finn and Sean message each other outwith the group chat. Sean and Finn have started a game of dares. Sean has dared Finn to take a photograph of his mum when she is not looking, Finn has dared Sean to take a photo of his big sister's pants on the washing line. Both boys find these dares really hilarious.

One night Sean dares Finn to send a photo of his penis. Finn at first says no, but Sean teases him saying he's a chicken, both boys find this really funny. Finn then sends a photo of his penis to Sean.

Sean then tells Finn that if he doesn't meet him at the garage tomorrow night at 7pm, he will put the picture of Finn's penis on line. Finn at first thinks Sean is kidding on but Sean shows him a screenshot of the picture just needing one more click to be uploaded. Finn agrees to meet Sean. Sean is not 13, Sean is 53 and he continues to threaten to upload the photograph if Finn does not meet him and another man and have oral sex with them both.

Jodies' Story

Jodie is 14 and enjoyed spending time with her female friends at the Bus station. The young people would often drink alcohol if they could persuade an adult to buy it for them. One evening Jodie and her friends approach Mikey to ask if he would buy alcohol, he agreed and let them sit in his car to drink it. Mikey is 25. Mikey gave the girls his phone number and said they could call him any time and he would get alcohol for them. Mikey also gave the girls a lift home sometimes as he said he was worried that they were at risk from bad guys.

This went on for a few weeks and after Mikey had dropped Jodie's 2 friends off one night, he gave Jodie more alcohol and told her that he really liked her. He asked to meet Jodie by herself the following night, he told her that she was much more grown up than her friends. Jodie was really flattered that this older guy who had been really kind and had looked out for her and her friends was interested in her, so she agreed to meet him alone.

Mikey took Jodie for a burger and said he had vodka at his flat, he hadn't brought it with him as he thought it would be good to have a drink together at his flat and get to know each other better. Mikey took Jodie home later that night. He suggested that they meet at his flat the next night, which Jodie did. Again, Mikey had alcohol for Jodie but when it came to her time to go home, he asked her to stay over and they had sex. This continued for a few weeks, Jodie started missing school to be with Mikey, she didn't see her friends as they were "too immature" and she often didn't return home, telling her mum she was staying with friends.

After a few weeks, Mikey introduced Jodie to his friend Joe. Mikey told Jodie that Joe was upset as he had fallen out with his girlfriend and it would really make Mikey happy if she would help Joe feel better by sleeping with him. Within a few months Jodie was being sexually exploited by Mikey and three of his friends. Jodie was isolated from all her own friends and family and still believed that Mikey loved her and if he hurt her it was her own fault. After all this was the same guy who used to drive her and her friends home to keep her safe from the bad guys out there.

Hayley

Hayley was known to have learning disabilities, although she attended the local school. Hayley tagged along with the group of girls and boys who hung out at the park most nights. These kids were out till late at night as parents were in the pubs or not at home.

Hayley tagged behind them when they went from the chip shop to the park. In the summer, Hayley was sitting on the grass in the park, she had a skirt on which was too short for her and she was showing off her pants as she was not careful about how she was sitting. One of the boys took a picture of her pants on his phone and sent it round the group. Everyone was laughing at Hayley and so was she. There was a small group of the kids who then began to get other photos of Hayley to put out. The photos were becoming more explicit as the weeks went on.

Hayley's mum found out and spoke to Hayley about it and the school. Hayley said that it was okay because the guys were her friends and she was popular because everyone wanted to take photos of her.

The school got involved and the local youth outreach workers to explain to Hayley and the others about exploitation and the illegal distribution of indecent photos of a minor. The kids hadn't realised the legalities of the situation and hadn't thought they were exploiting Hayley.

Joe

I met him online and we met up 2 weeks later. He said he was 18 and I was 12. I was struggling at home with my mum and stepfather so he listened and understood it all. I found out later he was 26. I felt grown up being given drink and drugs. He told me if I had sex with his and other men he would give me money.

For the next year I had sex with him and lots of other men. I was taken all over the country to places where men had sex with me. It got more violent and extreme.

I finally ended up in a psychiatric hospital. They put me in touch with Barnado's, who helped me to understand what had happened and how to get my life back.

I still feel very angry about what happened to me but I am trying to move on and go to college.

Heini

Heini was brought up in an abusive home, her mum was regularly sexually abused, raped and beaten up by the men who came into her mum's house. By the age of 12 Heini had been sexually assaulted herself while under the influence of drugs.

At this point Heini went off the rails. When she was 16, she was moved into bed and breakfast accommodation. It did not become the safe and secure place that she craved. People around her would buy her drinks and drugs but in return for sex. Heini was really in a mess.

She was introduced to a Barnado's worker who spent a lot of time with her explaining what good relationships are compared to bad relationships.

They worked on her self-esteem and what she wanted from her life. Heini says that her life has completely turned around now.

Sally

Sally has Asperger's syndrome, which makes it difficult for her to form relationships. She was a lonely, withdrawn child and an easy target for bullies. It was while Sally was online that she was targeted by her abusers. They pretended to be interested in her problems, flattered her and eventually persuaded her to trust them.

She was taken to parties where her 'boyfriend' tried to cajole her into having sex with other men. Things quickly spiraled out of control. She was living in fear and couldn't see any way to escape the abuse.

One of our Senior Practitioners from Barnados, Emma, met Sally she began the long process of helping her to escape her abusers.

Whenever Sally needed her, Emma was there. She spent many hours talking and listening to Sally, proving to her that here was an adult she could trust and rely on, discussing her fears, her hopes and helping build up her self-esteem.

Farhah's Story

Farhah witnessed a lot of violence in her family – her father subjected her mother to violent beatings. Eventually her parents separated and she lived with her mother and other siblings. Farhah started being bullied at the age of 12 when a couple of older boys pulled her trousers down and fondled her in school. Little action was taken against the boys. Other boys aged 15 started to show interest in her. She was offered free alcohol, cigarettes and takeaways. She thought it was cool having older friends and felt special. Eventually she started to meet them in a local park because she trusted them. On one occasion she was introduced to a man in his 20s, who drove a flashy car and who gave her presents. He became her friend and showered her with lots of attention and gifts.

Farhah started to believe this older man was her “boyfriend” because he made her feel special and accepted drugs and alcohol that he gave her. Farhah soon became addicted to drugs and especially alcohol. It did not matter if she could not afford to buy them because her “boyfriend” would provide them free. One day he took her to his flat, made her dress in new clothes and boots that he had bought for her and then raped her. He took photographs of her and threatened to send them to her family unless she did as she was told.

Farhah became trapped and felt unable to ask for help. She was forced to give oral sex to young men. This then progressed to Farhah being passed around to other much older men. She would be taken to various locations in the city such as flats, hotels and cars and men would have sex with her. Each time it was common for her to have sex with several men. The men would watch each other have sex with her. She would be given lots of alcohol and also injected with drugs. On one occasion Farhah remembers there being up to 15 men in the room. Farhah witnessed men exchanging money for having sex with her.

Farhah was threatened and told that if she did not continue to turn up to have sex with men when she was required, then her family would be attacked. Farhah also started to run away from home as the men wanted her for longer periods of time. This would result in her going missing for days. By the time she was 13, she had run away about ten times. The men also encouraged Farhah to bring her younger sister to them and one day Farhah even attempted to take her younger sister with her but was unsuccessful.

Sometimes the men that were driving Farhah to the various locations would stop the car and also rape her too. Farhah was also beaten and burned with cigarettes and sometimes strapped down and her clothes ripped off. She was also forced to perform sexual acts on the men and do role-play such as dancing for the men including with another young Asian female. She also had to perform sex acts via a webcam for some clients. Farhah was in such severe pain because of the brutal rapes that she also started to take painkillers every day. Farhah was even passed around for sex during the month of Ramadan – considered a holy month by Muslims. Most of the men who abused Farhah were of Pakistani background and some were of other ethnic backgrounds, including Afghani and white. Many of the men were much older and in their 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s. Through hearing conversations over a period of time she found out that many were married.

At the age of 14, Farhah went missing for a prolonged period and was reported missing to the police. She was eventually found at the family home of a man who had befriended her and was a part of the grooming ring. Other family members also lived in the same house including elders and extended family and were aware that Farhah would be locked up

during the day in the bedroom while the offender went to work. The offender would leave a bucket for her so she could use it as a toilet during the day. When Farhah was rescued, the family members defended the offender and made excuses that she was being protected and looked after her because she had run away from home due to family.

When Farhah was rescued she was covered in bruises, blood stains, cigarette burns and intoxicated on drugs, and suffering from severe abdominal pains as a result of brutal multiple rapes. After being rescued Farhah started self-harming as she relived the ordeal of her rapes. For her own safety she had to be taken into medical care for psychiatric help to deal with her trauma.

The police were informed but there was no prosecution because Farhah was not willing to give evidence and formally report her abusers.

Saima's Story

Saima (of Pakistani heritage) came from a violent family – her brothers and father were very violent. She grew up not liking herself and secretly self-harmed. At the age of 15, Saima became sexually active out of choice. She had sexual relationships with boys her own age and a bit older and became known as a “slag” at school by other pupils.

One day Saima went to a local park with some boys and other girls and was raped by 3 men. They also filmed her ordeal. Saima struggled to come to terms with this and started to drink heavily. No one believed anything Saima said, including what had happened to her because she was seen as a “trouble maker” at school. The men that had abused her started to offer her money, drugs and alcohol. Eventually she started to view them as her friends.

However, she was regularly raped and beaten by them and then would also suffer more violence at home. The offenders, who were all of Pakistani background, would encourage each other to rape and abuse her. Saima did not seek help as she felt this was her destiny and was also extremely scared of her abusers. She believed they were so dangerous that they would kill her and her family. Saima struggles now with serious sexually transmitted diseases, health implications and addictions.

Imaan's Story

Imaan who was from a Muslim background (ethnicity not disclosed) was in her late teens when she first reached out to talk about the sexual abuse she had suffered from a young age after years of being groomed by her Quran teacher, her father and the women in their respective families. She had sustained years of not only sexual and physical abuse but also psychological brainwashing.

Imaan had always believed her teacher to be right because he used verses from the Quran, which he claimed justified his abuse of her and the abuse by her father. Her father stopped sexually abusing when she reached puberty. However her Quran teacher continued the abuse. His wife was aware of the abuse and even counselled Imaan to continue allowing it to happen when she began to object to it.

Imaan came across information online, which made her question what the religious teacher had been telling her. She realised that the abuse could not be justified using the Quran. However she struggled to "let go" of the belief she had been taught because throughout her childhood it was her norm that was even validated by her mother. It has taken a number of years to help Imaan understand what she had suffered. Imaan eventually disclosed that other men and girls were also involved in this circle of abuse.

Aisha's Story

When Aisha who was from a Muslim background (ethnicity not disclosed) was 6 years old, she was sexually abused by a family member. As Aisha was very young she didn't understand what had happened to her until she became a teenager and became aware of sex. Aisha had not spoken to anyone about what she had suffered and went into deep depression. She took to self-harming as a way to cope and isolated herself from her family.

When Aisha was 14 years old, she became mixed up with the wrong crowd at school. She was frequently in trouble with her teachers for displaying disruptive and aggressive behaviour. Her new friends introduced her to an online "Islamic" forum, where young Muslims could chat regularly, "hang out" and "pick" each other up because their parents did not allow them to "date" or go out after school. After a few months on two Islamic online forums, Aisha found herself regularly chatting into the night with other male forum users. These users were adult men. She felt chatting into the night was a good distraction for her and that she could find solace from the nightmares she often had. What Aisha did not know at the time, was that she was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the sexual abuse she suffered when she was a child.

Gradually the men online groomed Aisha, under the guise of friendship. One man used his status of having an established presence on the forum to build trust with Aisha, often using Islam as a pretext for gaining this trust and confidence in him. Before she knew what was happening she was pulled into sexually explicit conversations online and was coerced to perform sexual acts through the web camera on her computer.

Safa's Story

Safa who is of Muslim background (ethnicity not disclosed) was just 9 years old when a family friend, whom she called "uncle" started to pay her lots of attention. He told her she was "special" and that they had a "unique friendship". The uncle, who was in his forties, married with two children, began to touch her sexually. Despite this she remembers that she loved him because he always bought her treats or was there to comfort her if she had an argument with her parents.

When Safa was 14 years old, the uncle raped her in her family home while her parents were out. He told her that if she told anyone, she would not be believed and would be called a "slag". He also told her that her parents loved him more than her, and that who would believe a young girl over a married and respected man? Safa felt very confused - on the one hand she thought her uncle loved her and this was his way of showing his love but on the other hand he was mean and cruel when he threatened her to remain silent.

Safa had no one to turn to and her behaviour quickly deteriorated - she began taking drugs, sleeping around with boys at school and doing badly in her schoolwork. She became known as a troublemaker at home, school and in her community. Her uncle took advantage of this and stepped up his advances, began showing her off to his friends so they could approach her for sex too. They were all abusing her and sometimes were violent if she didn't comply with their demands. When Safa was about 16 years old, she disclosed the sexual abuse to a helpline who contacted statutory agencies and the police. However, the case did not progress further because Safa's parents did not believe her and she felt she could not go against her uncle whom she sometimes felt she still loved. At age of 17, Safa was addicted to heroin, lived on the streets and often prostituted herself to earn some money.

Nazia's Story

A Bangladeshi family of four sisters lost their father at a very young age. They lived with their mother who was unemployed and could not speak English. Nazia was the eldest and when she was 14 years old, she met a Bangladeshi man outside school and started dating him and became sexually active with him. Within a few months her boyfriend had got her hooked on heroin. To fund the drug habits, he then forced her to start doing street work. He also circulated her amongst his friends who were mostly in their 20s but a few were teenagers. Most of them were of South Asian background with a few being white. The men would use her for sex in exchange for money or drugs.

Nazia felt helpless as she was totally at the mercy of her addiction. The men were aware of this and used it to their advantage. She was made to do everything, including role-play, which she found very disturbing. It wasn't long before Nazia's boyfriend introduced her younger sisters to his friends. They too found themselves in the same situation as their older sister – becoming addicted to drugs and being passed around by their boyfriends to their friends. Due to their Muslim faith, they felt unable to ask for help – they thought that they would be judged and blamed. For this reason they did not seek help for a long time. The sisters managed to conceal their double lives from their mother when questioned on their whereabouts by covering for each other.

Nazia and her sisters' ordeal only emerged when she had a health scare and visited her local GP, who referred her to an agency for her drug addiction. The support worker helped Nazia and the rest of the family and involved other mainstream agencies. Collectively they provided them with the necessary support to deal with the addictions and helped them to relocate to a different city. The girls felt that moving away was the only way to escape their past and move forward with their lives. When they moved, they continued with their rehabilitation. Nazia and her sisters were not willing to report the men that sexually exploited them.

Fawzi's Story

Fawzia is a Pakistani girl. When she was 14 years old, she started to receive a lot of attention from the older 17-year-old Pakistani boys in her school. She felt that she was getting attention because she was quite heavy chested compared with the other pupils. They bought her lots of gifts and started to ask her to meet them alone without her friends.

They started to meet her alone in a nearby alleyway – eventually they persuaded her to perform sexual acts. The boys then circulated information around the school about what she had done with them, which resulted in her getting a “bad reputation”.

She became isolated in school and the boys pretended they were her only friends so they could continue exploiting her.

Sumaira's Story

Sumaira's early years were highly traumatizing for her. Her mother died when she was a toddler and was brought up by her Pakistani father and grandmother. She was diagnosed with learning difficulties at a young age and her father began sexually abusing her when she was 13 years old. Her uncle and her older brother also started to abusing her soon after. All of them were very educated working in various professions and were aware of each other's abuse of Sumaira.

Her father, uncle and brother continued to abuse her for the next four years. Sumaira did not understand what was happening to her and believed that these men loved her. Her grandmother was aware of the abuse and rape but did not intervene. She had even walked into the room when Sumaira was being raped by her father. She told Sumaira not to tell anyone what was taking place because it would bring shame on the family.

When Sumaira was 17 years old, she started attending college and a key worker was assigned to her because of her learning difficulties. The key worker noticed regular bruising on her wrists and arms as if she had been forcefully held. After conversations with Sumaira the worker suspected abuse and involved social services. After several meetings Sumaira eventually had the confidence to disclose her experiences. However she refused to either report the abuse to the police or leave home because she believed that her father, uncle and brother loved her. However, one day Sumaira decided she could no longer endure the abuse when all three of them raped her together. Although she was still not willing to report them, she asked social services to find her accommodation and was placed in a women's refuge.

Within a few months of moving into the refuge, a young Pakistani man befriended Sumaira. She started dating him because he promised to marry her. As soon as she started a relationship with him, he took her to a house party and introduced her to his friends. During the party he told her that he owed lots of money to his friends and that if she really loved him, she would help him pay off his debts by having sex with the men. She was confused and felt pressurized and reluctantly agreed. She was taken to the bedroom and several friends had sex with her. The boyfriend continued to pass Sumaira around to his friends and other men for the next 6 months.

Sumaira confided in her social worker about what was happening but again refused to report the abuse to the police because she believed her boyfriend loved her. Eventually after support from the social worker, Sumaira started to stand up to her boyfriend and refused to go out with him. However, the boyfriend then befriended another vulnerable young woman at the refuge. So when Sumaira would leave the refuge to go anywhere the other young woman called the boyfriend to inform him. The boyfriend and his friends would drive around looking for her and would pick her up off the street and gang rape her in the back of a van. They would also torture her and insert objects into her vagina such as perfume bottles and leads.

The social services informed the police but Sumaira would still not report the rapes to the police, as she now feared the men. Her social worker then arranged for Sumaira to be moved to another part of the country. It was the only way to end the cycle of abuse.

Jamila's Story

Jamila was a graduate in her mid 20s from a Pakistani background. She was living alone away from family because of her job. A local Pakistani man, a few years older than her, befriended her. He told her that he loved her and wanted to marry her but in secret until he could get his parents to formally agree to the marriage. Unknown to Jamila at the time, he was married with children.

They married in secret without involving either family. Jamila would receive visits in the evening from her husband so he could have sex with her and then return back to his family home. He then started demanding expensive gifts from her such as designer watches, clothes and shoes. Jamila loved her husband so she bought him whatever he asked for. She was unable to keep up with his demands and could not afford to buy him the requested items. It was then that her husband suggested that she started earning additional income so she could continue buying him what he wanted and to help pay off his debts. He put a lot of pressure on Jamila and used emotional blackmail to get her to have sex with other men in exchange for money. He then started taking Jamila to various houses so his friends could have sex with her.

Some of these men looked religious from their appearance such as having beards and wearing thobes. Jamila was not the only one being exploited in this way – the same network of Pakistani men would exchange information about other young Asian women and converts living by themselves in the same town and target them in the same way. They would then share their so-called “wives” within the network.

Anisa's Story

Older Pakistani men befriended Anisa, a 14 year old Pakistani girl. However, when she started trusting them, the men forced her into prostitution. Anisa would not be able to move due to the amounts of alcohol and drugs they would give. Many of the men that were having sex with Anisa appeared religious because of their "thobes" (Islamic clothing) and beards – they were from a Pakistani background. This made her lose her faith in Islam and she could not even bring herself to enter a mosque or cover her head. She was prostituted for another 2 years.

When Anisa was 16 years old, she gained enough courage to ask for help. She believes that she was only able to escape her situation because she was placed in a women's refuge. Anisa is now trying to take tiny steps and starting a new life with her child. She is also reclaiming her faith in life and Islam – realising that Islam was not to blame but people were.

